

## Chicago 3Arts Announces Winners of Annual 3Arts Awards

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Chicago nonprofit **3Arts** has increased the amount of its annual unrestricted awards for women artists, artists of color, and artists with disabilities to **\$25,000**, effective with the 7th annual 3Arts Awards tonight, Oct. 6, 2014. Ten Chicago-area artists working in the performing, teaching, and visual arts will receive a total of **\$250,000** in a celebratory gathering at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Previously, 3Arts presented annual awards of \$15,000.

The amplified annual 3Arts Awards mark the beginning of a long-term increased commitment from 3Arts in support of Chicago's diverse artistic community. To date, 3Arts has awarded nearly \$1.5 million in direct support for Chicago artists. This year's 3Arts Award recipients are: dancer **Darrell Jones** and choreographer **Erica Mott**; circus choreographer **Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi** and playwright **Calamity West**; instrumentalists **Brandi Berry** and **Carlos Mejía**; visual artists **Irina Botea** and **Amanda Williams**; and teaching artists **Sophia Nahli Allison** and **Samuel Roberson**.



"Over the past seven years, we've listened to what artists tell us they need and want to help them make their work and build sustainable careers. In response, we have deepened and expanded our programs so that in addition to the cash grant, our awardees are now offered residency fellowships, project support, professional development and promotion. The time has come to raise the bar again-to raise the amount of our award so that Chicago artists can gain that extra bit of freedom to pursue whatever really matters to them," said **3Arts Executive Director Esther Grisham Grimm**.

"Thanks to everyone who has stepped up in support of our efforts, from major funders to hundreds of individual contributors, we are confident our increased financial commitment is sustainable and will resonate throughout Chicago's artistic community for years to come," said **3Arts Board Chair Irene Siragusa Phelps**.

Driven by the belief that the vitality and creative spirit of Chicago is reliant upon a diverse spectrum of artistic voices, **3Arts** advocates for women artists, artists of color, and artists with disabilities working in the performing (dance, music and theater), teaching, and visual arts. For more information on 3Arts, please visit [www.3arts.org](http://www.3arts.org).

The recipients of the 2014 3Arts Awards are:

### Dance:

**DARRELL JONES**, *Dancer, Denise and Gary Gardner Artist*

Darrell Jones has performed in the United States and abroad with a variety of choreographers and companies such

as Bebe Miller, Urban Bush Women, Ronald K. Brown, Min Tanaka, and Ralph Lemon.

Along with performing, Darrell is a choreographer and a tenured faculty member at The Dance Center of Columbia College who has choreographed for professional and student ensembles (The Seldoms, University of Colorado, University of Illinois). He received choreographic fellowships from Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography, Chicago Dancemakers Forum and is a two-time Bessie award recipient for his collaborative work with Bebe Miller Company and for his most recent research in (e)feminized ritual performance.

**ERICA MOTT**, *Choreographer, McCormick Family Foundation Artist*

Erica Mott is a performance/dance artist engaged in the conversation between movement, sound, video, and object. She has been called "ingenious" by the Chicago Reader's Laura Molzahn and referred to as "a vibrant performance-maker, object designer, and choreographer engaged with distinctive creative research and methodology, effectively complimented by articulate and generous teaching skills, mentoring, community and audience building, and public discussion about her work," by CJ Mitchell, Deputy Director, Live Arts Development Agency, UK.

Erica's recent performances were featured at Audio Art Festival (Krakow, Poland), Free Fall Festival (Toronto, Canada), NES (Skagastrom, Iceland), Museo del Ferrocarril and CASA (Oaxaca, Mexico), and CAD Special Exhibitions Space/Artopolis (Chicago). She works with Guillermo Gomez-Pena's collective, La Pocha Nostra, as a core troupe member and teaches workshops for Lookingglass Theatre Company, Northeastern University, The Second City, and other independent venues and organizations. Additionally, she is an instructor in the performance department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is a recipient of several awards including Amnesty International's Patrick Stewart Human Rights Fellowship (to teach performing arts in South Africa).

**Theater:**

**SYLVIA HERNANDEZ-DISTASI**, *Circus Choreographer*

Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi is a second-generation circus performer who grew up touring with various circuses across the country. Highlights of her performing career include a three-year tour with the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus and competing in the Circus World Championships in London, England. In 1990, Sylvia moved to Chicago where she began teaching and choreographing circus arts. She teamed up with Lookingglass Theatre Company and ultimately earned three Joseph

Jefferson Awards for her circus choreography in *The Baron in The Trees* (1999), *Hard Times* (2002), and *Lookingglass Alice* (2005).

To date, Sylvia has worked on 12 Lookingglass Theatre productions in Chicago and on tour across the country. Other theater credits include Marriot Theater Lincolnshire (where she won her fourth Jeff Award in 2007 for *All Night Strut*), The Mercury Theater, Chicago Children's Theatre, and Steppenwolf Theatre. Sylvia is a Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director of The Actors Gymnasium where she enjoys splitting her time as a circus teacher, act creator, and choreographer for circus productions such as *Lost and Found: A Recycled Circus*, *Skoored*, *The Magical Exploding Boy* and *the Invisible Circus*.

**CALAMITY WEST**, *Playwright, Merrill Lynch Artist*

Calamity West is a Chicago-based playwright. She received her BA in playwriting at Webster University in 2004 and earned her MFA in playwriting at California College of the Arts in San Francisco in 2007. She was born and raised in Missouri.

Most recent full-length productions of Calamity's work include: *Ibsen is Dead*, *The Peacock* (Jackalope Theatre Company), *The Gacy Play* (Sideshow Theatre Company), and *Common Hatred* (The Ruckus). Calamity's short plays have been produced by: Jackalope Theatre Company, Victory Gardens, The Inconvenience, Chicago Dramatists,

The Anatomy Collective, Broken Nose Theatre, First Floor Theater, and The Good Night Ladies.

**Music:**

**BRANDI BERRY**, *Instrumentalist, Gertrude E. Grisham Artist*

Violinist Brandi Berry, whose "four-string acrobatics" and "indispensable skill" (TimeOut Chicago) have been praised as "alert [and] outstanding" (Chicago Classical Review), has also been noted for her "riffs...powered by a flashing blur of bow arm, [as they] rolled out with irresistible glee" (Washington Post).

In addition to her "baroque/classical" side, she has a long history of performing bluegrass and country with such groups from Texas (her home state) as Kat's Kradle, the Bozarts, and Newgrass; and has fiddled at the Irish American Heritage Center and the Chicago Barn Dance Company. Brandi teaches fiddle at the Old Town School of Folk Music. She is also a member of the avante-world rock group, Kmang-Kmang. She holds degrees in violin performance from Indiana University and the University of North Texas.

She has appeared with numerous ensembles including Kings Noyse, Apollo's Fire, Newberry Consort, Toronto's Classical Music Consort, and Ensemble Phoenix Munich; and as soloist/concertmaster of Ars Antigua, Mountainside Baroque, and St. Louis's Kingsbury Ensemble. Brandi has also performed on numerous series throughout the U.S. and Canada including at the Library of Congress. She serves on the faculty of DePaul University as co-director of their Baroque Ensemble program, and has guest coached ensembles at Northwestern University and Wheaton College.