



# NEWS FROM TCA: MARCH 2024

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Introducing and congratulating the 2024 class of Young Masters!

## 15 Texas Students Selected for 2024 Young Masters Grants

The Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) and the [Texas Cultural Trust \(TXCT\)](#) are proud to announce the 2024 class of [Young Masters](#). Young Masters is a grant program that provides



- Saj Baldwin, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, Houston, *Visual Arts* • Adeline Dunlap, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, Allen, *Dance/Ballet* • Madelynn Mircelle Gonzalez, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, Brownsville, *Musical Theater* • Caroline Jacobson, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, Spring, *Music/Voice* • Beth Anne McGowan, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, Dallas, *Dance* • Aureus Morel, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, Cedar Hill, *Music/Composition* • Hudson Pletcher, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, Frisco, *Dance* • Eva Rami, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, Sugar Land, *Literary Arts* • Adrianna Rodriguez, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, Harlingen, *Theater* • Matthew Scott, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, Lewisville, *Music/Piano* • Valeria Velasco, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, San Antonio, *Musical Theater* • Gracelyn Weber, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, Savannah, *Dance* • Gisele Elise Wilson, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Dallas, *Dance/Ballet* • Nevaeha Wilson, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, Keene, *Music/Voice* • Lerchen Zhong, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, Austin, *Music/Piano*

exemplary art students in grades 8-11 with the financial help they need to pursue advanced study in the areas of visual arts, literary arts, music, theater, dance, musical

theater, folk & traditional arts, and media arts. This year's promising young students come from 14 cities and together display a variety of artistic talents.

The state's most talented young artists receive the title of "Young Master" and are awarded grants of \$5,000 per year to further their studies in their chosen arts disciplines. Students are eligible to receive the grant for two years, but they must submit a report and updated application. This gifted group of 15 students represents the twelfth class of Young Masters. Since the program's inception in 2002, the TXCT and TCA have named 199 Young Masters, awarding over \$1.3 million to aspiring artists from across the state. The Young Masters were selected by a citizen panel of experts from across the state based on artistic excellence, level of commitment and quality of their proposed plan of action.

In order to be considered for the Young Masters grant, students must be legal U.S. residents living in Texas and participating in a school based program, a summer institute, or a specialized course of study or receiving private lessons from a qualified professional instructor. They must also maintain passing grades in all academic areas. TCA and the Trust congratulate these young artists for their accomplishments and look forward to celebrating them at an awards ceremony and star studded concert on April 16 at Austin's ZACH Theatre.

## 2024 Texas Poetry Out Loud Winner Named



The [Poetry Out Loud](#) recitation contest is a national project of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. This exciting program helps students master public speaking skills, build self confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. High school students memorize poems and perform them in competition. The students are evaluated on qualities such as articulation, evidence of understanding, accuracy and overall performance. In the 2024 Texas state competition, 18 high school students from across Texas competed for a chance to advance to the state finals. The virtual semi finals, held in late January, were judged by poets/performers Brian Francis, Jacqueline Kolosov, Rich Levy, and Celeste Guzmán Mendoza.

The 2024 Texas Poetry Out Loud finals were held in person at the Texas Spirit Theater and graciously hosted by the **Bullock Texas State History Museum** on Saturday, February 24. The finals brought together the top ten competitors from across the state to determine the state champion and runner up. The event was hosted by internationally renowned Texas poet Naomi Shihab Nye. The judges for the competition, Corey Marks, Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton, Chibbi Orduña, and 2023 Texas Poet Laureate ire'ne lara silva, are Texas poets and performers.

After two rounds, the field was narrowed to five finalists: **Stella McCoy**, a junior at Austin's Headwaters School; **Jocelyn Hoenicke**, from Saint Stephen's Episcopal School in Austin; **Maxine Louthan**, a junior at the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas; **Teron Smalls**, who attends Cornerstone Christian Schools in San Antonio; and **Oluwabori "Anjy" Fadairo**, a junior from the Hockaday School in Dallas.

Ultimately, Ms. Fadairo won the 2024 Poetry Out Loud state final. As state champion, she will receive \$200 and will represent Texas at the national level. Anjy will compete in Washington, DC, May 12, for a pool of \$50,000 in scholarships for students and cash awards for schools. Additionally, her school will receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry books and materials. The Texas runner up was Maxine Louthan. She will receive \$100, while her school will receive \$200 for the purchase of poetry books and materials. We congratulate all our 2024 participants, their teachers, and their families.

Photo: Amanda Kaus Photography

## Support Texas Arts with the *State of the Arts* License Plate



TCA's new black and silver *State of the Arts* minimalist design license plate is shipping and is available to order at <https://www.myplates.com/go/arts>.

This plate design can go on a passenger car, motorcycle, trailer, or private bus (attention, Texas bands!). TCA will receive a portion of the sales of the plate. Note that this plate is

part of MyPlates' "Lone Star Series," but only the *State of the Arts* plate supports TCA. There is a price break for those ordering their plate for multiple years. Make a long term commitment to the arts!

## TCA Speaker Series: Unlock the Power of Local Foundations

TCA is launching its first Speaker Series event of 2024. This free webinar will be conducted on Zoom and is centered on helping attendees learn about local foundations and their grants. The discussion will include the differences between community and family foundations, how you can work them into your funding plans more effectively, and what to expect in building and managing your relationship with your foundation supporters.

The virtual meeting will be on **Tuesday, March 26, 2024**, from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm Central. It is open to arts nonprofits and members of the public.

TCA staff will be joined by two foundation professionals with a wealth of experience to share:

**Bao-Long Chu** is Program Director at Houston Endowment where he oversees the Foundation's strategy to support and grow the region's arts, culture, and parks ecosystem. Chu is a poet and his libretto for the opera *Bound*, composed by Huang Ruo, premiered in Houston in 2014, New York in 2019, and Seattle in 2023.



**Katy Sauer** is the Program Officer at Still Water Foundation, a private family foundation that supports organizations working in the arts, education and environmental conservation. Katy's background is in social



work and nonprofit consulting, and she enjoys working together with nonprofits to execute grants that are responsive to community needs.

**Only a few spots are left in this convening.** Mark your calendar and [register today!](#)

TCA selected this topic using feedback from constituents, and we expect that future meetings in this series will address other needs expressed by members of the Texas

arts field.

Please note: registration does not guarantee a spot in this event, as spaces are limited. Be quick to join us on the day of to experience this conversation in real time!

## Upcoming TCA Application Deadline

TCA has an upcoming application deadline. As always, the TCA staff is happy to discuss your goals and eligibility to determine which programs are right for you. You may also request that a TCA staff member review your application and provide feedback. Ideally, these requests would be made at least two weeks before the application deadline.

### **Grant Program: Arts Respond Performance Support**

This program provides professional artist fees to Texas nonprofits, schools, colleges, and units of government for hiring an artist from the [Texas Touring Roster](#) to do a performance. These applications are funded based on a percentage of contracted fees.

**Activity dates must occur:** between June 15, 2024 and August 31, 2024

**Application deadline:** midnight on May 1, 2024

**Application form:** [online](#)

**Resources:** [grant guidelines](#), [contact TCA staff](#)

## TCA Rural Tours Bring More Arts to Underserved Areas



In our continuing efforts to provide more quality performances and arts opportunities to rural areas of the state, TCA has selected four [Texas Touring Roster](#) artists and groups to provide free performances in rural counties between March 1 and May 31. Each artist or group provides six performances in an assigned area, and the performances are hosted by local nonprofits, units of government, or schools. TCA pays each artist a flat fee for the performances directly, eliminating costs to

host organizations. Hosts are reminded that any Texas nonprofit or unit of government, including a school or library, is eligible to apply for a Performance Support grant for up to half of a Texas Touring Roster artist's fee.

[2008 Texas State Musician Shelley King](#) kicks off the spring rural tours in Limestone and Henderson counties with performances at the Groesbeck Convention Center on March 2 at 6 PM and at the Texan Theatre in Athens on March 9 at 7 PM. In April and

May, Shelley will visit Freestone, Madison, and Falls counties. She will be performing at Teague Public Library on April 5 at 6 PM, at the Madisonville Mudbug Festival on April 13 at 11 AM, at Golinda City Park in Lorena on April 20 at 7 PM, and at Dingrando Park in Marlin on May 25 at 6 PM.

[The Creativity Shell](#) will take their mobile studios to the San Jacinto area to teach sewing and textile arts to children. They will be at Nancy Carol Roberts Memorial Library in Brenham on April 20, Coldspring Area Public Library on May 3, Gordon Memorial Library in Sealy on May 4, and Montgomery County Memorial Library in Magnolia on May 11. The Creativity Shell will implement both of their mobile studios on May 18 when they will host workshops at Sam and Carmena Goss Memorial Library in Mont Belvieu and at Navasota Public Library. All the workshops will take place from 11 AM to 4:30 PM.



If you are local to any of these venues, we hope you'll enjoy these free performances and workshops! We'll have more spring performances to share in our April newsletter. Special thanks to the fantastic artists conducting rural tours on behalf of TCA and to their host organizations.

The Creativity Shell photo by She ancia Danie

## Rosie Flores Named a 2024 National Heritage Fellow



Austin's Rosie Flores was recently named one of the [2024 National Heritage Fellows](#) by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Each fellowship includes a \$25,000 award. Details will be released in the future about an event to honor the 2024 fellows.

In the announcement, the NEA noted that, as a rockabilly and country musician, Rosie Flores "has been songwriting, singing, and playing guitar for more than four decades, preserving and extending the musical legacies of Texan musicians that came before her. Her groundbreaking talent helped lay the foundation for what has grown into the alt country movement."

"I am honored to announce the ten gifted recipients that have been named 2024 NEA National Heritage Fellows," said NEA Chair Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD. "Through their dedication to and generous stewardship of their traditions and cultures, these artists and culture bearers carry forward their knowledge and passion to future generations. They offer us the opportunity to see things from different perspectives, help us make sense of the world, and celebrate our rich collective heritage comprised of our diverse lived experiences."

The National Heritage Fellowships are the nation's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. Including the 2024 class, the Arts Endowment has awarded 487 National Heritage Fellowships since 1982, recognizing artists working in more than 200 distinct art forms.

## Apply to Be a TCA Grant Evaluator

Each year, TCA invites roughly 200 Texans to serve as peer reviewers of the grant applications we receive. We are grateful to these members of our arts field who donate their time and knowledge to our panel review process and assess the quality of grant applications. The peer review process is central to the Commission's efforts to maintain an accountable, accessible awards system for the State of Texas.

If you would like insight into the grant evaluation process, we invite you to nominate yourself to serve on a panel. TCA is not able to pay for this work, but it will allow you to gain experience as a grant evaluator, see how other organizations present their programs and challenges, and ensure that TCA grant decisions can be made—we really can't do this without you. Nominations are accepted year round and can be made [here](#).

Panels can be held online or in person in Austin. TCA reimburses for travel and hotel costs for in person meetings. For online panels, TCA assigns reviewers no more than 25 grant applications to help keep the workload reasonable. **Evaluators can also be grant applicants**—TCA excludes evaluators from reviewing and scoring an application that they submitted or have any other conflict of interest with.

## Beware of SAM-UEI Scams



If your organization has a SAM UEI (System of Award Management Unique Entity Identifier) issued by the federal government, TCA wants to remind you this service is **100% FREE**. Scammers are sending out convincing looking "official" emails offering to help with SAM UEI renewals for a fee. **Renewals are free**, so any mention of a fee should alert you that the email is a scam. TCA recommends marking those emails as junk, blocking those senders, and deleting those emails. Only organizations that apply directly to a federal agency for funding need to renew their SAM UEI.

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## Grantee Spotlight: Increasing Visitors and Their Spending



Every fall, TCA staff spend many, many hours reviewing report forms that grantees submit as they close out their grants. These reports share arts organizations' trials and tribulations, challenges and solutions. Many of these stories will resonate with others across our field, so we're sharing some of them through grantee spotlights.

Originally established in 1969 as the Rockport Art Association by a group of artists, the **Rockport Center for the Arts (RCA)** is dedicated to presenting an eclectic array of exhibits, special events, educational workshops, performances, and more. In 2022, RCA was awarded a Cultural District Project grant in support of the Rockport Art Festival. The festival, which originated in 1969, is an annual, outdoor, two day festival celebrating fine art and master crafts over the July 4th weekend, including vendor

booths, live music, food, and activities. In 2023, 120 artists and a chosen master craftsman came together to display their work and wares for festival goers and compete for 10 award categories as well as a single “best in show” award. Painter Fred Fisher won the “best in show” award for his paintings that use a Gyotaku rubbing technique to depict the fish, crabs, and shrimp he catches on his fishing expeditions.

The 2023 festival saw RCA expand on a strategy they began in 2022, when people were just becoming more comfortable with the idea of returning to large in person events. Since the festival lines up with the 4th of July, the strategy involved dedicating advertising and programming to bringing in nontraditional art festival attendees. This included a robust marketing campaign using TV, radio, print, billboards, and social media channels targeting Rockport’s top tourism draws. One dimension of this campaign focused on drawing the attention of visitors in the nearby Rockport Beach Park, which is a popular destination during the July 4 weekend. Instead of highlighting the traditional core of the festival alone, this campaign elevated the festival as an experience with food, music, and children’s activities like face painting, jewelry beading, paper crafting, and more. The programming strategy included holding mainstage band performances on Sunday, a time that historically saw little traffic from traditional visitors.

All these efforts went towards multiple goals, including increasing gate traffic on Sundays, which historically accounted for only 25-33% of past festivals, but rose to 41% in 2023. Similarly, the added focus on drawing in nontraditional attendees broadened the radius of where festival attendees come from. By widening the reach of the festival, RCA strengthened the wave of spending it creates in the Coastal Bend. Thanks to this strategy, nearly 60% of attendees travelled over 75 miles to visit the festival, and hotels and restaurants throughout the county were full. All in all, RCA’s ongoing review and adaptation of their advertising and programming opportunities helps them grow the festival’s reputation as a must see event.

TCA is proud to be able to support the Rockport Center for the Arts and so many other wonderful organizations across the state who make the arts accessible to so many of our fellow Texans.

Photo: Ty Husak Photography

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