

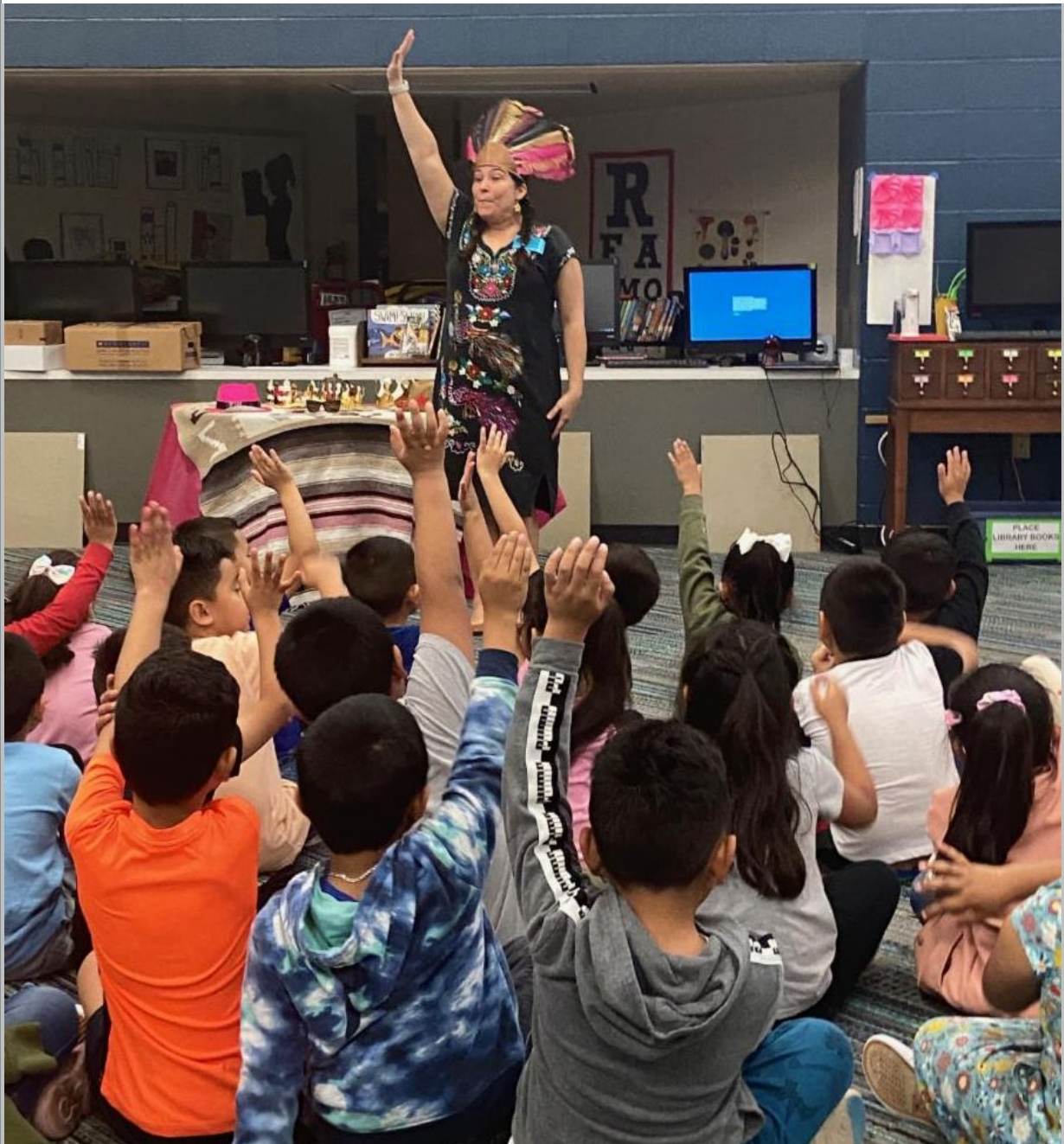


NEWS FROM TCA: APRIL 2024

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Scroll down to our story on how Express Children's Theatre reaches new audiences through partnerships with other nonprofits and preschool daycare centers. Photo: Express Children's Theatre.

Young Masters Celebration April 16

The Texas Cultural Trust will celebrate the 2024 class of [Young Masters](#) during an

awards ceremony and concert on April 16 at Austin's ZACH Theatre. The evening will feature Ray Benson, Trevor Scott, and Texas Young Masters alumni! More information on the event is available [here](#).

The Young Masters program is a joint initiative of the Texas Commission on the Arts and the Texas Cultural Trust (TXCT). The grant program provides exemplary art students in grades 8-11

2024 TEXAS YOUNG MASTERS TEXAS YOUNG MASTERS TEXAS YOUNG MASTERS

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

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, a specialized course of study, or receiving private lessons from a qualified professional instructor. They must also maintain passing grades in all academic areas. Young Masters are 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.

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

On March 26, TCA held an online convening, **Unlock the Power of Local Foundations**. Speakers gave insights into foundation resources, how to build new relationships with foundations, and the role that foundation funding can play alongside other funding sources. We were proud to present such insightful speakers to discuss their foundations and some others, as well. If you weren't able to join the live event, a recording of it is available [here](#).



Thanks again to our speakers for this session: **Bao-Long Chu**, Program Director at Houston Endowment, and **Katy Sauer**, Program Officer at Still Water Foundation (Austin).



Our next Speaker Series professional development opportunity is coming up in June! This free, optional convening, titled **Creative Spaces and Venue Solutions**, is an opportunity to explore the challenge and process of finding a new home or performance space for your organization. Our speakers will discuss the ins and outs, including ongoing impacts, of securing their current spaces, so you can have the knowledge you need to take on this important work. We will officially open registration for the event next month. We hope to see you there!

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

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 Audiences

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.



[Main Street Theater](#), Houston's oldest and largest theater for youth, will visit West Texas in their spring tour anchored in Hudspeth County and the City of San Elizario. The company will visit Dirks-Anderson Elementary School in Fort Davis on April 24 and give two performances for students. On April 25, they have three events: two performances for students at Parkway Elementary School in Monahans, and one performance for Sierra Blanca Independent School District.

If you have students at these schools, we hope they'll enjoy these free performances! We'll have more spring performances to share in our May newsletter. Special thanks to the fantastic artists conducting rural tours on behalf of TCA and to their host organizations.

Photo: RicOrnelProductions

Welcome, Michael!



over a decade.

On March 18, TCA welcomed a new Program Administrator to our staff. **Michael Darough** graduated from the University of Memphis, earning an MFA in photography in 2011 and his BFA in photography from Arizona State University in 2007. Darough went on to work in higher education, teaching at Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA and Baylor University. His most recent appointment, before joining TCA, was Director of Education for Professional Photographers of America in Atlanta, GA. He worked with photographers and small business owners to provide resources and materials to build and sustain their careers. Darough is a nationally and internationally exhibiting artist who has lectured about art and culture for

At TCA, Michael will work on the Cultural Districts Designation program and with other aspects of cultural tourism. He will serve as the program specialist for multidisciplinary organizations and local arts agencies. Additionally, Michael will work with Arts Respond Project grant applicants in the public safety and criminal justice priority area, among other duties.

Photo: Michael Darough

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.

Grantee Spotlight: New and Renewed Partnerships Expand Audiences

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.

This month, we look at **Express Children's Theatre (ECT)**, a performing arts and education organization in Houston

dedicated to producing multicultural theater productions for youth and families. Like so many other organizations, Express Children's Theatre had to adapt and reduce its offerings during the pandemic to keep its programming going and available to as many families as it could. However, 2022-2023 proved to be a return to form, with



new collaborations and renewed partnerships attracting more audiences than in recent years, across a complete slate of full-length productions and interactive one-person shows.

Express Children's Theatre re-energized their long-standing partnership with the Miller Outdoor Theatre by returning to the stage with four of their signature full-length performances. After the pandemic caused ECT to adopt a truncated schedule, they took the opportunity this year to return with a full line-up. These productions featured brand-new partnerships with local arts organizations. For example, ECT collaborated with Dance of Asian America to create a work that celebrates Chinese New Year, and partnered with Ars Lyrica Houston to produce a bilingual English-Spanish production that serves as an introduction to classical music. By building co-creative partnerships with organizations perfectly positioned to bring expertise and knowledge to the artistic and cultural aspects of each production, ECT attracted new audiences they did not typically serve before. In fact, following these collaborations, **audience sizes exceeded numbers for the same series before the pandemic hit**.

Express Children's Theatre also saw the impact of building up their relationships on their one-person interactive shows, which go to schools and other facilities serving young people. During the pandemic, ECT insisted on finding a safe way to make this program, which was designed for younger and smaller audiences, available to pre-kindergarten youth in daycare centers throughout greater Houston. Since then, ECT has expanded their relationships with more daycares by consistently producing shows that address the specific needs and contexts for pre-school age groups. That work reached new heights, with **bookings for these shows doubling those for any other season in the organization's history**. ECT is planning for more growth in the future.

TCA is proud to be able to support Express Children's Theatre and so many wonderful organizations across the state who make the arts accessible to more of our fellow Texans.

Photo: Express Children's Theatre

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