



**BAM Virtual Gala 2020 honors Cate Blanchett, Zadie Smith, and Jeanne Donovan Fisher for their artistic achievements and philanthropic contributions—May 13 at 8pm on BAM.org**

**Gala includes performances by St. Vincent, Brooklyn Youth Chorus, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch dancer Julie Anne Stanzak; a living room dance party with house music DJ Eli Escobar; and the annual BAM Art Auction**

**Open to all, event supports BAM’s artistic mission and continues series of unique digital experiences offered as *Love from BAM***

**April 30, 2020/Brooklyn, NY**—On May 13, the BAM Virtual Gala 2020 honors actor and director **Cate Blanchett**, author **Zadie Smith**, and philanthropist and producer **Jeanne Donovan Fisher** for their invaluable contributions to film, literature, theater, and cultural philanthropy. In accordance with COVID-19 safety and social distancing guidelines, the gala will be hosted this year on BAM.org and open to the public. The event directly supports BAM’s commitment to its wide scope of adventurous programming and viewers are invited to make contributions throughout the evening.

BAM President Katy Clark said, “Moving to an online, virtual format gives BAM an exciting opportunity to open its gala experience to a wider audience, pay tribute to our amazing honorees in new ways, and gather the arts community in a challenging time. We are excited to share this unique experience as part of our current digital *Love from BAM* programming. Our greatest concern right now is for everyone’s health and safety. When we can safely come together once again, we’ll look forward to seeing you at BAM.”

Gala chairs are **William I. Campbell** (BAM Vice Chair) and **Christine Wächter-Campbell**; and **Judith R. Fishman** and **Alan H. Fishman** (BAM Chairman Emeritus).

The artistic director for BAM’s virtual gala is award-winning theater and film director **Maureen Towey**.

Artists who have performed at BAM will create special tributes to the honorees. Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch Artistic and General Director Bettina Wagner-Bergelt has graciously offered a solo to be danced by company member Julie Anne Stanzak and filmed by French filmmaker Nathalie Larquet in honor of Cate Blanchett. GRAMMY Award-winning ensemble Brooklyn Youth Chorus, under the direction of Founder and Artistic Director Dianne Berkun Menaker, will perform a Philip Glass composition dedicated to Jeanne Donovan Fisher. In honor of Zadie Smith, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater company members will pay tribute with an original, short performance film.

Multiple GRAMMY Award winning artist **St. Vincent** will perform in celebration of BAM—seen exclusively during the livestreamed event. Renowned house DJ **Eli Escobar** will MC a living room dance party to close out the evening.

The annual BAM Art Auction, powered by Artsy, will launch on the day of the gala and run online through May 27. The event, featuring dynamic works from a range of artists working in different media, brings together art-lovers, collectors, and patrons in support of the institution. The auction is co-chaired by BAM Trustees **Tony Bechara** and **Mark Diker**, and features works by artists **Katherine Bradford**, **Marcel Dzama**, **Alex Katz**, **Chloe Wise**, **Erin Shirreff**, **Swoon**, and **Anish Kapoor**, among many others.

Gala benefit committee members include A24 Films, **Tony Bechara**, Bloomberg Philanthropies, **Vida & Patrick Brett**, **Rose Byrne & Bobby Cannavale**, **Natalia Chefer & Joel Tompkins**, **Neil & Kathleen Chrisman**, **Deborah Colson & Mark Diker**, Con Edison, Delta Air Lines, **Elizabeth & Matthew Denys**, **Carol & Roger Einiger**, **Thérèse M. Esperdy & Robert G. Neborak**, **Steven & Susan Felsher**, **Roberta Garza & Roberto Mendoza**, **Teresa Gonzalez**, **Jevon Gratineau**, **Ethan Hawke**, **Kameron Kordestani**, **Robin & Edgar Lampert**, **Marley B. Lewis**, **Pat Mitchell**, **Lupita Nyong'o**, **Gabriel & Lindsay Pizzi**, **Sibylle & Robert Redford**, The Rita and Alex Hillman Foundation, **Jonathan F.P. & Diana Calthorpe Rose**, **Keri Russell & Matthew Rhys**, **Chelsea & Morwin Schmookler**, **Timothy & Julie Sebuya**, **Amy Sherman-Palladino & Daniel Palladino**, **Galia & Axel Stawski**, The Stephen and Ruth Hendel Foundation, **Alexa & Marc Suskin**, **Joseph A. Stern**, **Tommy Tune**, **Iva Vukina**, and **Rachel Weisz**.

Each gala honoree distinctly embodies BAM's adventurous spirit and commitment to the arts, and each has contributed to BAM's legacy of supporting outstanding achievements in the performing arts, cinema, and literature. The iconic Cate Blanchett has appeared on BAM's stage in the title role of *Hedda Gabler* (2006) and as a masterful and critically acclaimed Blanche in Liv Ullmann's production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (2009). The renowned novelist, essayist, and short story author Zadie Smith appeared at BAM in 2007 and 2016 as part of the *Eat, Drink, & Be Literary* series, and was part of BAM's *Unbound* book-launch series in 2014. Trustee Jeanne Donovan Fisher was elected to BAM's board in 2006. In addition to serving on BAM's film committee, she was a devoted supporter and champion for the construction of the BAM Fisher, which opened in 2012.

#### **About the honorees:**

**Cate Blanchett** is an internationally acclaimed and award-winning actor, producer, humanitarian, and dedicated member of the arts community. In recognition of her continued advocacy for the arts and support of humanitarian and environmental causes, Blanchett has been awarded the Companion of the Order of Australia in the General Division; the Centenary Medal for Service to Australian Society through Acting; the Stanley Kubrick Award for Excellence in Film; the Women in Film Crystal + Lucy Award for expanding the roles of women in film; and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture. She holds Honorary Doctorates of Letters from the University of New South Wales, the University of Sydney and Macquarie University, and is a graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Arts. In 2018, Blanchett served as Jury President of the 71st Cannes Film Festival in France. Her countless extraordinary film performances have garnered Blanchett three BAFTAs®, two Academy Awards®, three Golden Globe® Awards, as well as numerous award nominations. Blanchett is equally accomplished on the stage, having led the Sydney Theatre

Company as co-artistic director and CEO for six years with her partner, Andrew Upton. For her onstage roles, she was nominated for a Tony Award® and honored with the Ibsen Centennial Commemoration Award. Blanchett is a patron of the Sydney Film Festival, an ambassador for the Australian Film Institute and The Old Vic theatre and a lifetime ambassador for the Australian Conservation Foundation. She is also a Global Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and was honored with the Crystal Award at the 2018 World Economic Forum in Davos. She is co-founder and president of the production company Dirty Films with Upton. Dirty Films has produced such films as *Carol*, *Truth*, and *Little Fish*.

In 2020, Blanchett can be seen as Phyllis Schlafly in FX's new limited series, *Mrs. America*, which she executive produced alongside Dahvi Waller, Stacey Sher, and Coco Francini. Blanchett will also soon be seen in the six-episode drama series *Stateless*, which she co-created with Elise McCredie and which is executive produced by Dirty Films along with Matchbox Pictures. Featuring an all-female writing and directing team, *Stateless* examines issues of displacement as shown through four characters caught up in Australia's immigration system, each one shedding light on the complications and contradictions of border protection.

Blanchett resides in the United Kingdom with her husband, four children, three dogs, two pigs and chickens.

**Zadie Smith** was born in North-West London in 1975 and holds a degree in English Literature from the University of Cambridge. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and has twice been listed as one of Granta's 20 Best Young British Novelists. Her first novel, *White Teeth*, was the winner of The Whitbread First Novel Award, The Guardian First Book Award, The James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction, and The Commonwealth Writers' First Book Award. Her second novel, *The Autograph Man*, won The Jewish Quarterly Wingate Literary Prize. Zadie Smith's third novel, *On Beauty*, won the Orange Prize for Fiction, The Commonwealth Writers' Best Book Award (Eurasia Section) and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Her fourth novel, *NW*, was shortlisted for the Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize and the Women's Prize for Fiction. Her most recent novel, *Swing Time*, was published in November 2016 and was shortlisted for the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction and longlisted for the Man Booker 2017. She published her first essay collection, *Changing My Mind*, in 2009 and her second essay collection, *Feel Free*, in 2018. Her first short story collection, *Grand Union*, was published in 2019. Smith writes regularly for *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books* and is a tenured professor of Creative Writing at New York University (NYU). She lives in London and New York.

**Jeanne Donovan Fisher** is a producer, investor, and philanthropist living in New York City. Fisher is president of True Love Productions, a theater production company in New York that she formed in 2001. Prior to producing, Fisher's professional background was in strategic communications. She was a managing director and founding partner of Sard Verbinnen & Co., a strategic public relations consulting firm in New York. Before joining SVC, she was vice president and director of corporate communications at Morgan Stanley.

Fisher is an active philanthropist who, in addition to BAM, serves on the boards of the Sundance Institute (vice chair) and Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard (chair). She also supports numerous additional nonprofit institutions, particularly in the areas of arts and education.

## About the performers:

**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**, recognized by US Congressional resolution as a vital American “Cultural Ambassador to the World,” grew from a now-fabled March 1958 performance in New York that changed forever the perception of American dance. Founded by Alvin Ailey, recent posthumous recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor, and guided by Judith Jamison beginning in 1989, the Company is now led by Robert Battle, whom Judith Jamison chose to succeed her on July 1, 2011. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has performed for an estimated 25 million people in 71 countries on 6 continents – as well as millions more through television broadcasts, film screenings, and online platforms--promoting the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance tradition. In addition to being the Principal Dance Company of New York City Center, where its performances have become a year-end tradition, the Ailey company performs frequently in other major theaters throughout the United States and the world during extensive yearly tours. The Ailey organization also includes Ailey II (1974), a second performing company of emerging young dancers and innovative choreographers; The Ailey School (1969), one of the most extensive dance training programs in the world; Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs, which brings dance into the classrooms, communities and lives of people of all ages; and The Ailey Extension (2005), a program offering dance and fitness classes to the general public, which began with the opening of Ailey’s permanent home—the largest building dedicated to dance in New York City, the dance capital of the world—named The Joan Weill Center for Dance, at 55th Street at 9th Avenue in New York City. For more information, visit [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org).

Annie Clark made her recorded debut as **St. Vincent** in 2007 with *Marry Me*, and has, in relatively short order, become one of the most innovative and enigmatic presences in modern music.

Each of St. Vincent’s four subsequent albums has met with critical acclaim and commercial success eclipsing that of its predecessor. These albums would include *Actor* (2009), *Strange Mercy* (2011), and her self-titled fourth album and winner of the 2014 GRAMMY for Best Alternative Album, making her only the second female artist ever to win in that category. In addition to these solo works, St. Vincent joined with David Byrne to record and release the collaborative album *Love This Giant* in 2012, and performed with Dave Grohl, Krist Novoselic and Pat Smear of Nirvana at the band’s 2014 induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, playing the season finale of *Saturday Night Live* that same year.

In 2017, working with co-producer Jack Antonoff, St. Vincent created a defining statement with *MASSEDUCTION*. As ambitious as it was accessible, the album broke St. Vincent into the U.S. and UK top 10s while landing at #1 on the Best of 2017 lists of Jon Pareles of *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*—and placing high in the year-end rankings of *The AV Club*, *Billboard*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Mashable*, *The New York Daily News*, *NME*, *Noisey*, *Paste*, *Pitchfork*, *Q*, *Stereogum*, *USA Today*, and more.

St. Vincent’s latest album, last year’s *MassEducation*, reveals another dimension of 2017’s universally acclaimed *MASSEDUCTION*. A stunning standalone work in its own right. *MassEducation* was recorded live in the studio by Annie Clark on vocals and Thomas Bartlett on piano over two nights in August 2017 during the mixing of *MASSEDUCTION*. The new album lays bare the exquisite songcraft of its other half, rendering songs like “Slow Disco” and “Savior”

and their subjects in vivid, vulnerable new light. Clark herself describes the album as “two dear friends playing songs together with the kind of secret understanding one can only get through endless nights in New York City.”

Outside of recording and performing, St. Vincent has directed the short horror film *The Birthday Party* and recently released the second edition of her signature Ernie Ball Music Man guitar.

**DJ Eli Escobar** is the quintessential New York City DJ. A devoted collector, explorer, and connoisseur of all kinds of music with hip-hop roots, he is hugely well-respected in the New York club circuit after over two decades of mutual love for the city and the house scene.

Most at home while hunched over the decks at some jumping club on a Brooklyn backstreet, he also has production magic at his fingertips. While growing up in Manhattan Eli worked for a time in a record shop, soaking up the sounds of New York’s clubbing epicenter which strongly informed his take on dance music and the shape of his albums. The latest one, *Last Summer*, was released on his own Night People label at the end of 2019.

Escobar is putting his own twist on the city’s house and disco soundtrack, connecting the dots between yesterday’s golden era classics and today’s club anthems.

**Brooklyn Youth Chorus’** Grammy Award-winning ensemble, led by Founder & Artistic Director Dianne Berkun Menaker, has collaborated with a range of organizations and artists including the New York Philharmonic, The National, Wye Oak, Bon Iver, Shara Nova, International Contemporary Ensemble, William Brittelle, London Symphony Orchestra, Barbra Streisand, Arcade Fire, Sir Elton John, and Grizzly Bear. As a commissioner of new music, the Chorus has introduced more than 120 original works and world premieres by contemporary composers, including collaborations with Caroline Shaw, Toshi Reagon, DJ Bishi, Bryce Dessner, and Nico Muhly.

The Chorus has a strong reputation as producer of original works including *Silent Voices* (National Sawdust, New Victory Theater), *Black Mountain Songs* (BAM Next Wave Festival 2014); and *Tell the Way* (St. Ann’s Warehouse 2011). The Chorus has released two albums: *Silent Voices* (2018) and *Black Mountain Songs* (2017). Founded in 1992, Brooklyn Youth Chorus has served nearly 6,000 students, currently involving more than 700 students in its after-school and public-school programs. The Chorus’ faculty teach a range of repertoire and styles using founding artistic director Dianne Berkun Menaker’s Cross-Choral Training® method, emphasizing healthy and versatile vocal technique, music theory, sight-singing and ear training.

### **Julie Anne Stanzak / Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch**

Born in North Carolina, Stanzak’s early studies included the School of American Ballet, New York, and The Washington School of Ballet, Washington D.C. From 1976 to 1979 she was a member of the Chicago Lyric Opera Ballet, under director Maria Tallchief, who remains her great mentor. From 1979 to 1985 Stanzak joined the Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam under director Rudi van Danzig, performing in a diverse repertory that included works of George Balanchine, Hans van Manen, Toer van Schayk, Kurt Jooss, and Caroline Carlson, along with the classics.

From 1986 to the present she has been a member of Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, performing in more than 30 pieces. Stanzak choreographs, directs, and teaches professional workshops and seminars throughout Europe, Japan, England, and the US. She also collaborates with professional companies that have artists with physical and neuro diversities. Most recently Stanzak has been focusing on her own solo works.

For press information contact Sandy Sawotka at [ssawotka@BAM.org](mailto:ssawotka@BAM.org)

#### Credits

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#### General Information

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, BAM Rose Cinemas, and BAMcafé are located in the Peter Jay Sharp building at 30 Lafayette Avenue (between St Felix Street and Ashland Place) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. BAM Harvey Theater is located two blocks from the main building at 651 Fulton Street (between Ashland and Rockwell Places). Both locations house Greenlight Bookstore at BAM kiosks. BAM Fisher, located at 321 Ashland Place, is the newest addition to the BAM campus and houses the Judith and Alan Fishman Space and Rita K. Hillman Studio. BAM Rose Cinemas is Brooklyn's only movie house dedicated to first-run independent and foreign film and repertory programming. BAMcafé, operated by Great Performances, offers varied light fare and bar service prior to BAM Howard Gilman Opera House evening performances.

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