



SOCIETY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
Bringing the World's Best to Houston

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 14, 2020 at 3 p.m.
[Click here for artists' photos](#)

SPA Announces Six Virtual Award Winners of *Houston Artist Commissioning Project*

(HOUSTON)—Society for the Performing Arts (SPA) announces six Houston artists and groups to receive awards as part of the inaugural *Houston Artist Commissioning Project* (HACP). Chosen from 36 total applicants, the six winners will each receive \$800 for a new digital work, roughly five minutes in length, to premiere this fall on SPA's social media channels. Much like the touring artists SPA presents each year, these local artists reflect a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines: **Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton** (spoken word), **Tazeen Zahida** (theater), **Jacquelyne Boe & David Janesko** (dance), **Christopher Thomas** (dance), **Felipe Lopez** (visual art) and **WindSync** (music).

The full HACP virtual premieres schedule:

Premiere Date	Artist	Genre/s	Working Title
October 15	Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton	Spoken Word	<i>Keeping the Light</i>
October 29	Tazeen Zahida	Monologue, Satirical Comedy	<i>Trouble in the Melting Pot</i>
November 12	Jacquelyne Boe & David Janesko	Dance & Visual Art	<i>Chirality</i>
November 19	Christopher Thomas	Dance, Mime	<i>TipToe Thomas</i>
December 3	Felipe Lopez	Video/Projections, Poetry, Music	<i>Precautionary Principles</i>
December 17	WindSync	Music	World premiere for wind quintet by Akshaya Avril Tucker

Leading up to each new work, artists will join Claire Williamson, SPA Director of Education and Community Engagement, for a *Westwood Trust Creative Chat*, giving audiences an opportunity to meet and connect with these working Houston creatives.

For the second phase of the *Houston Artist Commissioning Project*, SPA will accept applications for \$5,000 live performance awards through December 18.

ABOUT HACP VIRTUAL AWARD WINNERS

- **Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton**

Mouton is an internationally known writer, educator, activist, and the first Black Poet Laureate of Houston. Her work has appeared in *Houston Noir* by Akashic Press (2019), *Black Girl Magic* by Haymarket Books (2019), *Fjords Journal*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and on such platforms as NPR, BBC, ABC, Apple News, Blavity, Upworthy, and across the TedX circuit.

She serves as a contributing writer to *Texas Monthly* and *Glamour*. Her most recent poetry collection, *Newsworthy*, won honorable mention for the Summerlee Book Prize. A German translation, under the title *SayTheirNames*, is set to be released in Fall 2021 by Elif Verlag.

D.E.E.P. holds two Bachelor's degrees from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, in English and African American Studies respectively. She also holds a M.Ed from the University of ST. Thomas. She is a certified teacher with the State of Texas and has dedicated over 15 years towards the education of young minds, the expansion of literacy, and the dismantling of literary racism. Learn more at livelifedeep.com.

- **Tee Zee Productions**, written and directed by **Tazeen Zahida**.

Born in Karachi and raised in Saudi Arabia, poetry and literature played a major role in Tazeen's upbringing. She grew up immersed in the writings of Ghalib,

Iqbal, Faiz, Shakespeare, Shaw, Wilde and Poe. She eventually found her voice in playwriting.

As an unapologetic bilingual, she writes plays and articles both in English and Urdu. Tazeen's work is inspired by current affairs, social issues, family dynamics and her experiences of living in the Middle East and America. Her work aims to represent the unrepresented and tell the untold stories in an authentic and meaningful way.

She has been working under the banner of her company **Tee Zee Productions**. Some of her recent plays in Houston include, "A Rearranged Marriage," "Blood Test" and "Mohabbat Fatehay Aalam (*Love Conquers All*)."

Currently she is presenting an online dramedy series which you can watch [here](#).

- **Jacquelyne Boe & David Janesko**

Boe and Janesko have an ongoing collaboration as part of their 2019 to 2021 residency at the Lawndale Art Center in Houston, Texas. Boe is Houston based professional choreographer, dancer, and educator interested in collaboration and experimentation.

Janesko is an artist exploring the emergence of complexity using an experimental approach that encompasses a wide array of mediums, technology and subject matter. Together they are exploring movement and drawing through sets of rule-based actions in multiple media types.

Boe has been creating original works since 2014 and is a founding member of *Perspective Exchange*, an annual cross-country dance festival by choreographers from Austin, New York, San Francisco, Denver and Houston. With a BFA in Modern Dance Performance, she is currently a company member of Erick Hawkins Dance, Frame Dance, and Hopestone Dance. Boe has also worked with organizations and individual artists such as Houston Grand Opera, Sean Curran, and Rob Ashford. Learn more at jjboe.com.

Janesko grew up in Western Pennsylvania and worked for a number of years as a geologist before attending the San Francisco Art Institute (MFA, 2013). From 2013 to 2015 David was a Graduate Fellow then Affiliate Artist at the Headlands Center for the Artist in Sausalito California, and the curator for Flatland Gallery in Houston from 2017 to 2019. Janesko has presented his work in numerous exhibitions around the US in a wide variety of both indoor and outdoor spaces. Learn more at janeskodavid.com.

Visit jjboe.com/collaboration to learn more about their collaboration.

- **Christopher Thomas**

Thomas began dancing and entertaining at a very young age. By the time he reached 11, Thomas was already being featured in commercials.

Taking a break during his teen years to focus on sports and college, Thomas returned to his true love, dance, and in 2007 began traveling the world. Thomas has visited 25 countries as a teacher, competitor, choreographer, and performer. Through dance and entertainment, Thomas has performed alongside Steven Tyler, Keith Urban, Sugar Ray, Life House, Natasha Bedingfield, 69 Boyz, Flo Rida, Kendrick Lamar, Erykah Badu and more.

In 2010 Thomas relocated to Bangkok, Thailand to explore dance abroad. There he trained local pop stars while hosting and performing at events throughout Southeast Asia. Thomas moved back home to Houston a year later and started his own dance company, Sonkiss'd Dance Theater. With Sonkiss'd, Thomas mentored dancers and provided opportunities for them to expand their talents to become more valuable in the competitive market of entertainment. Thomas now has past dancers who work and tour with Sam Smith, Taylor Swift, and Beyoncé.

When it comes to entertainment Thomas believes he can achieve anything. His motto: "God gave you a talent. Use it. That is your gift to the world."

- **Felipe Lopez**, collaborating with **Emanuelle Outspoken Bean**, and musician and composer **Meghan Hendley**.

Felipe Lopez is a multidimensional self-taught visual artist based in Houston, Texas. Born in New York, Lopez's career began with his mixed media drawings & paintings.

In 2019, Mayor Sylvester Turner and the City of Houston approved Houston Arts Alliance recommendation to award Lopez a Support for Artists and Creative Individuals grant which has helped fund his largest bulb work. Early 2019 also brought another major solo exhibition entitled *The Liquidity of a Right with Forma 110* with another solo exhibition in May at Deborah Colton Gallery *The Want In My Nature*. Felipe was also selected to be on the city-wide committee for Disaster Relief with Houston Arts Alliance and the City of Houston.

In 2020, Lopez will have a solo exhibition at Deborah Colton Gallery entitled *Precautionary Principles of the New World*, the inclusion in the Texas A & M Corpus Christi Oso Bay Biennial XXI juried exhibition *Matter Matters*, happening September to October.

Bringing 15 plus years of classical and contemporary music performance along with composition, **Meghan Hendley** has established herself as a multifaceted musician. Studying classical piano and composition at Rice University Shepherd School of Music along with the University of Houston's Moores School of Music/Honors College, Hendley's strong classical roots have allowed her to compose chamber, choral, theater, film, and electronic music for a variety of performances including those with the Houston Ballet Academy, U of H Concert Women's Chorus, Mildred's Umbrella Theater Company, Generating Theater Company, Zoukak Theater Company from Beirut. Hendley has also performed in multiple bands including at SXSW as an official artist, Free Press Summer Fest, and Bonnaroo.

2017 Mayors Office of Cultural Affairs Artist in Resident and 2016 Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and The Idea Fund recipient, **Emanuelle Outspoken Bean** is a performance poet, writer, compassionate mentor, electric entertainer, and educator. Bean uses poetry to do

collaborate with other mediums and institutions such as being the first poet to perform on a main stage production of Houston Ballet's *PLAY*.

Bean has also worked with many youth organization from across the country such as, Inside Out in Detroit, Youth Speaks in San Francisco, and coach Tiger-Tail Production's 2016 youth slam, *WordSpeak* in Miami. While balancing a very busy touring schedule, in Houston Bean serves as the Project Coordinator, Lead Coach, and mentor for Meta-Four Houston, a project of Writers in the Schools (WITS) that works with professional performance/slam poets and encourages self-expression and literacy among Houston's youth through creative writing and performance.

- **WindSync, featuring composer Akshaya Avril Tucker.**

Since the ensemble's founding in 2009, **WindSync** has built a reputation as one of the finest North American wind quintets, backed by national and international-level prizes in chamber music performance from the Concert Artists Guild, Fischhoff, and M-Prize Chamber Arts competitions.

WindSync infuses their traditional genre of Western classical chamber music with relevancy and energy by focusing on innovation, collaboration, and special programming for children and families. In Houston, they curate and perform a three-concert series each season and present the Onstage Offstage Chamber Music Festival, designed to connect the people and neighborhoods of Houston through music education and music in public spaces.

WindSync has appeared in recital at the Library of Congress, Shanghai Oriental Arts Center, Ravinia, and Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and they have been named three times to the touring roster of the Texas Commission on the Arts.

The ensemble's members include: Garrett Hudson (flute), Emily Tsai (oboe), Julian Hernandez (clarinet), Anni Hochhalter (horn), and Kara LaMoure (bassoon).

Akshaya Avril Tucker is a composer drawing inspiration from the music and dance traditions of South Asia, who trained as a cellist and Odissi dancer from a young age.

Commissions and projects include works for Johnny Gandelsman (*Brooklyn Rider*), WindSync, Marianne Gedigian, Hindustani vocalist Sali Oak, Duo Cortona, Englewinds, invoke string quartet, Thalea String Quartet and Density512.

She holds an M.M. in Composition from the University of Texas at Austin and a B.A. in Music from Brown University. In 2019, she won an ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award. She received an honorable mention from ASCAP in 2018 and was a finalist for the award again in 2020. In 2017, she received a Rainwater Innovation Grant from the University of Texas, and in 2015, she received a Brown University Distinguished Senior Thesis Award.

ABOUT THE HOUSTON ARTIST COMMISSIONING PROJECT

SPA aims to promote and sustain Houston's working artists and artist communities by supporting the creation of new works across all performing arts disciplines. In this pilot year, the *Houston Artist Commissioning Project* will progress through two phases: an initial period of virtual commissions presented in fall 2020, followed by larger-scale live performance commissions presented onstage at Jones Hall for the Performing Arts in summer 2021.

Houston is the most culturally diverse city in the nation. In celebrating artists' voices here at home, we promote more connected and thriving communities. SPA believes Black artists, Indigenous artists, artists of color, artists in the LGBTQ+ community, artists with disabilities, and woman artists must be centered through this project. To that end, we strongly encourage applications from artists with these identities or members of other marginalized communities. Learn more at spahouston.org/hacp.

ABOUT SOCIETY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Society for the Performing Arts (SPA) is the largest non-profit arts presenter in the Southwest. Founded in 1966 as a resident organization of Jones Hall for the Performing

Arts, SPA has sponsored more than 1,000 performances of the world's most remarkable artists, featuring a huge range of arts disciplines. In addition to performances at Houston's Theater District venues, SPA provides learning experiences for all ages through master classes, lectures and special performances, as builds strong supportive relationships with schools and community organizations throughout the region.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SPA has launched the **Arts Forward**, Relief & Response fund, to address the devastation of the crisis and support growth initiatives that will sustain the organization for many more years to come. More at spahouston.org.

Discover Society for the Performing Arts on social media @spahouston:



#####

Media Contact

Brian Glass

713.632.8108

bglass@spahouston.org