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2023 RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED FOR THE AMERICAN THEATRE WING'S ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER INITIATIVE

AWARDING OVER HALF A MILLION DOLLARS IN SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS TO 30 STUDENT ARTISTS AND 10 SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

(New York, NY – March 8, 2024) – The **American Theatre Wing** (ATW), led by President and CEO Heather Hitchens, announced today the 2023 recipients of the **Andrew Lloyd Webber Initiative's** programming, including the **4-Year University Scholarships**, the **Training Scholarships**, and the **Classroom Resources Grants**. These scholarships and grants represent the Wing's most rigorous investment in direct support for underserved public school students demonstrating exceptional talent and economic need to continue their study of theatre.

"This is such a special initiative for us at the Wing," says Heather Hitchens, President and CEO of the American Theatre Wing. "From repairing Albert Hill Middle School's auditorium's audio system so that productions can once again be amplified, to the creation of a set-design apprenticeship between Camden Repertory Theater and Creative Arts High School in New Jersey, the needs are specific and varied, and the results are real. Directly due to the programs of the Andrew Lloyd Webber Initiative, more theater and art is created, shared, and made accessible to those it wasn't before."

Through the program's University Scholarships and Training Scholarships, the American Theatre Wing looks to bridge the gap between talent and opportunity, creating a strong pipeline to the professional theatre for promising artists of all backgrounds. The awarded student's area of focus can be performance, design, writing, stage management, or any other aspect of theatre.

The **4-Year University Scholarship** – available to high school students in Grade 12 who demonstrate talent and ability in the theatre arts but lack the resources to attend a four-year university program – can be used at an accredited private or public university or college in the United States. Each awarded student is provided with a scholarship of up to \$10,000 to use toward course fees, and is renewable for four years so long as a minimum GPA of 3.0 is maintained. The 2023 recipients of the **4-Year University Scholarship** are: actor, sound designer and arts administrator **Malychia Abudu-Clark** of Charlotte, NC, attending New York University, Tisch Drama; actor **Madelynn Forcier** of Pharr, TX, attending Elon University; actor **Moyo Ifafore** of Washington, DC, attending Carnegie Mellon University; actor **Sa'rai Jackson** of Baltimore, MD, attending Shenandoah College; composer & lyricist **Owen Knight** of Sykesville, MD, attending Cornell University; and set, lighting and sound designer **Ruby Ravsten** of Keller, TX, attending University of Oklahoma.

The recipient of the 2023 **Stewart F. Lane Fellowship for Career Advancement** – an award of \$10,000 presented each year to a graduating college senior who is selected based on their potential to make a positive, long-lasting contribution to the theatre industry – is **Jaurius Norman**, of University of Houston. Studying the craft of playwriting and dramaturgy, Jaurius’s academic career consists of multiple dramaturgy roles both at the University of Houston and Houston’s The Alley Theater. The University of Houston School of Theater and Dance selected to produce his senior play *Fish’s Belly* last fall.

The Training Scholarship is available for public middle and high school students who demonstrate talent and ability in the theatre arts but have a lack of resources to receive high level training prior to college. These scholarships can be used for Private or Group Voice, Dance, or Music lessons; theatre training programs that stand alone or are housed in professional theatre settings; theatre training camps; or special training opportunities. The 2023 recipients of the **Training Scholarships** are: **Akinkle Armand** of Washington, D.C., who attended British American Drama Academy; **Ebonie Bogle** of Maryland, who attended Southeastern Summer Theatre Institute; **Favor Buchi** of Alabama, who attended Southeastern Summer Theatre Institute; **Cameela Byrd** of North Carolina, who attended Open Jar: TECH Intensive; **Alexander Café** of New Jersey, who attended British American Drama Academy; **Alexandra Candiliotis** of Michigan, who attended Interlochen; **Ella Escamilla** of Florida, who attended Oklahoma City University High School; **Alexandra Fonseca** of Florida, who attended Boston Conservatory’s Musical Theatre Acting Intensive; **Brea Johnson** of Missouri, who attended Northwestern National High School Institute; **Deven Lawrence** of Texas, who attended The College Audition Conservatory; **Gabriel McKinney** of Illinois, who attended NYU Summer Music Theatre Workshop; **Ann-Marie Poveda** of Maryland, who attended Open Jar Institute Musical Theatre; **Anthony Quintana** of Florida, who attended Norwalk Conservatory; **Breanna Reynhout** of Michigan, who attended Interlochen Arts Camp; **Ariel Russell** of Virginia, who attended British American Drama Academy; **Arkida Saiwai** of Massachusetts, who attended University of Michigan’s Musical Theater Workshop; **Kayden Shelmire** of Louisiana, who attended The Dance Center Louisiana; **Willow Singleton** of Maryland, who attended British American Drama Academy; **Leah Taylor** of New York, who attended New York Conservatory of Dramatic Arts Summer Intensive Training; **Zakirah Walker** of North Carolina, who attended Drama Summer Intensive; **Kenna Wells** of North Carolina, who attended Southeastern Summer Theatre Institute; **Jaylon Williams** of Louisiana, who attended The Munny Summer Intensive; and **Olivia Zenetzis** of California, who attended Penn State: STATE! Musical Theatre Summer Program.

The Andrew Lloyd Webber Initiative’s **Classroom Resources Grants** are awarded to individual public K-12 schools, in the U.S. or Puerto Rico, or non-profit parent group associated with that K-12 school. This grant program directly funds under-resourced public schools, to provide instruments, dance floors, lighting grids, and other necessary materials to help create and enhance existing theatre programs. Grant requests of up to \$50,000 are considered, allowing the American Theatre Wing to extend meaningful resources to multiple deserving schools each year. The 2022- 2023 school year **Classroom Resources Grants** recipients are: **Albert Hill Middle School** (Richmond, VA), **Curley K8** (Jamaica Plain, MA), **J.O. Wilson Elementary School** (Washington, DC), **West Point High School** (West Point, MS), **Camden Repertory Theater Residency at Creative Arts High School** (Camden, NJ), **Canyon Hills High School** (San Diego, CA), **Cordova High School** (Rancho Cordova, CA), **High Point Central High School** (High Point, NC), **High School Ahead Academy Middle School** (Houston, TX), and **Royal Oaks School of the Arts** (Kannapolis, NC).

MORE ABOUT THE CLASSROOM RESOURCE GRANT RECIPIENTS

Albert Hill Middle School (Richmond, VA), for \$5,128, to purchase audio equipment desperately needed after part of the school's ceiling collapsed in the auditorium and ruined the soundboard years ago. Albert Hill Middle School will be able to perform musicals that will project the sound of the students' voices or the vocal accompaniment music with the new sound system. The auditorium is not only a place for performances, but it is also a classroom. With this sound system upgrade to Albert Hill's auditorium, they are able to support all of the young student's voices through new tools and technology and significantly impact the entire school, teachers, and students in every grade level.

Curley K8 (Jamaica Plain, MA), for \$7,650, to purchase equipment to support a variety of theatrical productions, and to supply students with tools to develop skills in the myriad of theater jobs outside of performing - including designing, creating, and setting up props, costumes and sets, lighting design and light board operation, and stage/house management. After COVID-19 hit and all theatre productions were shut down, the school restarted their theatre program with an expansion to all 5 days and a new strand to include production (tech) as an elective along with a musical. This strand was wildly popular with students who traditionally disconnect from the performing arts as teenagers. To flourish as a content area, there must be a transparent sense of equity. Not all students can stay after school, so this elective became the crown jewel.

J.O. Wilson Elementary School (Washington, D.C.) for \$5,843, to purchase a new stage curtain and rigging. The school's current curtains are over 30 years old and experiencing dry rot, ripped, torn and detached from the rigging in multiple areas. They also do not open or close properly and worsens significantly with each use. These curtains will help transform the current multi-use cafeteria into a functional theatre space. The curtains will be used for all school-wide performances such as the Winter Concert, Black History Month Celebration Performance, Empowerment Day, Student Talent Show and the Cardinal Drama Players Spring Production of Lion King Jr.

West Point High School (West Point, MS) for \$14,000, to refurbish the school's auditorium with equipment that will enhance the program's ability to educate students in the theatrical arts. These purchases - which include rolling garment racks and portable makeup stations with dust covers, an upgrade to the "vintage" Major B-156 Borderlights with LEDs, floor mics to replace the aging overhead lavaliers, and sandbags to secure stage flats - will help launch the program's second musical, and the first since returning to post-COVID operations. Students of West Point Consolidated School District, a Title I School in rural Mississippi composed predominantly of low-income students, benefit from the arts education they receive through the theatre program. It is too early to measure the long-term impact of the program, but initial results can be seen in the growing number of students interested in and participating in the performing arts classes and activities.

Camden Repertory Theater Residency at Creative Arts High School (Camden, NJ) for \$25,000, to partner with the theater company in residence Camden Repertory Theater's Hammer and Nails program. This program is a set design apprenticeship and this national-focused initiative will bring together professional artists, students, theater companies and colleges and universities to explore through hands-on workshops, demonstration presentations, and training sessions to encourage more African American and Latinx students to consider design and administrative careers in the theater arts.

Canyon Hill High School (San Diego, CA) for \$25,000 to purchase instruments, lighting, microphones, amplification equipment,, and sound peripherals for students to use on stage for musical productions. With these purchases, the school will no longer need to rent instruments and focus on a student-centered musical theatre moving forward.

Cordova High School (Rancho Cordova, CA) for \$10,200 to fund the program's expansion with more mics, and to support tech students the opportunity to learn what is involved in building and running a show with more elaborate tech. The grant will also allow the school to cover the cost of royalties, sets, costumes, and sound. The goal is to produce more musicals, and encourage involvement from students, including the school's very strong LGBTQ community on campus. As the theatre program is completely self-sufficient, funds going towards marketing to increase ticket sales, with ticket prices low enough, is important to continue offering the community opportunities to see these productions.

High Point Central High School (High Point, NC) for \$25,000 to repair, clean, and upgrade the auditorium at High Point Central, so that not only theatre students but students in other art forms can collaborate and engage in meaningful performing arts experiences. The Point Players Theatre Revitalization Project is centered around creating equitable access for students in need of the arts. This project is crucial, in that it educates students of the various career paths and possibilities in the arts, outside of performing on stage. It is a vital investment in the current and future arts supporters and will equip students in career readiness, no matter which path they choose.

High School Ahead Academy Middle School (Houston, TX) for \$25,000 to purchase new curtains for the cafetorium, lighting, digital theatre curriculum, and funding to take the students to see a live theatre show. The school is rather old, and lacks amenities that other newer or remodeled schools may have. The second year of its theatre program, the school has made incredible strides with the students, but does not have enough resources to put on a production that showcases everything the students and teachers have worked hard for throughout the year. Every student is required to take theatre at this school, yet with limited resources and no budget, it is hard to supply all of which is required to continue to build the program. This grant will enable the program, Express Yourself!, a year-long arts integration literacy project that collaborates theatre with ELA to improve literacy outcomes and support the arts on our campus. They will use readers curriculum, and performance to encourage students to not only enjoy reading, but immerse themselves in character study and development. This will ultimately improve standardized test scores, social emotional learning, and culminate into a larger final production run entirely by the students.

Royal Oaks School of the Arts (Kannapolis, NC) for \$25,000 to purchase primarily sound equipment, along with set, costume and props. The stage is connected to the gym and the "backstage space" is only wide enough for students to move from one side of the stage to the other without detection. All sets must be stationary. Lighting was not only minimal, it was aimed in the wrong direction. And the sound system was inside a concrete closet and often lost connection. The performance club has between 75-100 students each year and that is the group that does the biggest productions. The school needed microphones, and other audio components, so students do not not need to frantically switch them out among the actors backstage. The project also includes constructing platforms on casters in order to turn the set on the stage for shows. This would allow the illusion of a different setting. Finally, reusable props and costumes were needed for upcoming productions. Previously, the set and costumes were mostly funded by the theatre

teacher, but in order to have long term sustainability, funding from the school and grants is needed in order to have productions for the long term and increased volunteerism from parents and community members.

ABOUT THE ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER INITIATIVE

The Andrew Lloyd Webber initiative provides students at all levels with enhanced theatre education to initiate meaningful relationships with theatre in childhood and open doors for pursuing theatre as children become young adults. By fostering lifelong engagement with theatre through educational avenues, we provide diverse young people across the nation newfound access to industry success.

The initiative is how we rebuild the established path to working in the theatre industry. We reach students across the nation at an early age to make theatre transcend background, creating access to industry opportunities for all who seek them.

The initiative provides classroom grants to create or enhance theatre programs in our nation's under-resourced schools. Scholarships for afterschool and summer training programs, and tuition support for students pursuing theatre in higher education, provide support on the individual level to students determined to make a career in theatre.

The initiative expands The American Theatre Wing's legacy commitment to education and diversity – bringing theatre to more communities, and using performing arts education to give every student the opportunity to play a role in the American theatre.

Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation funds the initiative with an influential 1.3 million dollar three-year grant. The project is an extension of the work Webber, a multi-Tony Award winning composer-producer, is doing to promote and fund arts education through the foundation in the UK. To learn more about the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, visit www.andrewlloydwebberfoundation.com

ABOUT THE AMERICAN THEATRE WING:

The American Theatre Wing (Heather Hitchens, President and CEO) invests in brave work, supports creative growth, and celebrates excellence in bringing inclusive stories to our national culture through theatre. Founded by seven suffragists in 1917, on the eve of America's entry into World War I, the American Theatre Wing has spent a century honoring theatrical achievements and fostering artistry, by providing a platform for strong and fearless voices in the American theatre.

In addition to being the founder and co-presenter of the **Tony Awards®**, and the home of the **OBIE Awards**, the American Theatre Wing offers a powerful suite of programs that address all aspects of the national theatre ecology. Venerable programs like the **Andrew Lloyd Webber Initiative** nurture the work of young artists by providing access to theatre through education; esteemed annual prizes like the **Jonathan Larson Grants** create essential pathways to success for emerging professionals; and unique resources like **Master Class, The Network for Emerging Leaders**, and the Emmy-nominated **Working in the Theatre** series, offer artists with unparalleled opportunities to connect and learn from industry luminaries. To learn more about the extensive programming and grant opportunities for students, theatre professionals, and audiences, visit AmericanTheatreWing.org. For the latest updates and news, follow the Wing on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Twitter](#).

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