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Announcing ISPA's 75th Anniversary Awards Recipients

Tania León, Cathie Boyd, Mary Lou Aleskie, Constantin Chiriac, Denisse Flores Somarriba, and Aneeshwar Kunchala

*Award Presentation to be held during the
New York 2024 ISPA Congress: Bridging the Gap
on Thursday, January 11, 2024*

New York, NY, USA (December 8, 2023)– On behalf of the Board of Directors, the International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA) announces the recipients of the 2024 ISPA Awards. The first ISPA Award was presented in 1975 to Beverly Sills. Since then, ISPA has continued to recognize outstanding individuals and organizations for their contribution to the arts and their communities. The 2024 award recipients are as follows (biographies attached):

Distinguished Artist Award

Presented to artists who have made an outstanding contribution of talent, artistry, dedication, and service to the world of the performing arts.

Tania León (Cuban-American Composer)

Nominating Statement: *“Ms. León describes her Pulitzer Prize winning composition, “Stride”, as something that is pushing forward. Pushing forward also describes Tania. A person and an artist who has been celebrated globally, she continues to leave a lasting legacy in the world of music and beyond.”*

International Citation of Merit

Presented for unique lifetime achievement which has enriched the international performing arts. This Award is not for performance but rather for distinguished service working within the profession.

Cathie Boyd (Artistic Director & Founder of Cryptic & Curator for Sonica)

Nominating Statement: *“Cathie’s career exemplifies a commitment to global exchange following 30 years of touring her unique visual musicals in addition to staging work for many other international institutions.”*

Patrick Hayes Award

Inspired by the legacy of Patrick Hayes, the founding President of the International Society of the Performing Arts Foundation, this Award recognizes an ISPA member in any stage of their career who has demonstrated transformative leadership in the performing arts.

Mary Lou Aleskie (Director, Hopkins Center for the Performing Arts at Dartmouth College)

Nominating Statement: “Mary Lou Aleskie is a visionary leader. Her leadership role at organizations across the United States is only matched by her commitment to mentoring young professionals in the performing arts.”

Angel Award Recipient

Presented to an individual or organization which has demonstrated a significant and lasting contribution to the support of the performing arts which transcends the boundaries of one country or institution, and merits international recognition.

Constantin Chiriac (President, Sibiu International Theatre Festival)

Nominating Statement: “I believe that this Festival (Sibiu), under the leadership of Constantin Chiriac, is deserving of the award for its visionary courage, ambition, and for the social impact it makes through its work.”

Emerging Leader Award

The Emerging Leader Award celebrates creative and evolving practice in any aspect of the performing arts including presenting, touring, artist management, and creative producing. Five (5) awards will be presented in this category. ISPA members as well as employees of ISPA members are eligible to be nominated.

Denisse Flores Somarriba (Director of Unity of Innovation and Connection, Cultura UDG)

Nominating Statement: “Denisse Flores will be an emerging arts leader throughout her career, both by her nature of constant exploration and as a tireless promoter of Latin American culture. Her work exhibits continued curiosity and desire to explore and expand international partnerships.”

Celebrating Our Planet Award

The *Celebrating Our Planet Award* Recognizes excellence and/or innovation with respect to creating, presenting, and/or touring the performing arts in a climate friendly, sustainable manner. This new award recognizes the initiative(s) of an ISPA member as opposed to the community as a whole.

Aneeshwar Kunchala

Nominating Statement: “*Despite his young age, Aneeshwar is a determined advocate on his mission to combat environmental degradation. Through his journey, he continues to inspire young (and old) minds to appreciate nature and contribute to its preservation through the arts.*”

“While we received many worthy nominations, the Board was unanimous in their endorsement on the 2024 awardees. The recipients reflect the richness of diversity that the ISPA membership represents” said ISPA Chief Executive Officer David Baile.

The awards will be presented at a ceremony to be held during [New York 2024 ISPA Congress: Bridging the Gap](#), on Thursday, January 11, 2024. The ceremony will be hosted by Elizabeth Hayes, daughter of the International Society for the Performing Arts founder Patrick Hayes.

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[BIOGRAPHY OF THE AWARD RECIPIENTS]**Tania León***2024 Distinguished Artist Award Recipient*

Tania León (b. Havana, Cuba) is highly regarded as a composer, conductor, educator, and advisor to arts organizations. Her orchestral work *Stride*, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, was awarded the 2021 Pulitzer Prize in Music. In 2022, she was named a recipient of the 45th Annual Kennedy Center Honors for lifetime artistic achievements. In 2023, she was awarded the Michael Ludwig Nemmers Prize in Music Composition from Northwestern University. Most recently, León became the London Philharmonic Orchestra’s next Composer-in-Residence—a post she will hold for two seasons, beginning in September 2023. She will also hold Carnegie Hall’s Richard and Barbara Debs Composer’s Chair for its 2023-2024 season.

Recent premieres include works for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, NDR Symphony Orchestra, Grossman Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, Modern Ensemble, Jennifer Koh’s project *Alone Together*, and The Curtis Institute. Appearances as guest conductor include Orchestre Philharmonique de Marseille, Gewandhausorchester, Orquesta Sinfónica de Guanajuato, and Orquesta Sinfónica de Cuba, among others. Upcoming commissions feature a work for the League of American Orchestras, and a work for Claire Chase, flute, and The Crossing Choir with text by Rita Dove.



A founding member and first Music Director of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, León instituted the Brooklyn Philharmonic Community Concert Series, co-founded the American Composers Orchestra's *Sonidos de las Américas* Festivals, was New Music Advisor to the New York Philharmonic, and is the founder/Artistic Director of Composers Now, a presenting, commissioning and advocacy organization for living composers.

Honors include the New York Governor's Lifetime Achievement, inductions into the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and fellowship awards from ASCAP Victor Herbert Award and The Koussevitzky Music and Guggenheim Foundations, among others. She also received a proclamation for Composers Now by New York City Mayor, and the MadWoman Festival Award in Music (Spain).

León has received Honorary Doctorate Degrees from Colgate University, Oberlin, SUNY Purchase College, and The Curtis Institute of Music, and served as U.S. Artistic Ambassador of American Culture in Madrid, Spain. A CUNY Professor Emerita, she was awarded a 2018 United States Artists Fellowship, Chamber Music America's 2022 National Service Award, and Harvard University's 2022 Luise Vosgerchian Teaching Award. In 2023, Columbia University's Rare Book & Manuscript Library acquired Tania's León's archive.

Cathie Boyd

2024 International Citation of Merit Recipient

Cathie Boyd is an internationally respected director, producer and curator known for her ability to inspire others and her strong leadership of creative endeavour. With over 30 years of experience, she is able to work across art forms, from opera to music, digital arts and film while being able to work at a strategic and practical level, often working in new and unusual ways to achieve goals.

Raised in Belfast, Ireland, Cathie graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and set up Cryptic in 1994 with the desire to create innovative music and/or sound-based performances that would '*ravish the senses*' of international audiences. Her many years of artistic practice include numerous international commissions and collaborations which have been presented in over 30 countries.

Cathie has been instrumental in providing a key platform for artists around the world by creating Glasgow's biennale Sonica Festival in 2012. She also has much experience in working with new technologies and was previously awarded a NESTA Fellowship to develop live visuals for classical music – performances include the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, BBS SSO, London Sinfonietta and NYO.

Awards include Creative Programming for Sonica; NESTA Fellowship; European Woman of Achievement for the Arts; Outstanding Young Person Award; Junior Chambers of Commerce and an Edinburgh Festival Fringe First. Cathie also served as President on the Board of IETM (international network for contemporary performing arts) and Vice Chair at Visiting Arts, London. She recently participated in the Performing Arts Research metaLAB with Harvard University.

Mary Lou Aleskie

2024 Patrick Hayes Award Recipient



Mary Lou Aleskie is an Internationally known advocate for the power of the arts to bring people together, not only within local communities, but around the globe. Since 2017, Ms. Aleskie has been the Howard Gilman '44 Executive Director of the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College. On campus she chairs the Provost's Council on Arts Advancement and Integration focusing on the creation and evolution of Dartmouth's Arts District. This initiative is catalyzed by the reimagining and expansion of the historic Hopkins Center in collaboration with world renowned architects, Snøhetta. Ms. Aleskie is known for her interdisciplinary approach, linking the arts with humanities and sciences across campus, including in the creation of Dartmouth's first Arts Integration Initiative.

Before Dartmouth, Ms. Aleskie was the director of the International Festival of Arts & Ideas (2005 - 2017) , where she was responsible for leading the largest international multi-disciplinary festival in New England, acclaimed for gathering world-class artists, thinkers and leaders, while attracting and engaging a broad and diverse audience. During her tenure, the Festival was recognized among the top arts presenters in the nation by the National Endowment for the Arts and grew its audience in record numbers. While there, she also served as a lecturer at Yale and was a Fellow at Branford College. Ms. Aleskie has served on varied committees and leadership roles at ISPA, a2ru, and local organizations including serving as ISPA Chair (2016-19).

Constantin Chiriac

2024 Angel Award Recipient

Constantin Chiriac is a theatre and film actor. As a cultural leader, Constantin Chiriac is President of the Sibiu International Theatre Festival, General Director of the "Radu Stanca" National Theatre in Sibiu, Director of the Sibiu Performance Arts Market and founder of the Sibiu Walk of Fame, of the School of Theatre and Cultural Management at the Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, of the International Doctoral Research Platform in Performing Arts and Cultural Management at the same university, of the Association Sibiu European Cultural Capital 2007. He is a professor at the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu and has received the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from important universities in Romania and worldwide, giving lectures and conferences at universities around the world. In 2019 the French Minister of Culture, Mr. Franck Riester, decorated him with the rank of *Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters*. In 2020, he was awarded the rank of *Knight of the National Order of the Legion of Honour of France* by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and received the Cultural Distinction of the Romanian Academy. Constantin Chiriac has played in over 40 performances, collaborated with important theatre directors worldwide and performed one-man shows and poetry recitals in over 50 countries.

The Sibiu International Theatre has been running, along its 30 editions, under the High Patronages of the Romanian Presidents and it was also granted the High Patronage of King Charles III and of the German President. The Festival received important recognitions from the King of Belgium, the Israeli President and the Emperor of Japan.

Denisse Flores Somarriba

2024 Emerging Leader Award Recipient

Denisse has 17 years of experience in the arts and culture sectors. This is only possible thanks to her passionate and focused belief in art's transformative powers, an ailment she happily shares with the souls in this hall.

Through her work at the University of Guadalajara Denisse has made key contributions to



Mexico's cultural landscape bringing her drive, passion and experience to flagship projects such as the Santander Performing Arts Centre, the Guadalajara International Book Fair and festivals such as the International Theater Festival for the Early Years, Guadalajara International Film Festival, Bogota Ibero-American Theater Festival, Circulart (Medellín) and the Pan American Games in Sao Paulo.

During her masters at King's College London in 2015, Denisse completed an internship with the British Council as it lead the UK's guest of honour appearance at Guadalajara's International Book Fair. This allowed her to have an invaluable inside view of the Council's *savoir-faire*, work culture and love of "friday wine".

Denisse heads the University of Guadalajara's Culture Innovation and Liaising Unit where she works in two directions: Inwards, the Unit promotes outreach and engagement with the University's 320K+ student community through governance and data analytics. Outwards, the Unit promotes international collaborations that increase programming opportunities, educational activities and professional liaising in benefit of Guadalajara artists.

She is a 2010 Kennedy Center for the Arts Fellows and a proud ISPA member since 2010 serving in several committees along the way and spearheading ISPA's 2019 summer conference in Guadalajara.

Aneeshwar Kunchala

2024 Celebrating Our Planet Award Recipient

Aneeshwar Kunchala is an 8-year-old conservationist who uses his art to inspire and spread his important message about conservation to young people and adults around the world. He started this remarkable journey after seeing a picture of a dead whale on the beach with its stomach filled with plastic. This incident made him do something for the natural world, because the water sources are littered, the soil and air is polluted, and it's impacting all the creatures. The animals are losing their home and some of the species are close to extinction due to deforestation and poaching.

Aneeshwar is determined to do his part for the natural world by raising awareness with his poems, paintings, and documentaries. At 7 years old, he had an incredible opportunity to present a documentary for the United Nations produced by Sky Kids, "COP27—6 Ways to Save Our Planet," where children from six continents talked about the solutions to save the world. Aneeshwar has become the Youngest Documentary Presenter (male), recognized by Guinness World Records. Aneeshwar also presented the Save Our wildlife documentary to demonstrate how climate change is impacting wildlife. He is fortunate to have amazing opportunities to take his voice around the globe using world stages like Britain's Got Talent and America's Got Talent, as well as Nordic, Oslo and Amsterdam Business forums.

Aneeshwar loves spending time outdoors watching birds. He believes that every animal has its own special superpower. He is a conservation and wildlife campaigning phenomenon. He has already won multiple national and international awards for his work building awareness and inspiring millions of people to protect the planet and its living things. He is a Young Scientific Explorer, Climate Change Voice of the Year 2023, a Global Child Prodigy award recipient, a BBC Blue Peter gold badge holder, a British Youth Citizen award recipient, and was named a Young Climate Change Leader by the UK's Prime Minister, and a British Future role model. These achievements have helped him to reach out to more people and inspire young children to explore the natural world and try and help it by making small meaningful changes.



About ISPA: The International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA) is a global association of more than 500 arts management leaders from 56 regions, who come together with the shared goal of strengthening and developing the arts internationally. We achieve this by building leadership ability, by recognizing and discussing field-wide trends and new developments, and by deepening global exchange through the arts. ISPA members include presenters, performing arts organizations, artist managers, competitions, funders, consultants and other professionals working in the performing arts. Founded in 1948, 2024 marks ISPA's 75th anniversary.

About ISPA Awards: As a leadership network, ISPA is committed to recognizing excellence in the performing arts globally. There is an annual call for award nominations. All nominations are reviewed by the Nominating Committee Members and then a slate of nominees is recommended to the Board of Directors for approval.

For more information on the ISPA Awards, visit www.ispa.org/page/awards_landing

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