ANNOUNCING THE 2022 CREATION FUND AWARDS

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The National Performance Network (NPN) is awarding an initial $402,000 and leveraging an additional $1,785,000 in support of the creation of 23 new artistic works. In addition to Creation Fund support, each project will receive up to an additional $10,000 in Development Fund support and be eligible for presentation support.

The 2022 Creation Fund awardees represent dozens of artists spread across fourteen US states. Their projects take the form of oral histories, shared feasts and family meals, installations made from roofing material, and experimental and surrealist operas. Many seek to answer the
question posed by New Orleans–based choreographer Ryuta Iwashita of re:FRAME Collective in their application: “In a country of severe violence, segregation, and isolation, can we model something that goes beyond that—not even to the world, just to each other?”

One work will expunge the actual criminal records of BIPOC community members with a misdemeanor or nonviolent felony in their past, another explores the culinary and political impacts climate has had on East Asian populations. One project deploys “doing nothing” as a creative personal and political survival strategy, while in another a priestess of twerk will guide audiences through a temple with personally tailored rituals. Artists will create space to process uncertainty, grief, and restlessness from the COVID-19 pandemic and celebrate Southwestern non-immigrant Latinx histories, Black queer divinity, and queer Palestinian liberation.

The Creation Fund is phase one of a [three-part program](https://npnweb.org/programs/cdf) that supports the creation, development, and mobility of new artistic work advancing racial and cultural justice and resulting in live experiential exchange between artists and communities. The fund supports new work in its early stages, centering relationship building between artists, presenters, and communities.

The next Creation Fund deadline will be May 22, 2023 for projects premiering between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025.

[Learn more about the Creation & Development Fund here.](https://npnweb.org/programs/cdf)

*The Creation and Development Fund is made possible with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency), and co-commissioners.*

### 2022 CREATION FUND RECIPIENTS

*Project titles, descriptions, and timelines may shift.*
Clockwise from top left: Noelle Ghoussaini, Ismail Khalidi, Mohamed Yabdri, Caitlin Nasema Cassidy.


Co-commissioners: **Pangea World Theater** (https://npnweb.org/contact/pangea-world-theater/) (Minneapolis, MN), **Arab American National Museum** (https://npnweb.org/contact/arab-american-national-museum/) (Dearborn, MI), and **Noor Theater** (http://www.noorthetheatre.org/) (New York, NY)
The Magic Bullet is a transdisciplinary performance project inspired by the true story of Algerian marabouts (Islamic mystics) whose miracles inspired an uprising against French colonial rule in Algeria in the 1850s. This prompted Emperor Napoleon III to bring renowned French magician Houdin out of retirement for a special mission to North Africa to showcase his illusions and undermine the magic of indigenous spiritual leaders and repress the Algerian rebellion. Using historical text and image along with original writing, magic, and movement, the artists will explore the relationships between (anti)colonial power and illusion, as well as between spirituality and resistance.

Dan Froot & Company (standing, left to right: Natalie Camunas, Dan Froot, Christopher Rivas), with community members, in a performance of Pang! at University of Saint Joseph, West Hartford, CT (2019). Photo: Ray D. Shaw

Dan Froot & Company (https://www.danfroot.com/) (Los Angeles, CA) — Arms Around America

Co-commissioners: the Myrna Loy (https://npnweb.org/contact/myrna-loy-center/) (Helena, Montana), Miami Light Project (https://npnweb.org/contact/miami-light-project/) (Miami Shores, FL), and UCLA’s Center for the Art of Performance (https://cap.ucla.edu/) (Los Angeles, CA)
**Arms Around America** is a four-year community-based performance project based on oral histories of families around the country whose lives have been shaped by guns. The goal is to foster dialogue among diverse community members and around the roles of guns in American life. The project will come to life in three distinct formats: six book-length oral histories of families from around the country, a podcast season, and an evening of short stage plays and monologues.

![Image of dancer](image-url)

**Jasmine Hearn** (https://www.jasminehearn.com/) (Houston, TX) — **Memory Fleet: A Return to Matr**

Co-commissioners: [DiverseWorks](https://npnweb.org/contact/diverseworks/) (Houston, TX), [Dance Place](https://npnweb.org/contact/dance-place/) (Washington, DC), the [Chocolate Factory Theater](https://chocolatefactorytheater.org/) (Long Island, NY), and [Kelly Strayhorn Theater](https://npnweb.org/contact/kelly-strayhorn-theater/) (Pittsburgh, PA)

**Memory Fleet: A Return to Matr** is a migrating performance and archive that preserves the living memories of eight Black matriarchs of the North and South sides of Houston, TX. Their shared stories will be the source for original sound scores, choreographies, and garments that will be experienced as a site-specific performance, album, feast, online archive, anthological catalog,
and a mercurial system of somatic, embodied sound and dance practice. This developing memory-keeping practice will then tour to Pittsburgh, PA, Washington DC, and New York, NY in order to archive the living memories of Jasmine’s dance mothers within their communities.

Autumn Knight performing _M_ _ _ ER at DiverseWorks in Houston, TX (2018). Photo: Lynn Lane.

**Autumn Knight** (http://autumnjoiknight.com/) (New York, NY) — **NOTHING #1 OR DOLCE (FAR NIENTE)**


**NOTHING #1 OR DOLCE (FAR NIENTE)** is a continued investigation within a body of performance and workshop series on economies of time, attention, and survival—and the creative role within those realms. The project intends to utilize performances, screenings, and digital/cinematic video as a means of reorganizing a relational experience with “doing nothing” as a creative personal and political survival strategy. Knight will employ properties and investigate the sweetness of nothingness as it relates to Black existence.
MX Oops (https://www.mxoops.com/) (New York, NY) — UnFiNiShEd aNiMaL

Co-commissioners: New York Live Arts (https://npnweb.org/contact/new-york-live-arts/) (New York, NY), Dance Place (https://npnweb.org/contact/dance-place/) (Washington, DC), the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center (https://theclarice.umd.edu/) (College Park, MD), and 651 Arts (https://npnweb.org/contact/651-arts/) (Brooklyn, NY)

UnFiNiShEd aNiMaL is a multimedia performance that uses the vibrant aesthetics of queer nightlife culture to reveal how cognitive bias connects us all. This piece tells the story of humanity coming to grips with our collective inheritance, a ramshackle meshwork of cognitive processes evolved to survive, not for self-awareness. An interdisciplinary approach invites the audience to meditate on what might be unfinished about human cognition and how these biases keep us from building a better world together.
NAKA Dance Theater (http://nakadancetheater.com/) (Oakland, CA) — Y BASTA YA!

Co-commissioners: La Peña Cultural Center (https://npnweb.org/contact/la-pena-cultural-center/) (Berkeley, CA) and Rosy Simas Danse (https://www.rosysimas.com/) (Minneapolis, MN)

Y BASTA YA! (ENOUGH!), created by NAKA Dance Theater co-directors Debby Kajiyama & José Ome Navarrete Mazatl, is a multidisciplinary and multilingual performance project highlighting stories of Indigenous and Latina immigrant women. The work engages an intimate and personal exploration of issues of identity, patriarchy, systemic gender violence and invisibility, and the individual and collective effects on survivors. The work will emerge from a multiyear community development process in collaboration with immigrant rights organization Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA), culminating in an evening-length international touring performance.
Yankee Bajan

Graphic: Russell Watson, Barbados, West Indies.

Parris-Bailey Arts (https://www.parrisbaileyarts.com/) (Knoxville, TN) — Yankee Bajan

Co-commissioners: Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator (https://npnweb.org/contact/diaspora-vibe-cultural-arts-incubator-dvcai/) (Miami, FL), Hayti Heritage Center (https://npnweb.org/contact/the-hayti-heritage-center-st-josephs-historic-foundation-inc/) (Durham, NC), and Su Teatro (https://npnweb.org/contact/su-teatro-cultura-and-performing-arts-center/) (Denver, CO)

Yankee Bajan, a play with music, focuses on the growing movement of Black individuals and families exploring Black life outside of the United States. These expatriates, building homes and communities in Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean, seek a return home or a new life without the pressures and assumptions of the “white gaze” and racism in America. We look to the past in the spirit of Sankofa, looking back as we move forward, never forgetting the lessons of the past.

Anna Luisa Petrisko (https://www.annaluisapetrisko.com/) (Los Angeles, CA) — **ALL TIME STOP NOW**

Co-commissioners: Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater (https://npnweb.org/contact/roy-and-edna-disney-calarts-theater-redcat/) (REDCAT; Los Angeles, CA) and On the Boards (https://npnweb.org/contact/on-the-boards/) (Seattle, WA)

**ALL TIME STOP NOW** is an experimental opera with multichannel video, dance, body-based sculpture, and original music. The project grew out of recorded conversations between Anna Luisa Petrisko and her best friend, who was living in a Buddhist monastery in Myanmar, during the height of the COVID-19 global pandemic. **ALL TIME STOP NOW** creates space to process the uncertainty, grief, and restlessness—which we will undoubtedly continue to need. It is a contemplation on stillness, listening, impermanence, kinship, and the spaciousness of time.

**Mary Prescott** ([https://mary-prescott.com/](https://mary-prescott.com/)) (New York, NY) – *Ancestral Table*

Co-commissioners: [Living Arts of Tulsa](https://npnweb.org/contact/living-arts-of-tulsa/) (Tulsa, OK) and [Great Northern Festival](https://thegreatnorthernfestival.com/) (Minneapolis, MN)

*Ancestral Table* is a shared family meal, interdisciplinary performance, and docuseries that uses food to examine the relationships between climate, ecology, migration, and cultural inheritance. Through interviews with family elders and field experts, as well as travel, study and practice, Prescott will research six staple ingredients from six recipes handed down by her Thai maternal ancestors. The project will recover oral histories; learn about the culinary, cultural, political, and social impacts climate has had on East Asian populations; and examine the effects of food availability (or lack thereof) on her ancestors’ migrations through China, Thailand, and America.
Ashwini Ramaswamy ([https://www.ashwiniramaswamy.com/](https://www.ashwiniramaswamy.com/)) (Minneapolis, MN) — *Invisible Cities*

Co-commissioners: [John Michael Kohler Arts Center](https://npnweb.org/contact/john-michael-kohler-arts-center/) (Sheboygan, WI), [Bates Dance Festival](https://npnweb.org/contact/bates-dance-festival/) (Lewiston, ME), the [Ronald O. Perelman Performing Arts Center](https://www.theperelman.org/) (New York, NY), and the [Great Northern Festival](https://thegreatnorthernfestival.com/) (Minneapolis, MN)

Bharatanatyam choreographer/dancer Ashwini Ramaswamy’s *Invisible Cities* reinterprets Italo Calvino’s metaphysical/philosophical novel through interwoven cultural perspectives, with interactive, projected artwork created live by internationally renowned visual artist Kevork Mourad. *Invisible Cities* features groups of dancers of four diverse dance backgrounds—Bharatanatyam led by Ramaswamy, Gaga technique led by Berit Ahlgren, Modern led by Alanna Morris, and Breaking led by Joseph “MN Joe” Tran—to convey how diverse members of a city/community experience its rhythms through their own unique cultural lenses and perspectives, creating a prism of interpretations.

**re:FRAME collective** (https://www.merylmurman.me/reframe) (New Orleans, LA) — *Close Animals: Soliloquies on Being*

Co-commissioners: [Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans](https://npnweb.org/contact/contemporary-arts-center-new-orleans/) (New Orleans, LA) and [Basin Arts](https://basinartslafayette.com/) (Lafayette, LA)
“re:FRAME is a collective of five dance-makers based in New Orleans developing full-length solo works for joint presentation and exploring alternative systems for artistic sustainability. We commonly value embodied research, process over product, the interrogation of complex social issues and multidisciplinary ways of working in unconventional relationship to space. For Close Animals: Soliloquies on Being, our shared artistic task is to channel these practices into investigations of the solo form. We invite our communities to join us in movement and discourse that sets our studio research and collective-building alongside (and against) our current social, political, and cultural landscapes.”


Safos Dance Theatre (https://www.safosdance.org/) (Tucson, AZ) — Stories from Home

Co-commissioners: GALA Hispanic Theatre (https://npnweb.org/contact/gala-hispanic-theatre/) (Washington, DC) and Su Teatro (https://npnweb.org/contact/su-teatro-cultura-and-performing-arts-center/) (Denver, CO)

Stories from Home is a series of dances embodying oral traditions of Latinx communities in the American Southwest. Choreographer Yvonne Montoya and an all-Latinx cast of dancers draw upon personal histories and ancestral knowledge, including stories from Montoya’s family members. Montoya, a 23rd-generation Nuevomexicana, began to develop Stories from Home after her father’s passing in 2015; compelled to continue his storytelling tradition for her own
child, she turned to dance. *Stories From Home* is a vessel for personal and specific tales. The work explores how geographies, languages, and stories among Latinx and border communities have shared histories and experiences.

Andrew Saito (2022).

**Andrew Saito** ([http://www.andrewsaito.com/](http://www.andrewsaito.com/)) (New York, NY) — **HARLEM CANARY / TOKYO CROW**

Co-commissioners: **Asian Arts Initiative** ([https://npnweb.org/contact/asi...](https://npnweb.org/contact/asi...)) (Philadelphia, PA) and **Montalvo Arts Center** ([https://montalvoarts.org/](https://montalvoarts.org/)) (Saratoga, CA)
**HARLEM CANARY / TOKYO CROW** is a new stage production that will introduce audiences to the “Negro Propaganda Operations,” a little-known propaganda program within Japan’s government during WWII that enlisted African American Prisoners of War to record radio plays and other materials to extol the joys the POWs experienced while living in Japan and detail the horrors of racism in the US. Created by playwright Andrew Saito in collaboration with Montalvo Arts Center and Asian Arts Initiative, **HARLEM CANARY / TOKYO CROW** will investigate how propaganda—built on misinformation, a.k.a. “fake news”—distorts its authors’ and recipients’ thinking and behavior.

LA Samuelson performing *to get under, you have to lose* at the Atlas Institute in Boulder, CO (2020). Photo: Gretchen LaBorwit.

**Laura Ann Samuelson** (https://www.lauraannsamuelson.com/) (Longmont, CO) — *Telegraph Valley*

Co-commissioners: RedLine Contemporary Art Center (https://npnweb.org/contact/redline-contemporary-arts-center/) (Denver, CO), Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator (https://npnweb.org/contact/diaspora-vibe-cultural-arts-incubator-dvcai/) (Miami, FL), and square product theatre (http://www.squareproducttheatre.org/) (Longmont, CO)
Telegraph Valley is an interdisciplinary performance and installation work that uses roofing material, parts sourced from replicas of the liquid transmitter (an early ancestor of the landline telephone), and a dancer to reverse engineer the feeling of having sent out and/or received a message through the medium of one’s body. It tests the ways in which the implicit “not me” inside of the explicit “me” function as a communication device across time, space, and beings.

Samuelson seeks to connect with others around how we bear the relationship between simultaneously “having” and “being” a body that include and extend beyond gender, and to begin to help pull apart the habits of thinking and being that privilege capitalist, extractive, racist and heteronormative disassociation over messy, resilient, and risky connection with self and with others.

**Andrea “Vocab” Sanderson** ([https://andreavocabsanderson.com/](https://andreavocabsanderson.com/)) (San Antonio, TX) — *The Seasoned Woman*

Co-commissioners: the [Carver Community Cultural Center](https://npnweb.org/contact/carver-community-cultural-center/) (San Antonio, TX) and [Art2Action](https://npnweb.org/contact/art2action-inc/) (Tampa, FL)

*The Seasoned Woman* is a celebration of the beauty, strength, resiliency, and wisdom of womanhood across time and cultures. A collaboration between poet and musician Andrea “Vocab” Sanderson and Syrian opera singer Lubana Al Quntar, this multidisciplinary, multicultural work marries poetry, music, and soaring vocals of reimagined jazz standards through the cultural and musical influences of the collaborating artists—including R&B, hip-hop, opera, and Middle Eastern music.
James Scruggs. Photo: Patrice Busnel.

Co-commissioners: Art2Action (https://npnweb.org/contact/art2action-inc/) (Tampa, FL), the Center at West Park (https://www.centeratwestpark.org/) (New York, NY), and ArtsEmerson (https://artsemerson.org/) (Boston, MA)

**OFF THE RECORD: Acts of Restorative Justice** is a theatrical intervention that actually changes lives. Due to the over-policing of BIPOC people in the US, Black people are five times more likely to be convicted of a crime. What would an honest attempt to restore justice look like, one person at a time? Artist James Scruggs will work with lawyers, activists, and community participants who have a misdemeanor or nonviolent felony in their past to legally expunge or seal their criminal records, while telling their stories, onstage and off.
slowdanger (https://www.slowdangerslowdanger.com/) (Pittsburgh, PA) — SUPERCELL

Co-commissioners: Kelly Strayhorn Theater (https://npnweb.org/contact/kelly-strayhorn-theater/) (Pittsburgh, PA) and the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center (https://theclarice.umd.edu/) (College Park, MD)

SUPERCELL is an evening-length multidisciplinary quintet responding to climate change, media sensationalism, desensitization, and environmental collapse. Supercells are large storms of deep, persistent updrafts that often result from tornadoes. They are simultaneously ominous harbingers of great damage and breathtaking environmental events, akin to sensationalist media instantly amplifying catastrophic events for an insatiable public consumption. Through the activation of queer world building and generative science fiction, the collaborative team will spawn a performance world that invites audiences to question and wonder.
Harold Steward (Ashfield, MA) — *Fly*

Co-commissioners: The Theater Offensive (https://npnweb.org/contact/the-theater-offensive/) (Boston, MA), Double Edge Theatre (https://doubleedgetheatre.org/) (Ashfield, MA), and JAG Productions (https://www.jagproductionsvt.com/) (White River Junction, VT)

*Fly* is an original play adapted from the poetry of Marvin K. White. *Fly* follows Marvin after his close friend Ricky chooses to move on to the afterlife. The artists hope Ricky’s passage to the afterlife will spark and expand community conversation about queer health, Black masculinities and its subversive manifestations, intergenerational knowledge, and Black queer divinity.
Fargo Nissim Tbaki (left) and George Abraham (right), performing a work-in-progress excerpt of Eve in Dearborn (2021). Photo: Houssam Mchaimech.

**Fargo Nissim Tbaki** (https://fargotbakhi.com/) (Washington, DC) and **George Abraham** (https://www.gabrahampoet.com/) (Chicago, IL) — **Eve**

Co-commissioners: **Arab American National Museum** (https://npnweb.org/contact/arab-american-national-museum/) (Dearborn, MI), **Mizna** (https://mizna.org/) (St. Paul, MN), and **Silk Road Rising** (https://www.silkroadrising.org/) (Chicago, IL)

**Eve** is a collaborative performance poetry project which deconstructs Paradise Lost—and the Eve and Adam myth more broadly—through the lens of Palestinian liberation. Eve queers, shatters, reimagines, and stitches together several timelines: from Milton’s life to the many existential and lonely spaces of Palestinian diaspora, to space-times before Edenic origin stories. At a juncture where Ars Poetica meets myth, Eve returns to these pasts so that they may be a futurism that lives and breathes through us all.
Micaela Tobin performing *Almost Songs of the Bakunawa* at Coaxial Arts Foundation (2020).

**Micaela Tobin** (http://www.micaelatobin.com/) (Los Angeles, CA) — *Apolaki: Opera of the Scorched Earth*

Co-commissioners: Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (https://npnweb.org/contact/los-angeles-contemporary-exhibitions-lace/) (LACE; Los Angeles, CA) and OUTsider Film & Arts Festival (https://www.outsiderfest.org/) (Austin, TX)

*Apolaki: Opera of the Scorched Earth* is a modular opera by Micaela Tobin in collaboration with Jay Carlon that celebrates and centers the precolonial mythologies of the Philippines. It tells the story of Apolaki, the God of Sun and War, as a means to discuss larger issues of settler colonialism, decolonization, diaspora, immigration, and climate change. The opera involves movement, electroacoustic instrumentation, and community voice-choruses performed in different outside spaces around California, in direct relationship to the land that we occupy.

**Sugar Vendil** ([https://sugarvendil.com/](https://sugarvendil.com/)) (Brooklyn, NY) — *Antonym: The opposite of nostalgia*
Co-commissioners: Living Arts of Tulsa (https://npnweb.org/contact/living-arts-of-tulsa/) (Tulsa, OK), High Concept Labs (https://highconceptlabs.org/) (Chicago, IL), and National Sawdust (https://nationalsawdust.org/) (Brooklyn, NY)

How is trauma passed down? How do we internalize, normalize, and manifest trauma? How do we possess pain as it possesses us? Interdisciplinary artist and composer Sugar Vendil interweaves music, movement, and video in *Antonym: the opposite of nostalgia*, a multimedia memoir of her Filipinx American childhood. If nostalgia is a yearning for the past, *Antonym* longs for forward motion and envisions the future as an escape from pain.


Anna Martine Whitehead (https://annamartine.com/home.html) (Chicago, IL) — *FORCE! an opera in three acts*

Co-commissioners: Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (https://npnweb.org/contact/portland-institute-for-contemporary-art-pica/) (PICA; Portland, OR), the Chocolate Factory Theater (https://chocolatefactorytheater.org/) (Long Island, NY), On the Boards (https://npnweb.org/contact/on-the-boards/) (Seattle, WA), the Graham Foundation
force for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts (http://www.grahamfoundation.org/) (Chicago, IL), and Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater (https://npnweb.org/contact/roy-and-edna-disney-calarts-theater-redcat/) (REDCAT; Los Angeles, CA)

FORCE! an opera in three acts follows a group of Black women and femmes as they wait to enter a prison and escape a memory-erasing mold. Through sound, movement, and shared dream-spaces, we explore what kind of relationships bloom in the shadow of the prison, imagining a strange sisterhood with the power to disintegrate walls. FORCE! is a sprawling surrealist opera blending gospel, folk, pop, and contemporary experimental jazz, and reflects those who are most impacted by the interlocking forces of oppression that the prison industrial complex runs on, putting into practice the free world we have dreamt of.

Nia Witherspoon (center) performing an excerpt from Priestess of Twerk at Judson Memorial Church in New York City (2019).

Nia Witherspoon (https://www.niawitherspoon.com/) (Brooklyn, NY) — Priestess of Twerk

Inspired by the goddess temples of ancient Egypt and the bad bitches of hip-hop, *Priestess of Twerk* visions a Black feminist monastic/pleasure temple as a traveling full-scale performance installation and immersive experience that takes participants through a series of personally tailored rituals into a reimagining of the story of Isis’s journey to the Underworld. The temple is inspired by Nia’s personal experiences of sacred space in nightclubs, churches, temples, and spas, and will feel like a hallucinogenic journey inside one of Beyoncé’s wildly decadent visual albums. The work is framed by Black feminist pleasure principles, aesthetics of care, and ancestral healing.