

FOR IMMEDIATE MEDIA RELEASE

Announcing ISPA 2025 New York Awards Recipients

Janet Cowperthwaite, Cathy Graham, Tisa Ho, Yaron Lifschitz, Starmus Festival

*Award Presentation to be held at the
ISPA 2025 New York Congress: Leading with Creativity
Thursday, January 16, 2025*

New York, NY, USA (December 3, 2024)– On behalf of the Board of Directors, the International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA) announces the recipients of the ISPA 2025 Awards. The first ISPA Award was presented in 1975 to Beverly Sills (famed soprano and General Director, New York City Opera). Since then, ISPA has continued to recognize outstanding individuals and organizations for their contribution to the arts and their communities. The ISPA 2025 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.

Yaron Lifschitz (Artistic Director and CEO, Circa)

Nominating Statement: “Yaron Lifschitz is, a visionary and arguably one of the leading artistic entrepreneurs of the day. His commitment to circus arts and the development of future generations of circus artists is manifested through his work with CIRCA and the many regions within which he works.”

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.

Cathy Graham (Executive Director, NMC Recordings)

Nominating Statement: “Cathy’s [Graham] contribution to the arts goes far beyond her work at any one institution. It is embodied in her belief in the importance of music as a tool for cultural understanding and an appreciation of the arts as a vital part of society...”

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.

Tisa Ho (Former Executive Director, Hong Kong Arts Festival)

Nominating Statement: *"If you looked up the word "resilience" in the dictionary there will be no text, simply a picture of Tisa Ho. Tisa has led many organizations on to new levels of excellence and played an even more significant role in the broader international community which she so embraces."*

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.

Janet Cowperthwaite (Former Executive Director, Kronos Quartet)

Nominating Statement: *"Janet has been integral to the success of the Kronos Quartet. The quintessential "fifth member" of the Quartet, Janet's commitment to artistic and administrative excellence throughout her 43-year tenure cannot be overstated."*

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.

Starmus Festival

Nominating Statement: *"Starmus is a global festival of science and art that brings together some of the most respected minds on the planet. Their commitment to future development trends and global impact issues promises to influence the environment in which we all live."*

"While we received many worthy nominations, the Board was unanimous in their endorsement on the 2025 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 the [ISPA 2025 New York Congress: Leading with Creativity](#), on Thursday, January 16, 2025, at The Times Center in New York City.

###

[BIOGRAPHY OF THE AWARD RECIPIENTS]

Yaron Lifschitz

2025 Distinguished Artist Award Recipient

Yaron Lifschitz is a graduate of the University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, and National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), where he was the youngest director ever accepted into its prestigious graduate director's course. Since graduating, Yaron has directed over 80 productions including large-scale events, opera, theatre, physical theatre, and circus.

His work has been seen in over forty-five countries and across six continents by nearly two million people and has won numerous awards including six Helpmann awards and the Australia Council Theatre Award. His productions have been presented at major festivals and venues around the world including Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Barbican, Les Nuits de Fourvière, Chamaleon and all the major Australian festivals. His film work was selected for the Berlin and Melbourne Film Festivals. He was founding Artistic Director of the Australian Museum's Theatre Unit, Head Tutor in Directing at Australian Theatre for Young People and has been a regular guest tutor in directing at NIDA.

He is currently Artistic Director and CEO of Circa and was Creative Director of Festival 2018: the arts and cultural program of the 21st Commonwealth Games.

Cathy Graham

2025 International Citation of Merit Recipient

Cathy spent the first 14 years of her career in Stockholm working as a teacher and répétiteur with opera and theatre companies. Returning to the UK, she established herself on the London music scene, working for ENO Contemporary Music Studio, Almeida Opera, and as an Artists' Manager.

In 1994 she became Executive Director of the Society for the Promotion of New Music (SPNM), guiding organisational change, her tenure culminating in the SPNM receiving the Prudential Award for the Arts. From 1997 – 2006 she was Managing Director of the London Sinfonietta, during which time the ensemble toured extensively nationally and internationally, and saw its repertoire, profile and audience increase. She initiated and oversaw the ensemble's record label and led the move to Kings Place, the multi-purpose venue at Kings Cross, which acted as a base alongside the ensemble's South Bank Centre artistic residency.

Between 2006 and 2022 she was Director Music at the British Council where she worked internationally on arts and music projects which foster trust and cultural understanding between countries. She is currently Executive Director of NMC Recordings, the award-winning arts charity and record label representing British and Irish composers.

She has served on many Boards, including the Association of British Orchestras and the International Society for the Performing Arts, and for ten years was Chair of Streetwise Opera, an organisation which harnesses the power of music to help homeless people move forward with their lives. Awards include Hon RNCM and the Association of British Orchestras Award. In 2020 she received the honour of OBE for services to music and cultural relations.

Tisa Ho

2025 Patrick Hayes Award Recipient

Tisa Ho has sought to embrace the widest possible community in all her portfolios and to strengthen the organisations she served. The Hong Kong Arts Festival, Singapore Symphony, and Tong Yeong Concert Hall have all benefited from her efforts. A firm believer in empowering arts managers, she actively participates in regional and international networks and established an annual Cultural Leadership Summit at the Hong Kong Arts Administrators' Association.

As staunch advocate for ISPA, she worked closely the CEO to take the organisation through the covid years, including hosting an online Congress in this period.

She has received a Merit Award from the Hong Kong Government for services to the arts, and was elected to the All China Literature and Arts Association. Academic honours include Doctor of the University from the Griffith University, Australia; Fellowship of the Baptist University, Hong Kong; and Doctorate from the Hong Kong Academy of the Performing Arts.

She is concerned about the future that young people will face, and is grateful to have the opportunity to interact with students at Milan's La Scala Accademia and at the Seoul National University to encourage a diversity of views and possibilities.

Janet Cowperthwaite

2025 Angel Award Recipient

Janet Cowperthwaite was the longtime manager of the Kronos Quartet and the founding Executive Director of the Kronos Performing Arts Association (KPAA), a San Francisco-based nonprofit, for 43 years. Frequently described as "the fifth Beatle," Cowperthwaite played a pivotal role in the development and success of the Grammy-winning quartet and its organization. For more than four decades, she oversaw the commissioning of 1,100 works, the production of 75+ acclaimed recordings, and the planning and execution of thousands of performances around the world.

Cowperthwaite was instrumental in creating innovative programs such as the **Kronos Under 30 Project** to support young composers and **Kronos Fifty for the Future**, a free library of 50 contemporary quartet works, for which she raised over \$1M USD from more than 50 international partners. Pieces in the collection are widely performed and to date have been downloaded 40,000 times in 108 countries and territories. Cowperthwaite also had an important creative role producing many new

works, including Terry Riley's "Sun Rings", "At War With Ourselves" by Michael Abels and Nikky Finney, "A Thousand Thoughts" by Sam Green, and Tan Dun's "Ghost Opera." In 2024, as a capstone to the group's 50th anniversary, she led the effort to place the Archive at the Library of Congress, securing the Kronos/KPAA legacy.

Throughout her career Cowperthwaite has enjoyed mentoring artists and arts organizations. She has served on dozens of panels, and on several boards, including International Society for the Performing Arts, American Music Center, and Association of Performing Arts Professionals.

Starmus Festival

2025 Celebrating Our Planet Award Recipient

The Starmus Festival is a unique global celebration that blends science, art, and music, creating an extraordinary platform for the exchange of ideas and inspiration. Founded by astrophysicist Garik Israelian and Brian May from Queen (musician and astrophysicist), the festival brings together some of the most brilliant minds from diverse disciplines, including Nobel laureate scientists, astronauts, legendary musicians, and influential thinkers. Its mission is to bridge the gap between science and the general public by presenting complex concepts in engaging, creative, and accessible ways.

Since its inception, Starmus has hosted luminaries such as Stephen Hawking, Neil Armstrong, Hans Zimmer, Jane Goodall and many others, fostering a dialogue that celebrates humanity's curiosity and ingenuity. The festival features captivating lectures, thought-provoking panels, breathtaking live music performances, and artistic exhibitions that explore humanity's place in the cosmos. Notable highlights include the prestigious Stephen Hawking Medal for Science Communication, awarded to individuals and organizations that excel in bringing science to the public.

The festival has taken place in awe-inspiring locations like the Canary Islands and Switzerland, emphasizing the connection between the natural world and the vastness of space. La Palma, with its world-class observatories and pristine night skies, has been a fitting stage for Starmus, allowing attendees to marvel at the wonders of the universe.

Starmus is more than just a festival—it's a movement that inspires people to dream big, explore new frontiers, and appreciate the beauty of science and the arts coming together. It's a celebration of human achievement and our endless quest to understand the universe.

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

Media Contact: Zooey Cheng, Communication and Events Lead (zcheng@ispa.org)