

HOUSTON IS INSPIRED 2026 - 2027

INFORMATION SESSION
NOVEMBER 17, 2025



WELCOME



Deborah Lugo

Vice President of Programming & Education



AGENDA

MEET THE TEAM

HOBBY CENTER'S MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

OVERVIEW OF HOUSTON IS INSPIRED INITIATIVE

APPLICATION PROCESS

Q&A

TEAM



Robin Anderson

Education & Engagement Manager



Joseph Blanchard

Programming & Events Coordinator



Shelby Connolly

Project Manager

MISSION

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts **deepens** understanding of our **shared humanity**. We serve as a **connector**, **convenor** and **incubator** for all Houston audiences, artmakers and arts organizations. By presenting engaging performances and educational programs, we **strengthen our sense of belonging** to shape a more **cohesive and connected** Houston community.

VISION

The Hobby Center is the **central hub** for artists and audiences in Houston and is the **driving force** in the **performing arts ecosystem**. Building on a legacy of presenting the best of Broadway, the Hobby Center **reflects the diversity** of our city through a wide range of exceptional **artistic** and **educational** programming on and off stage. Compelling artists from Houston and around the globe engage audiences through **dynamic** and **innovative** artmaking and storytelling.

VALUES

TENACITY RESPECT INCLUSION GRATITUDE EXPLORATION

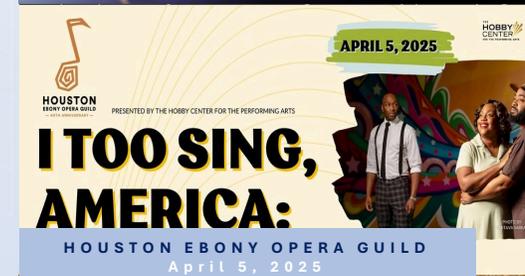


2023 – 2024 Season *Series Launch*

2024 – 2025 Season *Established Artist Residency Program*

2025 – 2026 Season *Established Open Call*

As part of its new mission, the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts piloted the **Houston Is Inspired initiative** in the **2023-24** Season with **ISHIDA Dance Company** and **Urban Souls Dance Company**. After a successful pilot, the Hobby Center committed to implementing its new artist residency annually with the **2024-25** Season featuring **FLY Dance Company**, **Houston Ebony Opera Guild**, and **Ana María Martínez with Andy Einhorn**. The **2025-26** Season marked the Hobby Center's **first open call**. The 2025-26 season features **The Ensemble Theatre**, **[Jk]Creativ.**, and **Silambam Houston**.



PROGRAM COMPONENTS

In partnership with the Hobby Center, three selected projects will receive...

Five days of full access to Zilkha Hall, including stage, dressing rooms, technical equipment, and production staff for rehearsals, tech and final performance

Stipend of \$20,000 to support the creation and development of the performance

Marketing investment from the Hobby Center and project-specific promotional plan created and executed in partnership with artist/organization

Professional photography of performance

Box office support and 30 complimentary tickets for the performance

Community engagement and/or educational opportunities that best align with presentation

Approximately a 90 to 120-minute ticketed performance at Zilkha Hall to culminate the week-long residency

Each week-long residency is valued at over \$60,000 in support of the project.





Zilkha Hall can provide:

- A projector and screen
- Stock soft goods (curtains, cycs, screens)
- Lighting Inventory
- Sound Inventory
- Dressing Rooms
- Orchestra Chairs
- Music Stands
- Music Stand Lights

For more information, please visit thehobbycenter.org

Artists will work closely with the Hobby Center's technical team to create a personalized production schedule for the week. Expect up to 8-hour days with required breaks. The final performance is scheduled for Friday. Artists should arrive mostly performance-ready (set built, lines memorized, choreography rehearsed, etc.).

Please note: Zilkha Hall does not have an on-site scenery shop or costume warehouse. As a touring venue, all props, sets, and scenery must be built and ready for load-in prior to the start of the residency.

You may include technical requirements in your application!





October 31,
2025

Application
Window
Opens

December 1,
2025

Application
Window
Closes

FEBRUARY
2026

Selected
Projects
Notified (3)

APRIL
2026

Public Season
Announcement
for 26/27
Houston is
Inspired Season

NOVEMBER
2026

Performance in
Zilkha Hall
(Project 1)

JANUARY
2027

Performance in
Zilkha Hall
(Project 2)

MARCH / APRIL
2027

Performance in
Zilkha Hall
(Project 3)

GONZO
247

EVALUATION OF STYLE

To apply, applicants must:

- Be a **Houston-based** performing artist(s) or organization(s).
- Define how the Houston Is Inspired residency will **deepen their artistry, further their creative work, and celebrate any specific milestone** for the artists or the city of Houston.
- Demonstrate **readiness to present** a 90–120-minute performance in Zilkha Hall.
- Commit to **spreading the word** via all their communication channels and audiences.
- Be available to fully participate in one of the selected **residency weeks** slated for:
 1. **November 2026**
 2. **January 2027**
 3. **March / April 2027**



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Proposals must include a **description of the performance**, a **biography of the artists** and/or organization, and a **link to previous performances**. Multi-disciplinary projects and collaborations are welcome.

Proposals must define how the Houston Is Inspired residency will deepen their artistry, engage their community, further their creative work and celebrate any specific milestone. The Hobby Center is committed to selecting artists who will benefit from this week-long residency by demonstrating an opportunity for **growth**, highlighting an **underrepresented** organization, showcasing a **unique** art form, collaboration or innovative project, or celebrating an artistic **milestone**.



SELECTION PROCESS

Applications ranging from all performing arts disciplines will be evaluated by a panel of **local arts community members** and **Hobby Center staff**. Using the selection criteria, the panel will assess the applicant's artistry and how the residency will further their creative work.

Is this application only for nonprofit organizations?

No. The application is open to artists, performing arts groups, and nonprofit organizations based in the Greater Houston area.

Does the project have to be a new work, or can it be something previously created?

Projects can be brand new or previously developed pieces that the applicant wants to refine during the residency week leading up to the final performance.

Do partnerships need to submit multiple applications?

No. If you're applying as part of a partnership, please identify one lead organization to submit the application on behalf of the group. Be sure to name all partner organizations in the application. All partnering entities must meet the eligibility requirements. The \$20,000 artist fee will be issued to the lead organization, who will be responsible for distributing it among partners.

What are the time parameters of the residency?

The residency runs Monday through Friday, culminating in a final performance on Friday. Artists/organizations will collaborate with the Hobby Center's technical team to build a weekly schedule. While days are not 24 hours, the schedule is generally based on an 8-hour workday with union breaks included. The Hobby Center is flexible and will work to accommodate artist availability.

How many performances are there?

Each finalist will present one performance, typically on the Friday evening of their residency week. Alternate timing may be discussed depending on other campus events that day.

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What kind of access do artists have to technical support and production time?

Artists will work closely with the Hobby Center's technical team to create a personalized production schedule for the week. Expect 8-hour days with required breaks. The final performance is scheduled for Friday. Artists should arrive mostly performance-ready (set built, lines memorized, choreography rehearsed, etc.).

The week is meant for fine-tuning and enhancing the work using the Hobby Center's professional equipment and technical staff. For technical specifications, visit: [Zilkha Hall Rentals – The Hobby Center](#)

Please note: Zilkha Hall does not have an on-site scenery shop or costume warehouse. As a touring venue, all props, sets, and scenery must be built and ready for load-in prior to the start of the residency.

Does the Hobby Center provide projectors?

Yes. Zilkha Hall has a projector and screen available as part of its house technical inventory. Specifications are available in the link above.

Can we include specific technical needs in our application?

Yes. You may include detailed technical requirements as part of your project proposal.

How have other artists or organizations used the \$20,000 stipend?

Past participants have used the stipend in various ways, such as compensating artists, producing sets, boosting marketing efforts, and more. Finalists are not required to submit receipts or reports on how the stipend is used.

Since the final performance is ticketed, who receives the proceeds?

All ticket proceeds go to the Hobby Center to help fund the residency program. Artists are guaranteed a \$20,000 stipend and receive 30 complimentary tickets to use at their discretion.

Ticket sales do not offset the full cost of the residency, which is valued at \$60,000 and fully funded by the Hobby Center. The Hobby Center will work with each finalist to understand their audience and set appropriate ticket prices to encourage strong attendance.

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Does every artist in the project need to live in Houston?

No. The Hobby Center will not provide travel and housing stipends, but can recommend hotels with specific rates for guests artists.

Do we need to hire a crew for our project?

The Hobby Center is proud to pay for union labor through IATSE Local 51. This does not include a stage manager. We are happy to connect you to stage managers in our network to be employed through your own means.

Can I adapt work that has previously been produced at the Hobby Center for Houston Is Inspired?

You are welcome to apply with work to be adapted for a different scale. Please be mindful that your work reflects the mission of the Houston Is Inspired series.

Is there a priority for either singular artists or arts organizations?

No. The Hobby Center is focused on amplifying the projects that best fit the mission. We have had a mix of individual artists and arts organizations.

How should my show be split up to include an intermission?

It is completely up to you how your show is divided. You do not have to include an intermission in your program.

Can I use projections for Subtitles?

Yes. Zilkha hall has one projector and multiple screens for use, which could work for subtitles.

If I am applying with a partner organization should I answer application questions for both myself and the organization?

Yes! Hearing about the context and goals of all parties involved help us make more informed decisions!

Do I need to provide the names of all artists I am employing for the project?

It is not necessary, but showing names of all artists shows a detailed and solid plan for the project.

What do education and community outreach programs look like for Houston Is Inspired?

We'll work together with selected projects to understand their stories, the communities they want to reach, and how they can best engage those communities. Past community outreach programs have included school talks, preshow lobby engagements, and Q&A's.

Am I allowed to apply for other grants and funding from donors to support this work?

Yes! You can subsidize the cost of your project with funding outside the Hobby Center.

Can I add additional performances?

As of this year, the Hobby Center is only able to provide the staffing resources for one performance.

What past project materials should I provide if this is a new work?

We really want to know who you are as an artist, so anything that helps us understand your ethos and vision will be great.

Who makes up the selection panel?

There are artists from dance, theatre, music, and an interdisciplinary artist, production manager, Zilkha hall staff member, member of the Hobby Center board, and an early-career artist.

GRATITUDE

Contact for later questions:

Joseph Blanchard

Jblanchard@thehobbycenter.org

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts serves as a connector, convenor and incubator for all Houston audiences, artmakers and arts organizations. Opened in 2002, the campus houses two theaters including the 2,650-seat Sarofim Hall and the 500-seat Zilkha Hall. Delivering a best-in-class patron experience, the Hobby Center welcomes over 500,000 audience members annually to engage with high-quality arts programming including the Memorial Hermann Broadway at the Hobby Center series. The Hobby Center is also home to a full season of musical theatre produced by Principal Resident Company Theatre Under the Stars, as well as a variety of diverse performances from both Houston-based and touring artists and companies. Education and accessibility initiatives are central to the Hobby Center's impact in Houston through programs like the ExxonMobil Discovery Series that welcomes thousands of students to free performances every season.

Please visit TheHobbyCenter.org for more information.

Follow the Hobby Center on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).