



NEWS FROM TCA: AUGUST 2026

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The 2025 and 2026 Texas State Artists await their new colleagues for 2027 and 2028.

Top row, left to right: Miranda Lambert - James Macari; Alecia Lawyer - Daniel Ortiz; Octavio Quintanilla - Paris Quintanilla; Angelbert Metoyer - Ana Lavalle; Steve Parker - Courtesy Blanton Museum of Art; Bottom row, left to right: Norah Jones - Joelle Grace Taylor; Ana Maria Martinez - Ashkan Roayaei; Kevin Prufer - Wyatt McSpadden; Letitia Huckaby - Paul Leicht; Linda Ridgway - Teresa Rafidi.

State Artist Nominations Open

On behalf of the Texas State Legislature, the Texas Commission on the Arts is now accepting nominations for the 2027 and 2028 Texas State Artists. Nominations are accepted for Texas State Musician-Nonclassical, State Musician-Classical, Texas Poet Laureate, Texas State Two-Dimensional Artist (visual arts), and Texas State Three-Dimensional Artist (visual arts). **Any Texas citizen can nominate a living artist in any of the five categories, and self-nominations are welcome.** Nominees must be native Texans or have resided in the state for at least five years, as well as having US citizenship. They must have attained the highest levels of excellence and success in their respective disciplines and earned a statewide, regional or national reputation for their high caliber work. Nominations will be accepted online through October 15, 2026. The Texas Poet Laureate, State Musician and State Artist Committee, composed of members appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, will make the final selections for the Legislature's consideration and approval in 2027.

The positions, created by SB 1043 of the 77th Legislature and-- in the case of the Texas State Musician-Classical designation-- SB 281 of the 88th

Legislature, are filled for one-year terms. Appointees are selected for the exceptional quality of their work and for their outstanding commitment to the arts in Texas. Each Texas State Artist reflects the state's diversity and high-quality artistic offerings.

The 2025 appointees include Texas Poet Laureate Octavio Quintanilla of San Antonio, Texas State Musician-Nonclassical Miranda Lambert of Austin, Texas State Two-Dimensional Artist Angelbert Metoyer of Houston, and Texas State Three-Dimensional Artist Steve Parker of Austin. Alecia Lawyer, of Houston, is the inaugural Texas State Musician-Classical. The 2026 appointees include Texas Poet Laureate Kevin Prufer of Houston, Texas State Musician-Nonclassical Norah Jones of Grapevine, Texas State Musician-Classical Ana Maria Martinez of Houston, Texas State Two-Dimensional Artist Letitia Huckaby of Benbrook, and Texas State Three-Dimensional Artist Linda Ridgway of Dallas.

To learn more about the Texas State Artists nomination process, and to submit nominations, visit <https://www.arts.texas.gov/initiatives/texas-state-artist/>.

TCA Grant, Program, and Funding Updates

Grant Applications for Fiscal Year 2027

The TCA Commissioners will hold their quarterly meeting on **September 3, 2026**. At this meeting, they will make final funding decisions on applications for Arts Create (Year 2) funding, Cultural District Project funding, Arts Respond Project funding, and Arts Respond Performance Support funding. They will also consider recommendations for the Cultural District Designation program.

If your organization has a pending Arts Create, Cultural District Project, Arts Respond Project or Arts Respond Performance Support grant application, you will receive an email notification about your recommended funding amounts by Thursday, **August 20**.

Grant Reports for Fiscal Year 2026 due September 30, 2026

Closeout reports are due for grant activities that end as TCA's prior fiscal year (September 1, 2025-August 31, 2026) concludes. All Arts Create, Cultural District Project, and Arts Respond Project grant report forms for fiscal year 2026 should be completed and submitted online by September 30, 2026. We recommend that you submit your report and materials well before the deadline to ensure timely payment of your upcoming FY 27 grants. Grant reports must be submitted and successfully closed out by TCA staff before new grants will be paid.

Please note that the data collected from these reports is provided to the State of Texas and the National Endowment for the Arts as TCA's main funders. Receiving your complete report on time with appropriate supporting documentation helps TCA make a case for the amount it receives for its grant budget.

Legislative Appropriations Request

TCA is currently preparing its Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR), which is the agency's formal funding request for the next Legislative Session. The Legislative Session will start in January 2027 and will determine TCA's biennial budget for September 1, 2027-August 31, 2029. Like all state agencies, TCA

has been instructed to cut spending by 3% in our LAR. After two Legislative Sessions of generous increases in our funding for cultural tourism projects, TCA has decided it is most responsible to budget the 3% reduction (roughly \$500,000) in that category. TCA's LAR will also make requests for additional funding, including a restoration of the cut funds. We will be sharing more details as the Legislative Session approaches.

High Schools: Sign Up Now for Poetry Out Loud

The school year is upon us, which means that TCA is signing up high schools across the state to participate in the [Poetry Out Loud](#) program. Interested educators should fill out [this form](#) soon to sign up and to receive materials to help them conduct the program during the fall semester.

The Poetry Out Loud recitation contest is a national project of the National Endowment for the Arts. This exciting program helps students become close readers, master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. High school students memorize poems and perform them competitively. Each participating high school will hold its competition to determine its school winner by December 15, 2026. The school winner will compete at the state competition in February 2027.

At the state level, the winner and runner up receive cash awards and their school libraries receive money to help them buy poetry books. The state winner will represent Texas in the national competition, which has a pool of \$50,000 in scholarships for students and cash awards for schools.



TCA Speaker Series: Engaging New Audiences through Partnerships

TCA is holding its next Speaker Series professional development event in August! This free optional online webinar is titled **Engaging New Audiences through Partnerships**. Our speakers will present their strategies for attracting new and returning audiences by cultivating a deeper understanding of their city's communities and resources and then forging cross-discipline and cross-industry partnerships.

The virtual meeting will be on **Thursday, August 13 from 2:00 - 3:30 pm Central**. It is open to arts nonprofits, artists, and members of the public.

TCA is excited to feature our speakers, who bring a wealth of information and experience serving a variety of communities through their programs:

Lynn Barnett has served as Executive Director of the Abilene Cultural Affairs Council since 1980. In this role, she has been instrumental in launching and nurturing numerous arts organizations and initiatives, including the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, the Center for Contemporary Arts, Young Audiences of Abilene, and the Children's Art & Literacy Festival. She



also spearheaded the Storybook Sculpture Project (58 sculptures) and the Storybook Bench Project (124 benches), as well as the Biennial Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition, which has celebrated 38 years of public art. Additionally, she worked closely with the City of Abilene to secure Abilene's designation as one of the first five Texas Cultural Districts recognized by the Texas Commission on the Arts in 2010.

Casey Chavez is the ArtWalk Coordinator for the Center for Contemporary Arts in historic Downtown Abilene. For the past four years, she has been a driving force behind the Center's ArtWalk, building bridges, strengthening community connections, and empowering art as the way to bring it all to life! Casey has also been working as a studio artist for the last ten years.



[Register](#) today and mark your calendar! 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. 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.

Rio Grande Valley Workshop



TCA will be participating in Telling Our South Texas Stories: A Gathering for South Texas Arts & Culture Creators, Stewards & Advocates on Saturday,

August 15 from 10 am - 4 pm at the San Benito Cultural Heritage Museum. Attendance is free. Limited sliding scale travel stipends are available to assist with travel costs such as gas, a rental car, a plane ticket, and/or a hotel stay. [Apply here](#).

Join MINDPOP's Rural Texas Arts and Culture Network, Texans for the Arts Foundation, Texas Commission on the Arts and San Benito Cultural Arts Department for a day of pláticas and resource sharing sessions. Explore how to communicate the distinct cultural identity and impact of the arts to enhance grant proposals and amplify advocacy for the arts locally and statewide. We'll consider ways to collaborate to strengthen grant proposals, hone individual storytelling, and share available funding opportunities and resources to support your work. [RSVP here](#) by August 10.

A Year in the Life of TCA

A new fiscal year will start for TCA on September 1. This means that much of TCA's summer is spent wrapping up the work of the fiscal year that's ending while simultaneously readying the agency—and assisting applicants—for the grants to come in the next fiscal year. Here's just some of what TCA did in fiscal year 2026:

- Provided over 1,850 grants for arts activities to organizations across the state, totaling approximately \$18.8 million.
- Designated four new [cultural districts](#), the 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor & Cultural District in Austin, the Govalle Cultural District in Austin, the Kerrville Cultural District, and the Odessa Arts District.
- Named a new Texas Touring Roster of over 150 Texas artists.
- With the Texas Cultural Trust, named the 2026 class of [Young Masters](#), 15 high school students excelling in their art form.
- Held four Speaker Series sessions offering professional development opportunities for the field.
- Conducted the [Poetry Out Loud](#) recitation contest for the state of Texas, which helps high school students across Texas become close readers and interpreters of poetry.
- Reviewed closeout reports for over 1,700 fiscal year 2025 grants.

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



TCA's chic black-and-silver *State of the Arts* minimalist design license plate 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 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 selected five Texas Touring Roster artists and groups to provide free performances in rural counties between June 1 and August 31. Each artist or group provides five 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. This month, we are wrapping up this year's tours with news about performances in Archer County.

Students at Archer Elementary School in Archer City will be welcomed back to campus with performances by **Magic in the Library** on August 26. Magic in the Library is a program harnessing the excitement of slight-of-hand magic and mechanical/theatrical prop illusions to bring literacy concepts to life, encouraging elementary students to become better readers and excel in language arts.

If you have students at Archer Elementary School, we hope they enjoy these free performances! Special thanks to the fantastic artists who conducted rural tours on behalf of TCA this summer, and to the host organizations that welcomed them into their communities.

Photo: Tom Steele Photography

Grantee Spotlight: Serving Veterans through Music



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're spotlighting UTSA Arts' On-Corps program, which has offered free weekly community-based music instruction for San Antonio veterans since 2022. TCA supported this program through an Arts Respond Project grant in the health and human services category. On-Corps provides music instruction to four ensembles made up of veterans and provides them with performance opportunities over the season. Many participants are beginning musicians or returning to their instruments after years of not playing, and find a welcoming, understanding cohort. UTSA Arts' grant application indicated, "The age of participants ranges from 30s – 80s, and this breadth of life experience creates a vibrant atmosphere in which the veterans share this music learning journey." On-Corps' directors are veterans themselves.

In 2026, UTSA Arts surveyed newer participants about their experiences in the program, including pre- and post-measures of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and stress. On the grant report, one participant described how the program contributes to veterans' sense of well-being with "Often things devolve if it's unfocused...having the focus of music allows me to enjoy the kinship of being around veterans without fearing that we're going to be on different corners and upset with each other." Another said, "this is the only thing that gets me out of the house each week, except for appointments." These comments point to a broader impact: the program is helping **reduce isolation, create routine, and reconnect participants with a sense of purpose and identity**. The musicians were able to showcase their skills at two UTSA Arts concerts and

give back to their community via performances at the 3rd Armored Division national reunion and the Towers on Park Lane retirement community near Fort Sam Houston.

TCA is proud to support and celebrate the On-Corps program and the work it does to serve veterans, and the numerous other organizations across the state who make the arts accessible to so many of our fellow Texans.

Photo: Breanna Castillo

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