



## THE DORIS DUKE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES THE FIFTH CLASS OF DORIS DUKE ARTISTS

**Twenty-one Performing Artists Receive \$275,000 Each as Recipients of Doris Duke Artist Awards,  
A Landmark Program That Has Supported 101 Artists With a Total of \$27.7 Million Since 2012**

**NEW YORK, NY, May 3, 2016** — The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) announced today the recipients of the fifth annual Doris Duke Artist Awards. Appointed in recognition of their creative vitality and ongoing contributions to the fields of dance, jazz and theater, awardees will each receive \$275,000 in flexible, multi-year funding as well as financial and legal counseling, professional development activities and peer-to-peer learning opportunities provided by Creative Capital, DDCF's primary partner in the awards.

With the 2016 class, DDCF will have awarded approximately \$27.7 million to 101 noteworthy artists through the Doris Duke Artist Awards.

This year's Doris Duke Artists are:

- **Kyle Abraham** (Dance)
- **Sharon Bridgforth** (Theater)
- **Dave Douglas** (Jazz)
- **Faye Driscoll** (Dance)
- **Janie Geiser** (Theater)
- **Miguel Gutierrez** (Dance)
- **Fred Hersch** (Jazz)
- **Wayne Horvitz** (Jazz)
- **Taylor Mac** (Theater)
- **Dianne McIntyre** (Dance)
- **Jason Moran** (Jazz)
- **Mark Morris** (Dance)
- **Lynn Nottage** (Theater)
- **Thaddeus Phillips** (Theater)
- **Will Power** (Theater)
- **Aparna Ramaswamy** (Dance)
- **Matana Roberts** (Jazz)
- **Jen Shyu** (Jazz)
- **Wadada Leo Smith** (Jazz)
- **Morgan Thorson** (Dance)
- **Henry Threadgill** (Jazz)

**Maurine Knighton**, program director for the arts at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, said, "The foundation is pleased to support this new class of Doris Duke Artists. The composers, musicians, theater artists, choreographers and playwrights who comprise this cohort are visionaries who have already made important contributions to their respective fields. We hope these awards enhance their capacities for exploration and experimentation, in keeping with Doris Duke's adventurous spirit. DDCF looks forward to their continued creativity, as their work is not only important to the creative sector, but vital to the vibrancy of our society, as well."



"Receiving the Doris Duke Artist Award made me feel like people still believe in me and see something in me at a time when I really needed to hear that message. It's special to feel that what you're doing is worthwhile and that you have a voice that you should trust," said **Kyle Abraham**, a recipient of this year's award in the dance category. "This award will allow me space to concentrate and focus on what I'm doing and why I'm doing it—two questions that, because of the fast track that the company and I have been on for the last five years, there hasn't been time to answer. It will allow me the space to get deeper into the kind of artist that I hope to be."

“This was literally an answered prayer: to be able to have a significant amount of funding, human resources and tools to move into the next phase of my career and life,” said **Sharon Bridgforth**, a recipient of this year’s award in the theater category. “The greatest impact the award will have in my work is to facilitate my ability to work exactly in the way that I envision, but it also feels like a victory for everyone that I’m standing with and because of. If an artist like me—queer gendered, lesbian, black, working in black forms in such a non-linear way—could receive not only the prestige and recognition of this award, but also the human and financial resources to live a full, healthy, abundant life, that’s going to be a great inspiration for others.”



“I’m just blown away. I know people who have won this award, and I have so much respect for them; it feels so special to be in their company,” said **Fred Hersch**, a recipient of this year’s award in the jazz category. “Given the health struggles that I’ve experienced over the years, it’s remarkable that I’m alive: I never expected to be 40, and now I’m 60. I feel like I’m still getting better at what I do, and that keeps me going. At heart, the thing I love to do is play—that’s never, ever going to change—but I know that this award is going to open some doors, personally and professionally, in ways I can’t even begin to predict.”

This will be the final group of Doris Duke Artists to receive these awards under the umbrella of the foundation’s Doris Duke Performing Artists Initiative, a larger \$50 million allocation by DDCF above its existing funding to the performing arts. However, having witnessed the tremendous value of the program over the past five years, DDCF is pleased to announce plans to extend the life of the Doris Duke Artist Awards by incorporating the program into its annual grant-making budget at a more sustainable scale for the long term. In the future, the foundation will continue to yearly give Doris Duke Artist Awards to three artists. These awards will be managed internally by DDCF staff. DDCF expresses deep gratitude to Creative Capital for their successful administration of the first five classes of Doris Duke Artists and for their part in making the awards program a success.

“The Doris Duke Performing Artist Awards has been a truly visionary program, setting a standard for comprehensive artist support,” said Ruby Lerner, founding president and executive director at Creative Capital. “We at Creative Capital have been so proud to be a part of the powerful partnership that has supported the 101 artists who have received awards to date.”

### **About the Doris Duke Artist Awards**

Each recipient of a Doris Duke Artist Award receives \$275,000—including an unrestricted, multi-year cash grant of \$225,000, plus as much as \$25,000 more in targeted support for audience development and as much as \$25,000 more for personal reserves or creative exploration during what are usually retirement years for most Americans. Artists will be able to access their awards over a period of three years under a schedule set by each recipient. Creative Capital, DDCF’s primary partner in the Doris Duke Performing Artist Awards, will also offer the awardees the opportunity to participate in professional development activities, regional gatherings, and financial and legal counseling—all designed to help them personalize and maximize the use of their grants.

To qualify for consideration by the review panels, all the Doris Duke Artists must have won grants, prizes or awards on a national level for at least three different projects over the past 10 years, with at least one project having received support from a DDCF-funded program. The panel chose the artists based on demonstrated evidence of exceptional creativity, ongoing self-challenge and the continuing potential to make significant contributions to the fields of contemporary dance, jazz and theater in the future.

### **About the Doris Duke Performing Artist Awards**

The Doris Duke Performing Artist Awards (DDPAA) was a program undertaken by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF), in partnership with Creative Capital, to empower, invest in and celebrate artists by offering flexible, multi-year funding as a response to financial and funding challenges unique both to the performing arts and to each grantee. Grants are not tied to any specific project but are intended as deepened investments in the artists' personal and professional development and future work.

DDPAA was part of the larger [Doris Duke Performing Artists Initiative](#), which was announced in 2011 and represented a \$50 million commitment by DDCF above its existing funding for the fields of contemporary dance, jazz, theater and related interdisciplinary work. Also included in this initiative is the foundation's ongoing [Building Demand for the Arts](#) program. The first grants under the initiative were announced in 2012, the centenary of the birth of Doris Duke. More information about the Doris Duke Performing Artist Awards is available at [www.ddpaa.org](http://www.ddpaa.org).

### **About the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is to improve the quality of people's lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and child well-being, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke's properties. The Arts Program of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation focuses its support on contemporary dance, jazz and theater artists, and the organizations that nurture, present and produce them. For more information, please visit [www.ddcf.org](http://www.ddcf.org).

### **About Creative Capital**

Creative Capital supports innovative and adventurous artists across the country through funding, counsel and career development services. Their pioneering approach—inspired by venture-capital principles—helps artists working in all creative disciplines realize their visions and build sustainable practices. Since 1999, Creative Capital has committed \$40 million in financial and advisory support to 511 projects representing 642 artists, and their Professional Development Program has reached 12,000 artists in more than 600 communities. For more information, visit [www.creative-capital.org](http://www.creative-capital.org).



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## 2016 DORIS DUKE ARTIST BIOS

### **Kyle Abraham: Choreographer and Performer (New York, NY)**

With training in music and visual art, contemporary and modern dance maker Kyle Abraham creates a movement vocabulary that exudes the same energy of his Pittsburgh roots. In 2006, he founded Abraham.In.Motion (AIM), aiming to create evocative interdisciplinary works. In 2015, he premiered “Absent Matter” at The Joyce. Inspired by jazz, hip-hop, news footage and live music, it was a response to racial injustice occurring today. Separate from his company, he collaborated on a *pas de deux* for himself and former New York City Ballet Principal Wendy Whelan as part of her work “Restless Creature.” Awards include a City Center Fellowship, MacArthur Fellowship, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award, USA Ford Fellowship, a BESSIE for Outstanding Performance for “The Radio Show” and two Princess Grace Awards. He has received funding from Creative Capital, MAP Fund and National Dance Project, among others. He is currently building his third commissioned work for Alvin Ailey American Dance Company and a new work for AIM, “Dearest Home.”

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AbrahamInMotion-400902660225/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/abraham.in.motion/> and <https://www.instagram.com/kyleabrahammt/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/KyleAbrahamMT> and <https://twitter.com/AbrahamInMotion>

Tumblr: <http://abrahaminmotion.tumblr.com/>

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/user2776262>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/kga223>

### **Sharon Bridgforth: Writer and Theatrical Jazz Artist (San Francisco, CA)**

Sharon Bridgforth’s theatrical jazz works combine African-American traditions with mindfulness, resulting in culturally and spiritually rich performances. She is a resident playwright at New Dramatists, and producer, founder and curator of the Theatrical Jazz Institute. Her 2011 work “River See” takes place on a riverboat just before the first Great African American Migration of 1910. In it, the past, present and future converge through stories, leading a young girl named SEE to answer her true calling. She has developed the Finding Voice Facilitation Method, which was published in “Experiments in a Jazz Aesthetic: Art, Activism, Academia, and the Austin Project” (University of Texas Press, 2010). The method helps artists find their full power as art makers. Her work has been supported by Creative Capital, MAP Fund and NPN Creation Fund, among others. Currently, she is building “dat Black Mermaid Man Lady,” which engages communities in block parties, workshops, oracle card readings, performance installations and home building projects.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SharonBridgforth1/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/sbridgforth>

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/sbridgforth>

Web site: [www.sharonbridgforth.com](http://www.sharonbridgforth.com)

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SBridgforth>

### **Dave Douglas: Composer – Trumpet (Croton-on-Hudson, NY)**

Described as “the unassuming king of independent jazz” (*DownBeat Magazine*), Dave Douglas is a prolific trumpeter, composer, educator and entrepreneur. His career as a bandleader has produced more than 50 recordings. In 2005, he created [Greenleaf Music](#), a recording company releasing music and recordings by himself and other jazz artists. His unique contributions to improvised music have garnered much recognition, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Aaron Copland award and two Grammy nominations. He is co-founder and director of the Festival of New Trumpet Music and hosts a podcast

called "[A Noise From the Deep](#)," which was named the top jazz podcast by the *JazzTimes* Critics Poll in 2014. He was appointed artistic director of the Bergamo Jazz Festival in 2015. Currently, he leads the Dave Douglas Quintet, his signature ensemble; performs with High Risk, an electronic music-influenced quartet featuring Shigeto; and co-leads Sound Prints with saxophonist Joe Lovano, inspired by the music of Wayne Shorter.

Bandcamp: <http://music.davedouglas.com/music>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/davedouglasmusic/>

Greenleaf Music: <https://www.greenleafmusic.com/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/davedouglas/>

Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/davedouglas>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/davedouglas>

Web site: <http://davedouglas.com/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcdY8hflB1aiA7TLeDGXO3w>

### **Faye Driscoll: Choreographer (New York, NY)**

Faye Driscoll is a BESSIE Award-winning choreographer and director called a "startlingly original talent" by *The New York Times*. The first of her three-part series, "Thank You For Coming: Attendance," premiered at Danspace Project in 2014. "Attendance" is intimately staged to craft a heightened reality of observation, invitation and interdependence. As audience and performers increasingly find themselves becoming one, a shared identity emerges, culminating in a dynamic ritual of action and transformation. She has collaborated with theater artists including Young Jean Lee, Cynthia Hopkins and Taylor Mac, and has received commissions from Walker Arts Center, ICA/Boston and The Kitchen, among others. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Award and has been funded by National Dance Project, Creative Capital, The Jerome Foundation and LMCC, among others. She is currently working on the second installment of the series, "Thank You For Coming: Play," which will premiere at the Wexner Center for the Arts in 2016.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FayeDriscollGroup>

Tumblr: <http://fayedriscoll.tumblr.com/>

Web site: <http://fayedriscoll.com/>

### **Janie Geiser: Theater Artist and Experimental Filmmaker (Los Angeles, CA)**

Janie Geiser is an internationally recognized visual-theater artist and filmmaker investigating the emotional power of inanimate objects. "Fugitive Time" (2014) merges puppetry, miniature landscapes, live-feed video and sound. Inspired by the dual histories of illness and health in the early 20th century, it is an immersive meditation on the body, illness and time. Her films are in collections at the Museum of Modern Art, The New York Public Library's Donnell Media Center and the Library of Congress. Honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship, an OBIE Award, and funding from Creative Capital and MAP Fund, among others. She is co-founder of [AUTOMATA](#), an artist-run nonprofit dedicated to the creation and presentation of puppet performance, experimental film and other lost or neglected forms. She is on the faculty of CalArts School of Theater. She is currently working with composers Cassia Streb and John Eagle on "SOUND HOUSE," an installation centered on a series of tasks which shape the sound in the room.

Web site: <http://janiegeiser.com/>

### **Miguel Gutierrez: Choreographer and Performer (New York, NY)**

By weaving together movement, song and text, Miguel Gutierrez creates process-focused dance performances where experimentation and emotionally driven action lie at the center of the work. His trilogy, "Age & Beauty," is a meditation on queerness, art making and middle age. The third installment, "DANCER," premiered in 2015 at Live Arts Bard at the Fisher Center. He received three BESSIE Awards: two for his choreography and one as a dancer in the John Jasperse Company. He received Guggenheim and Foundation for Contemporary Art Fellowships and support from MAP Fund, National Dance Project, National Performance Network and Creative Capital, among others. He invented [DEEP AEROBICS](#), which he describes as an "absurdist workout for the radical in us." He is a Feldenkrais



Method practitioner and has authored a book called "WHEN YOU RISE UP" (53<sup>rd</sup> State Press, 2013). He is currently creating music for Antonio Ramos' new piece, touring "Age & Beauty Part 1" and making a new album of songs.

Web site: <http://miquelgutierrez.org/>

**Fred Hersch: Composer – Piano (New York, NY)**

Fred Hersch began playing the piano at age four and started composing at eight. Deemed "the most arrestingly innovative pianist in jazz over the last decade," (*Vanity Fair*) he has earned eight Grammy nominations as jazz pianist and composer. His latest trio recording with bassist John Hébert and drummer Eric McPherson, "Floating" (Palmetto, 2014), was nominated for two Grammys (Best Jazz Album and Best Jazz Solo). His theatrical piece "My Coma Dreams" (2010) is based on visions he had during a two-month coma and features an actor/singer, 11 instrumentalists and multimedia elements. He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Chamber Music America French-American Jazz Exchange award and was named Jazz Pianist of the Year by the Jazz Journalists Association in 2011, among other honors. He is a spokesperson and fundraiser for AIDS services and education agencies, raising more than \$300,000 over two decades. He is on the Jazz Studies faculty at Rutgers University.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fredherschmusic/>

Web site: <http://fredhersch.com/>

**Wayne Horvitz: Composer – Keyboards (Seattle, WA)**

Composer, pianist and keyboardist Wayne Horvitz is the leader and principal composer for many ensembles including Sweeter Than the Day, Gravitas Quartet and most recently Electric Circus, a digital ensemble that uses audio and video to push the conception of beats and rhythms. He is an improviser on both piano and electronics, has performed as a sideman, and has collaborated with Bill Frisell, Liz Lerman, Paul Taylor and John Zorn. He has received support from Meet the Composer, the Mayor's Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs in Seattle and MAP Fund, among others. He is an adjunct professor of music at Cornish College for the Arts. In 2016, he will begin "21 Pianos," an interactive, site-specific project performed on an extremely out-of-tune piano and taking place across 21 Minnesotan towns. The project will culminate in a book and two CDs. He is also working on "Those Who Remain Part II," which will premiere at the Seattle Art Museum in January 2017.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wayne.horvitz>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/waynehorvitz>

Web site: <http://waynehorvitz.com/>

**Taylor Mac: Performer and Playwright (New York, NY)**

Taylor Mac (who uses "judy," lowercase sic, not as a name but as a gender pronoun) is a playwright, actor, singer-songwriter, performance artist, director and producer. Judy's work is a conversation with audiences about heterogeneity, homogeneity and cultural advocacy. Declared "one of the most exciting theater artists of our time" by *TimeOut NY*, judy is currently creating a four-part work called "Dionysia Festival." It includes an all-ages play, "The Fre"; a kitchen-sink tragedy, "Hir"; a dance-theater play, *The "Bourgeois Oligarch"*; and a music theater debate between small and large government, set inside an Ezra Pound poem in the subconscious of Clarence Thomas during a Supreme Court Hearing. Honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Herb Alpert Award and an OBIE, and support from MAP Fund and Creative Capital, among others. Judy is working on "A 24-Decade History of Popular Music," a concert spanning 24 hours, each focusing on a decade of popular music. It will premiere in its entirety in 2016.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/taylormacnyc>

Web site: <http://www.taylormac.org/>

**Dianne McIntyre: Choreographer (Cleveland, OH)**

Dianne McIntyre's trailblazing career has influenced the genre of dance for over 40 years. Her work combines elements of both dance and theater, exploring cultural themes and challenging the viewer's ability to think and feel. Her collaborative works include many "choreopoems," or poems with

choreography, with poet-playwright Ntozake Shange. In 2015, she choreographed and directed “lost in language and sound,” which was set to Shange’s collection of 25 personal essays. Currently, she is a visiting distinguished scholar at Spelman College. Her honors include a Doris Duke Impact Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and funding from the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation’s ArtsCONNECT and National Dance Project. She recently premiered three new works: a solo with ensemble yMusic at New York Live Arts; a dance piece set to Maya Angelou’s “A Brave and Startling Truth” for Dance St. Louis Ensemble (featuring Alicia Graf Mack, Antonio Douthit-Boyd and Kirven Douthit-Boyd); and “Change” for Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Web site: <http://www.diannemcintyre.com/>

### **Jason Moran: Composer – Piano (New York, NY)**

Since emerging onto the New York music scene in the late 1990s, pianist and composer Jason Moran has been “shaping up to be the most provocative thinker in current jazz” (*Rolling Stone*). In addition to his group The Bandwagon, with Tarus Mateen and Nasheet Waits, he has performed and/or recorded with artists Charles Lloyd, Don Byron and Steve Coleman. In 2007, he created “IN MY MIND: Monk at Town Hall, 1959,” an acclaimed multimedia performance examining pianist Thelonious Monk’s creation process. It became a documentary entitled “IN MY MIND” by director Gary Hawkins. He is a MacArthur Fellow and was voted *DownBeat* Critics Poll’s Jazz Artist, Jazz Album and Pianist of the Year in 2011. He is artistic director for jazz at the Kennedy Center and serves on the piano faculty at New England Conservatory. Last year, he started his own record label, Yes Records. In May 2016, he will release a solo piano recording “Live at The Park Avenue Armory.”

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Twitter: <https://twitter.com/morethan88>

Web site: <http://jasonmoran.com/>

### **Mark Morris: Choreographer and Director (New York, NY)**

Noted for musicality, choreographer Mark Morris has an unparalleled devotion to music. He formed the [Mark Morris Dance Group](#) (MMDG) in 1980 and has created close to 150 works for the company. Live music and community engagement are vital components of MMDG, which offers education in dance and music to people of all ages and abilities. His recent “Acis and Galatea” (2014) was a staging of the Mozart arrangement of Handel’s opera by the same name. It featured MMDG dancers, opera singers and a creative team including fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi. He formed the MMDG Music Ensemble in 1996 and began conducting for MMDG in 2006. To date, he has received 11 honorary doctorates, a MacArthur Fellowship, the Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement and the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society, among others. His newest MMDG work, “Layla and Majnun,” a collaboration with The Silk Road Ensemble, premieres in September 2016.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MarkMorrisDanceGroup>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/markmorrisdance/>

Web site: <http://markmorrisdancegroup.org>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/MarkMorrisDanceGroup>

### **Lynn Nottage: Playwright (New York, NY)**

Lynn Nottage is a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and screenwriter, crafting works that are both deeply human and historically based. A rainforest bar/brothel in war-torn Congo is the setting for her OBIE and Drama Desk award-winning “Ruined” (2009). Inspired by personal interviews with Congo refugees, it combined humor and song with postcolonial and feminist politics. She is co-founder of the production company Market Road Films and has received multiple honors including the MacArthur Fellowship, the inaugural Horton Foote Prize and a Guggenheim Fellowship, among others. She is an associate professor at Columbia School of the Arts. Her most recent play, “Sweat” (2015), won her the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for women playwrights. It premiered at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Arena Stage. She is also adapting her play “Intimate Apparel” into an opera with composer Ricky Ian Gordon.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/lynnbrooklyn>  
Web site: <http://www.lynnnottage.com/>

**Thaddeus Phillips: Director, Actor and Designer (Philadelphia, PA and Bogotá, Colombia)**

A director, actor, designer and world traveler, Thaddeus Phillips creates visual spectacles that take audiences to new frontiers. He has devised theatrical works inspired by whale songs, drug smugglers, Shakespeare, civilization collapse, doormen and Edgar Allan Poe. His solo, "17 BORDER CROSSINGS" (2012), examines international border crossings (like Colombia to Brazil; Morocco to the U.S., etc.). It was presented at the BAM Next Wave Festival and the Miami Light Project with upcoming tours to England, Poland, Boston and Hong Kong. Honors include a Pew Fellowship and nominations for a Lucille Lortel Award and Drama Desk Award. He has received funding from NPN Creation Fund, MAP Fund and NEFA, among others. Three projects will premiere in the next two years: "The Archivist," exploring the last film archive representing humankind; "The Arrival," a theatrical adaptation of Shuan Tan's graphic novel; and "100 Billion Nights," a children's theater show in collaboration with artist Steven Dufala and composer Juan Gabriel Turbay.

Web site: <http://thaddeusphillips.com/>

**Will Power: Playwright and Performer (Dallas, TX)**

Will Power is an award-winning playwright and performer who combines classic folklore with modern elements. His work sends audiences on a path of self-discovery by discussing complex themes and attempting to answer the questions people are afraid to ask. His musical "Stagger Lee" (2015) spanned the 20th century, tracing mythical characters in their quest to achieve the American Dream. Its deep-seated themes of racism and power were translated through Joplin-inspired tunes, R&B and hip-hop. Awards and honors include the Andrew W. Mellon Playwright in Residence Fellowship, a USA Prudential Fellowship, a Lucille Lortel Award for Best Musical and a Drama Desk Award nomination, among others. Currently, he is an artist in residence at Southern Methodist University and working on "Wade in the Water." He describes it as a "Nuvo-Gospel Musical," or a work that brings a more contemporary viewpoint to a traditional Biblical or gospel tale. It is being commissioned and developed at Center Theater Group in Los Angeles.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wpower3>  
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/willpower7>  
Web site: <http://willpower.tv/>

**Aparna Ramaswamy: Choreographer and Performer (Minneapolis, MN)**

Described as "rapturous and profound" by *The New York Times*, Aparna Ramaswamy is known for her insightful choreography and nuanced performance. She serves as co-artistic director, choreographer and principal dancer of Ragamala Dance Company with her mother and creative partner, Ranee Ramaswamy. She is a senior disciple of the iconic dancer/choreographer Alarmél Valli of Chennai, India. Raised in India and the United States, Aparna's cultural hybridity gives her the perspective to create a specific sub-genre of art that marries a contemporary Western aesthetic with an Indian ethos. The Joyce Theater premiered her newest work, "They Rose at Dawn," in 2015. Honors include three McKnight Artist Fellowships, a Joyce Award, and support from the National Dance Project, Jerome Foundation, MAP Fund and USArtists International, among others. Her new work with Ragamala, "Written in Water," draws parallels between the psychological and moral complexities of the second-century Indian board game "Paramapadam" and the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Sufi text "The Conference of the Birds."

Personal Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ramaswamyaparna>  
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Personal Web site: <http://www.aparnaramaswamy.net/>  
Ragamala Web site: <http://www.ragamaladance.org/>



**Matana Roberts: Composer and Performer – Saxophone (New York, NY)**

Matana Roberts is a Chicago-born saxophonist and sound artist. She works in many performance and sound mediums, including improvisation, dance, poetry and theater. Her largest undertaking has been a 12-part music cycle called “Coin Coin” (2005-present) that incorporates Americana research, ancestral memory, imaginative storytelling, instrumental improvisation and “post-disciplinary” vocal performance, which includes opera alternating with screams of joy. She describes the performance as a large-scale, panoramic “sound quilt.” She is a former member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians and the Black Rock Coalition. Her honors include a Doris Duke Impact Award, an Herb Alpert Award in the Arts and a Foundation for Contemporary Art grant. She has taught at Banff Creative Music Workshop, Brooklyn’s School for Improvised Music and Bard College. Her latest album, “COIN COIN Chapter Three: River Run Thee” (Constellation, 2015), is described as “the most vividly potent of the ‘Coin Coin’ series (so far)” (*The Quietus*).

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/matana-roberts>

Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/matana-roberts>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/matana-roberts>

Web site: <http://matana-roberts.com/>

**Jen Shyu: Composer, Vocalist and Multi-instrumentalist (New York, NY)**

Jen Shyu is an experimental jazz vocalist, composer, multi-instrumentalist, dancer and Fulbright Scholar. She has produced six albums, becoming the first female artist and vocalist as bandleader on Pi Recordings. She specializes in lesser-known traditional forms such as East Timorese and Taiwanese song, Javanese Sindhenan and Korean Pansori. This research inspired her work, “Solo Rites: Seven Breaths” (2014), which was directed by Garin Nugroho. She is a Doris Duke Impact Award recipient and has received grants from Chamber Music America, Asian Cultural Council and New Music USA, among others. She has performed her music at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her latest album, “Sounds and Cries of the World” (Pi, 2015), ranked among *The Nation’s* and *The New York Times’* Top 10 “Best Albums of 2015.” In March 2016, she premiered “Song of Silver Geese,” a multilingual, ritual music drama composed for her band Jade Tongue, dancer Satoshi Haga and Mivos Quartet at Roulette.

Bandcamp: <http://jenshyu.bandcamp.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jenshyumusic/>

Web site: <http://jenshyu.com/>

**Wadada Leo Smith: Composer – Trumpet, Multi-instrumentalist – Flugelhorn, Koto, Mbira and Atenteben (New Haven, CT)**

Trumpeter, multi-instrumentalist, composer and improviser Wadada Leo Smith has been active in contemporary creative music and jazz for over 50 years. In the 1960s, he created a musical language called Ahnkrasmaton. It is a symbolic language where the references of colors and images notated in the score are transformed to music. His recording “Celestial Weather” (2015, TUM Records) features a series of duets with bassist John Lindberg. It is reminiscent of the initial spirit of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and includes a tribute to bassist Malachi Favors. He is a Guggenheim Fellow, the Jazz Journalist Association’s Musician and Trumpeter of 2013 and *DownBeat* Critics Poll’s Composer of 2013. He is a member of the AACM and Chamber Music America and was on faculty at The Herb Alpert School of Music at the California Institute of the Arts from 1990-2013. In 2016, he premiered “A Cosmic Rhythm with Each Stroke” with Vijay Iyer at The Met Breuer.

Web site: <http://wadadaleosmith.com/>

**Morgan Thorson: Choreographer (Minneapolis, MN)**

Morgan Thorson animates spaces and interrogates dance production by choreographing movement, light and sound. She draws from many approaches. In “Faker” (2006), she used mimicry, narrative and song to demystify practices within the dance field. “Heaven” (2010), a dance devotional, was born from extreme limitation and used formalism to reach ecstatic release. “Spaceholder Festival” (2012) was an archaeological dig, excavating behavior and memory from the body. Like a discovered artifact, it revealed

a layered story—part truth, part lie, part object and part dance. She is a United States Artist, Guggenheim Fellow and two-time McKnight Fellow who has been supported by NEFA National Dance Project and NPN Creation Fund. In 2015, she began “Still Life,” using time as a subject. This ongoing installation processes loss, killing and extinction through movement and stillness. She is a Creative Campus Fellow at Wesleyan University, where she engages students and professors in interdisciplinary practices and develops pedagogy in dance, archaeology and religious studies.

**Henry Threadgill: Composer, Performer – Saxophone and Flute (New York, NY)**

For over 50 years, Henry Threadgill has been “perpetually altering the meaning of jazz” (*Chicago Tribune*). His self-described “creative, improvised music” blends black American music from ragtime to gospel to free jazz with contemporary chamber music. He has led many bands, including Air, Sextett, Zoid and Double-Up. He has received commissions from Carnegie Hall and Bang on a Can All-Stars and been awarded a 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Music, the Doris Duke Impact Award, New Music USA Project Grant, USA Prudential Fellowship and Guggenheim Fellowship. He is an early member of Chicago’s Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians and has been voted Composer of the Year in the *DownBeat* Critics Poll multiple times. His latest release, “Tomorrow Sunny/The Revelry, Spp” (Pi, 2012), employs his unique pitch system existing outside traditional Western music. In 2014, Harlem Stage held a two-day tribute in his honor called “Very Very Threadgill.” He was inducted into the ASCAP Wall of Fame in 2015.