

3Arts Awards

EMBARGOED FOR MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 12:01 AM Central Standard Time



[3Arts Award Recipient Images Here](#)

3Arts awards nearly \$1 million dollars in a single night to Chicago’s women artists, artists of color, and Deaf and disabled artists, marking largest award year in organization’s history

*Virtual awards event on November 1 is **FREE** for the public to attend via YouTube and includes world premiere performances by past award winners*

Plus, major expansion to signature artist-to-artist grant program “Make a Wave” announced

CHICAGO, IL (OCTOBER 18, 2021)—**3Arts**, the Chicago-based nonprofit grantmaking organization, will award Chicago artists with nearly \$1 million in unrestricted cash grants during the **14th annual 3Arts Awards**, taking place virtually on Monday, November 1, 2021, live on YouTube. The virtual event is free to the public and features three world premiere performances by past 3Arts awardees. Registration is required at <https://3arts.org/event>.

Since 2007, 3Arts has supported more than 1,200 artists—representing 70% women artists, 67% artists of color, and 14% Deaf and disabled artists—and distributed \$4.5 million in grants and services. On November 1,

3Arts will be awarding 134 artists including:

- Ten **3Arts Awards** recipients who will receive \$30,000 in cash grants.
- 121 artists selected by past 3Arts awardees will receive \$4,000 each in unrestricted grants, through a major one-time expansion to **Make a Wave**—3Arts’ artist-to-artist grant program—with support from *Make a Wave* Presenting Partner The Joyce Foundation, sending a bigger “wave” than ever through Chicago’s cultural core.
- Recipients of the second annual **3Arts Next Level/Spare Room Award**—a \$50,000 unrestricted cash award given to three women visual artists who are past awardees.

These announcements—together with \$230,000 in emergency relief grants given to 3Arts artists in 2021—make this the largest award year in 3Arts history.

“Our annual celebration is a call for our community to give more, do more, advocate more, and invest more in the creative heart of our city,” said executive director **Esther Grisham Grimm**. “We are pleased to present this joy-filled event so that audiences everywhere can meet some of the Chicago artists whose powerful work lifts us all.”

By providing cash awards, project funding, residency fellowships, professional development, and promotion, 3Arts helps artists take risks, experiment, and build momentum in their careers.

To elevate this year’s awards, 3Arts commissioned three world premieres spotlighting the work of recent awardees, including: **Ivelisse “Bombera De Corazón” Diaz**, performing with her Bomba Con Buya group; Indigenous futurist and multidisciplinary artist **Santiago X**, who will debut a new video work to honor Native lands; and powerhouse singer/songwriter and recording artist **Meagan McNeal**, who will release a music video for an original new song called “Slow Life.”

The 2021 3Arts Awards will continue 3Arts’s new tradition of sharing event donations with a local arts organization. This year’s co-beneficiary is **Free Street Theater**, selected in honor of theater and teaching artists of all ages who light up every stage they grace.

The 2021 recipients of 3Arts Awards are:

Dance artists **Charles “Poppin Chuck” Bledsoe** and **Cat Mahari**; musicians **Caitlin Edwards** and **Shanta Nurullah**; teaching artists **Emily Hooper Lansana** and **Andrés Lemus-Spont**; theater artists **Lili-Anne Brown** and **David Rhee**; and visual artists **Andres L. Hernandez** and **Derrick Woods-Morrow**.

3Arts will also celebrate the one-time expansion of their groundbreaking artist-to-artist grant program **Make a Wave**, in which the previous year’s 3Arts awardees select ten Chicago artists to receive surprise grants, sending a “wave” of support through Chicago’s cultural communities. Thanks to a \$500,000 grant from The Joyce Foundation, and continuing support from the Siragusa Family Foundation and the Reva & David Logan Foundation, this year, all artists who received a 3Arts Award since the first year of the program in 2008 have selected a record-breaking 121 *Make a Wave* grant recipients who will receive \$4,000 grants, doubling the usual \$2,000 amount. The *Make a Wave* artists include 18 dancers, 29 musicians, 9 teaching artists, 28 theater artists, and 37 visual artists and were announced today on the 3Arts website at <https://3arts.org/awards/maw/2021>.

The evening is led by event co-chairs: **William Estrada**, **Laurel Appell Lipkin**, and **Kimberly Manuel-Dickens** and **3Arts Board Chair Cat Tager**.

The recipients of the 2021 3Arts Awards are:

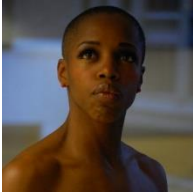
DANCE

Charles “Poppin Chuck” Bledsoe, *3Arts Awardee*



Charles Bledsoe, better known as “Poppin Chuck,” is a dance and visual artist who exemplifies the definition of a true school innovator. In the last three decades, Bledsoe has performed with and choreographed for some of the world’s best known Hip-Hop artists such as KRS-One, Kid Sister, and R&B singer Mya. Bledsoe’s natural talent for Locking and Popping has earned him great respect among prominent street dance communities in both Chicago and Los Angeles. Bledsoe performs with his groups, Robot M.A.F.I.A. and Thee Authentic Fewsion. He is also a sought-after educator, having taught with organizations such as Kuumba Lynx and Rumble Arts Center, and conducted workshops for several colleges and universities. His artwork is included among hundreds of artists in *L.A. Graffiti Black Book*, published by Getty Publications (2021).

Cat Mahari, 3Arts/Walder Foundation Awardee



Cat Mahari’s practice stems from a vast archive of research and physical training with the intent of manifesting a grammar of liberation via video and live performance. Her 2021 work, *Loving Each Other*, is a cinematic investigation into Blackness, intimacy, trust, and vulnerability. In 2021, she was a City of Chicago Esteemed Artist Award recipient in Dance. Her upcoming work, *Esentaye*, will be developed through a Links Hall residency in 2021 in anticipation of a premiere in 2023. Her solo work, the mixtape series entitled *Violent/Break*, has been in development at festivals and residencies in London, Chicago, and Norway. She

conceived and directed the Afrofuturist Krump dance film, *Imprints & Trace*, and was named a Charlotte Street Foundation Generative Performing Artist Fellow in 2017. Mahari is a culture bearer of Hip Hop and House, and former member of the Krump family Gool, with a BFA in dance performance from the Conservatory of Music and Dance and an MA in Performance, Practice, and Research from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

MUSIC

Caitlin Edwards, 3Arts/Walder Foundation Awardee



Caitlin Edwards began studying the violin at the age of eight through the Music Opportunity Program in her hometown of Birmingham, Alabama. She went on to be the recipient of the 2018 Rising Star Award from the Gateways Music Festival. In 2020, Edwards was featured as a soloist in the *Dreams of Hope* documentary, which premiered on PBS stations across the US and has received awards nationally and internationally. She has performed with the Chicago Sinfonietta, Grant Park Music Festival Orchestra, Nairobi Philharmonic, the ReCollective Orchestra, Sphinx Symphony Orchestra, and more. Edwards has performed and recorded with artists such as Ms. Lauryn Hill, Common, PJ Morton, Yolanda Adams, India Arie, and on John Legend’s *Bigger Love* album, for which she received a Grammy Certificate in 2021. She also recorded for the Disney movie score, *The Lion King*, at Sony Studios in 2019. Edwards is currently a mentor with the Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative, a program designed to offer resources to talented BIPOC youth pursuing careers in classical music. She frequently performs with her string quartet, D-Composed, based in Chicago, in addition to regular collaborations with local artists. In August 2021, she released her debut solo album, *Exhale*.

Shanta Nurullah, 3Arts/SIF Fund at The Chicago Community Foundation Awardee in honor of Samuel G. Roberson Jr.



Shanta Nurullah makes music primarily on sitar, bass, and *mbira* (African thumb piano), and works as a storyteller and teaching artist. She has been performing professionally as a musician since 1972 and as a storyteller since 1978. She co-founded two all-women’s groups, Sojourner and Samana, and currently leads the ensemble, SitarSYS. A member of the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians), Nurullah has received an Artist Fellowship from the Illinois Arts Council Agency and the Zora Neale Hurston Award from the National Association of Black Storytellers. She has performed in venues across the

country, distinguishing herself as a sitarist and bassist exploring African American improvisational music. ShaZah, her collaboration with vocalist Zahra Baker, has been featured recently on several virtual platforms. Nurullah teaches in the early childhood program at the Old Town School of Folk Music and is an advocate for women in music.

TEACHING ARTS

Emily Hooper Lansana, 3Arts/BMO Harris Bank Community Awardee



Emily Hooper Lansana is a community builder, storyteller, arts administrator, and educator. For more than thirty years, she has performed as a storyteller, sharing her work with audiences throughout Chicago and across the country. She has been featured at the National Storytelling Festival, the National Association of Black Storytellers Festival, and at a variety of museums, colleges, and performance venues. She often performs with Performance Duo: In the Spirit. She enjoys passing on traditions to young people as a coach and mentor with nationally recognized Rebirth Poetry Ensemble. Her work seeks to give voice to those whose stories are often untold, especially those of the African diaspora.

Andrés Lemus-Spont, 3Arts/HMS Fund Awardee



Andrés Lemus-Spont is a designer, educator, fabricator, and proud child of Mexican immigrants. He teaches art and architecture to youth from kindergarten through high school in in-school and afterschool programs. An architecture graduate of the College of DuPage and Illinois Institute of Technology, Lemus-Spont believes strongly in the value of mentoring and does so formally through Big Brothers Big Sisters and informally through apprenticeships for early-career designers. Lemus-Spont founded and currently directs the Building Brown Workshop. With Marya Spont-Lemus, he co-founded ¡Animate! Studio, a shared community arts practice that is a vehicle for playful, intergenerational creative workshops fostering joy and criticality in public space. From 2015-2019 that work took the form of the FrankenToyMobile, a pedal-powered maker space that provides free, hands-on workshops in which youth and adults reuse toys as raw materials to make new creations. He is also a founding member of the Mobilize Creative Collaborative.

THEATER

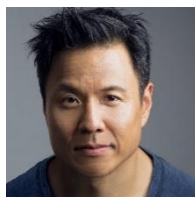
Lili-Anne Brown, 3Arts/Stan Lipkin & Evelyn Appell Lipkin Awardee



William Morris Endeavor.

Lili-Anne Brown, a native South Side Chicagoan, works as a director, actor, and educator, and has performed in, directed, and produced many award-winning shows, both locally and regionally. She is the former Artistic Director of Bailiwick Chicago, where she focused programming on Chicago-premiere musicals and new play development with resident playwrights. Recent credits include *School Girls, or The African Mean Girls Play* and *I Hate It Here* at Goodman Theatre, and *The Color Purple* at Drury Lane Theatre. She is a member of SDC, AEA, and SAG-AFTRA, a graduate of Northwestern University, and represented by

David Rhee, 3Arts/Reva & David Logan Foundation Awardee



David Rhee began his career as an actor after graduating from New York's Circle in the Square Musical Theatre program. Since then, he appeared on Broadway in the Tony Award-winning *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, worked at numerous theaters across America including Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre, and Silk Road Rising, and guest starred on TV's *Law and Order*. In 2015, Rhee returned to school to earn his MFA at Tisch School of the Arts at New York University in Dramatic Writing where he worked with Oskar Eustis at the Public Theater and Pulitzer Prize winner Suzan-Lori Parks. In 2017, with Erik Kaiko, Rhee co-founded Token Theatre in Chicago with a mission to change the narrative and shatter the false constructs about Asian Americans by creating new stories, reimagining classic works, and empowering artists to reshape the American identity. He has also been a guest lecturer at Northwestern University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and DePaul University.

VISUAL ARTS:

Andres L. Hernandez, 3Arts/Chandler Family Awardee



Andres L. Hernandez is an interdisciplinary practitioner engaged in discovering, recovering, and uncovering the histories, politics, and possibilities of the built environment. Through collaborative and independent, studio-based arts practice, he considers the potential of real and imagined spaces to support community building, creative production, and social action. Hernandez is the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago's inaugural and current SPACE artist-in-residence at Curie Metropolitan High School, a 2018-2019 visiting artist-in-residence with the University of Arizona School of Art, a 2018 Efroymsen Family Fund Contemporary Arts Fellow, and from 2017-2019, an exhibition design team member for the Museum of the Obama Presidential Center. He is co-founder of the Revival Arts Collective, founder and director of the Urban Vacancy Research Institute, and member of Wide Awakes Chicago. He received a Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University and a Master of Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he is an Associate Professor.

Derrick Woods-Morrow, *3Arts/Gary & Denise Gardner Fund Awardee*



Derrick Woods-Morrow's work is a meditation on deviation and disruption, on language and representation, and on growing up in the American South. Originally from Greensboro, North Carolina, he explores through his artistic practice Black sexual freedoms and the complicated histories concerning access to these freedoms. His work has been exhibited in collaboration with Paul Mpagi Sepuya in the 2019 Whitney Biennial; in thematic international and national group exhibitions at Kunsthal KAdE in the Netherlands, the Schwules Museum in Berlin, as well as The Contemporary Art Center in New Orleans; and the Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago. He is a member of the Chicago-based collective, Concerned Black Image Makers, and is on the Board of Directors at the Fire Island Artist Residency.

About 3Arts

3Arts is a nonprofit organization that supports Chicago's women artists, artists of color, and Deaf and disabled artists who work in the performing, teaching, and visual arts. By providing cash awards, project funding, residency fellowships, professional development, and promotion, 3Arts helps artists take risks, experiment, and build momentum in their careers.

3Arts extends special thanks to 2021 3Arts Awards Presenting Partner: The Walder Foundation and to the 2021 Award Partners: The Chandler Family, Gary & Denise Gardner Fund, The HMS Fund, Stan Lipkin & Evelyn Appell Lipkin, The Reva & David Logan Foundation, and The SIF Fund at the Chicago Community Foundation. One of the ten 3Arts Awards, designated as the Community Award, is named in honor of the Chicago community. Earlier this year the award was supported by 93 donors who contributed to a crowdfunding campaign plus a \$15,000 match from 2021 Community Award Partner, BMO Harris Bank. This year's 3Arts/BMO Harris Bank Community Award recipient is **Emily Hooper Lansana**, a community builder, storyteller, arts administrator, and educator who, for more than thirty years, has shared her work with audiences throughout Chicago and across the country.

3Arts also recognizes support for the Next Level/Spare Room Awards from an anonymous donor at The Chicago Community Foundation, as well as *Make a Wave* Presenting Partner: The Joyce Foundation and *Make a Wave* Partner: The Siragusa Family Foundation.

3Arts gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the following sponsors: Presenting Sponsors: Allstate Insurance Company and Perkins Coie; Lead Sponsors: Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Illinois and The Chicago Community Trust; Corporate Friends: The Center for Advanced Emotional Intelligence, Northern Trust, SDI Presence, and William Blair; and Media Sponsor: Chicago Magazine.

For more information about 3Arts, please visit www.3arts.org.

About The Joyce Foundation

The Joyce Foundation is a nonpartisan, private foundation that invests in public policies and strategies to advance racial equity and economic mobility for the next generation in the Great Lakes region. The Foundation supports policy research, development, and advocacy in six program areas: Education & Economic Mobility, Environment, Gun Violence Prevention & Justice Reform, Democracy, Culture, and Journalism. Learn more about joycefdn.org.

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