

TJAA plans online events Oct. 25, Nov. 15

Shining the light on Jewish arts

By Deb Silverthorn

The Texas Jewish Arts Association (TJAA) is convening two programs via Zoom in the coming weeks, continuing its mission of bringing thoughtful programming to the community.

"We're a community of visual artists, dancers, musicians, writers and art enthusiasts and we hope others will join us," said TJAA President Nan Phillips, a sculptor and stained and fused glass artist and teacher. "Our mission is to support artist members by fostering camaraderie, offering educational and social programming, and bringing artists' work to the public."

On Sunday, Oct. 25, from 3 to 5 p.m., the Art Schmoose will allow the community to get to know the artists.

On Sunday, Nov. 15, Dennis Kratz, senior associate provost and founding director of the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas, will lead the discussion APART: Thoughts on Public Art, Religion, Translation and Creating and Responding to Art.

The organization was formed in 2013 after a program by the Dallas Jewish Historical Society brought together Nancy Cohen Israel as a speaker and local artists who displayed their work. Israel is a Dallas



Photo: Rafael John Caschi

art historian, art educator, writer, curator, and owner of Art à la Carte. In January, the Texas Jewish Arts Association and the Texas Sculpture Association collaborated to present the Juried Exhibition at the Eisemann Center for the Performing Arts. Dancers, from left, Ally Elliot, Ally Z. Shives, Terrance Carson, Rose Kotopka and Suki John performed to the music of violinist Sarah Price.

art historian, art educator, writer, curator, and owner of Art à la Carte.

With a mutual desire to connect, and to create programs and events that could be held taking the Jewish calendar and other sensitivities into account, the TJAA was founded by Israel, Julie Berman, Ian Ayers Friedman, Kim Goldberg, Veronique Jonas, Nan Phillips and George Tobolowsky.

The last public event, a juried exhibition by a collaboration of the TJAA and Texas Sculptors Association, featured nearly a month of many facets of art at the Eisemann Center for the Performing Arts in Richardson. Among the highlights: a Jan. 19 reception featuring speaker Congregation Beth Torah's Rabbi Elana Zelony; "Hasidic Duets" by Dr. Max Stern; and a composition by Ayala Asherov-Kakas, "Winters and Afterthought." The latter was

led by Sarah Price, TJAA's music division director, and with dancers performing amid paintings and sculptures.

Last month, Price and Asherov-Kakas premiered a composition for solo violin, sponsored by TJAA's partnership with the Israeli Composers' League. Composed by Asherov-Kakas, and performed by Price, "Serenade" made its debut on the TJAA's website, Facebook and YouTube pages.

"With live performances shut down, and all of us not knowing the when, what and how we might return, we are grateful for these opportunities to reach even more people to share our art," said Price. "It was my first attempt at anything technical, and it's all a learning opportunity, but we've had a great response."

Asherov-Kakas agreed. "This piece



Photo: Ian Ayers Friedman

Members of the Texas Jewish Arts Association hope to return to gallery visits, like this one to the Cris Worley Fine Arts gallery which was exhibiting the work of artist Simeon Farhat. From left, Roseline Bedford, Nan Phillips, Deborah Loneragan, Gail Sachson and Carol Cohen.

is a reminder of the social distancing we're all witnessing. These are hard times," said the Israeli native, composer, performer and music teacher at the Jerusalem Academy for Music and Dance. She wrote the piece during quarantine, struck by how difficult it was to create something moving at this time. "I asked myself if it was possible to be romantic during these times of isolation. 'Serenade' was my answer to take off and fly as music does."

Suki John, TJAA dance division director and a professor in the School for Classical & Contemporary Dance at TCU, came to the organization four years ago. With TJAA members, she is building upon her 1990

choreo-drama, "Sh'ma," creating an educational component to the story of her family's experience during and after the Holocaust.

"The program in January was beautiful and we hope to create other opportunities, sooner than later, to come together — however that is," said John, who enjoys the structure of working across disciplines with live music and surrounded by physical art. "Regardless of our members' talents, we want to improvise and bring joy and art into each other's lives."

To register for either event, or for more information about the Texas Jewish Arts Association, visit texasjewisharts.org/upcoming-events.html.