



Indy Arts Council announces 2025 ARTI Award winners & performers to be recognized at annual Start with Art celebration on August 21

Start with Art, presented by Schahet Hotels, has kicked off the fall arts season in Indianapolis since 1987

ARTI Award winners and Start with Art performer photos available [here](#)

Indianapolis (August 12, 2025) – The [Indy Arts Council](#), central Indiana’s leading arts advocacy and services agency, today announced the 2025 ARTI Award winners and performers ahead of its annual [Start with Art](#) event on Thursday, August 21 from 3-5 p.m. at the Indiana Roof Ballroom. Since 1987, Start with Art has kicked off the fall arts season in Indianapolis and celebrated the artists and arts organizations whose creative talents shape our world-class city. Nearly 1,000 arts, business, and community leaders will gather to support the Indy Arts Council’s vision of a creative life for all.

The Start with Art 2025 main floor tickets are sold out, but balcony seating (non-ADA accessible) [is still available](#), and the community is [encouraged to donate](#). Sponsorships, donations, and ticket sales support the work Indy Arts Council does to nurture a culture where artists, arts organizations, and residents thrive. In 2024, Indy Arts Council invested \$1.5M in 91 nonprofit arts and culture organizations through the City of Indianapolis Annual Grants Program, and \$849K in over 800 individual artists. In 2023, the Indianapolis arts and culture sector generated \$524M in direct economic impact serving 6.5M residents and visitors.

"We are thrilled to honor the 2025 ARTI Award winners and celebrate the transformative power of creativity in our community," said Judith B. Thomas, Indy Arts Council President & CEO. "We are thankful to CICF for their generous support of the ARTI Awards for the past four years. We also extend our deepest gratitude to all of our sponsors, individual donors, and partners who join us in our mission to champion arts and culture."

The annual ARTI Awards at Start with Art

The ARTI Awards honor people and organizations who are advancing equity and innovation in Indianapolis arts and culture. The awards are presented each year at Start with Art by [Indy Arts Council](#) with generous support from the [Central Indiana Community Foundation](#) (CICF).

Jessica Dunn a.k.a. [Sesseka](#), an Indianapolis-based artist specializing in animation and illusion, was chosen to create this year’s ARTI awards. The video she created for the award, titled *Silent Symphony*, showcases Indiana’s biodiversity through the season.

The 2025 winners include:

- Cultural Entrepreneur: [Indy Dance Council](#)
- Neighborhood Impact: [Mike Graves](#) of [BRIDGE Collective](#) and [The Murphy Arts Center](#)
- Artist / Activist: [Dancia Monét Malone](#) of Rokh
- Corporate Leadership: [Herbert Simon Family Foundation](#)
- Community Partnerships: [IF Theatre](#) and [Flanner House](#) | [Flanner Fringe Lab](#)
- Christel DeHaan Lifetime Achievement: [Iris Rosa](#)

Start with Art 2025 Entertainment

Start with Art provides a unique opportunity to showcase local arts and culture talent. This year's lineup includes:

Pre-show Reception:

- On the street: Tap dancing by Breanna Davis and Justin Lewis, curated by [Indy Dance Council](#)
- In the elevators: *Introspections in Motion* featuring [Kurt Vonnegut Museum & Library](#)
- Reception music: 10 Years of [Chreece](#) by Oreo Jones, Jay Brookinz, and Jane Sun Kim
- Photo booth artwork: "Segment One" by [ess mckee](#)

Program Highlights:

- Mo Gio wearable art performance created by [Monique Burts, Art & Soul 2025](#) Featured Artist
- [Mr. Kinetik](#), emcee
- Remarks from Mayor Joe Hogsett
- State of the Arts: Judith Thomas, Indy Arts Council President & CEO
- Panel discussion moderated by Neelay Bhatt, Next Practice Partners Founder & CEO; with panelists including Phyllis Boyd, Indy Parks Former Director & School of Art Institute of Chicago MFA Student/Working Artist; Patrick Talty, Indiana Sports Corp President & Indy Arts Council Board Member; and Judith Thomas, Indy Arts Council President & CEO
- Performances from [Indy Drag Theatre](#) and [Percussive Arts Society](#)

Start with Art 2025 Sponsors

Start with Art is made possible through the support of the event's presenting sponsor of 20+ years, [Schahet Hotels](#), alongside numerous civic, corporate, nonprofit, and community leaders and organizations. Additional returning lead sponsors include matching grant sponsor [Efroymsen Family Fund](#), and ARTI Award sponsor [CICF](#).

The Indy Arts Council would like to thank and recognize all of this year's Start with Art Sponsors:

- **Presenting Sponsor:** Schahet Hotels
- **Matching Grant Sponsor:** Efroymsen Family Fund
- **ARTI Award Sponsor:** Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF)

- **Gold Sponsors:** Christel DeHaan; First Merchants Bank; Indianapolis Airport Authority; Pacers Sports & Entertainment; The National Bank of Indianapolis
- **Silver Sponsors:** AES Indiana; Butler Arts & Events Center; Indianapolis Colts; Glick Philanthropies; Gregory & Appel; Herbert Simon Family Foundation; Herron School of Art + Design; Indianapolis Motor Speedway; J.P. Morgan Private Bank; Newfields; Schmidt Associates; Women on a Mission
- **Bronze Sponsors:** 16 Tech; American Structurepoint, Anders CPAs + Advisors; Birge Family Foundation; Borshoff; Brenda Horn; Buckingham Foundation; Children's Museum of Indianapolis; Citizens Energy Group; CSO; Deep End Talent Strategies; Eli Lilly and Company; Flashpoint Leadership Consulting; Hale Family Foundation; Ice Miller; Indiana Sports Corp; Indianapolis Urban League; IndyStar; International Art Project; JD Sports | Finish Line; Lacy Foundation; Lilly Endowment Inc.; The Mind Trust; Mirror Indy; Music for All; Pile CPAs; PNC Bank; Ritz Charles; Shiel Sexton; STUDIOAXIS; Taft; TAG Consulting; Visit Indy; Wallington Asset Management, LLC; Women's Fund of Central Indiana

About Indy Arts Council

[Indy Arts Council](#) is central Indiana's leading arts advocacy and services agency. Their mission is to champion arts and culture. Indy Arts Council believes every resident should experience arts and culture in a way that nourishes and inspires them. This vision of a creative life for all is central to the work they do to support artists, arts organizations, and the community.

For more information and to start exploring, visit www.indyarts.org.

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