FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 6, 2026

MEDIA CONTACT: James Juliano

SHOUT Marketing and Media Relations

773-852-0506

james@shoutchicago.com

*Media passes, photographs, videos, interviews and additional materials available upon request.

ASIAN AMERICAN ARTS CHICAGO ANNOUNCES 2026 FESTIVAL SCHEDULE AND TICKETS ARE NOW ON SALE FOR EVOLUTION: ASIAN AMERICAN ARTS FESTIVAL, MAY 2 AND 3, AT LOOKINGGLASS THEATRE

During Asian American, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian Heritage Month, the Two-Day Festival Features More than 125 Artists, Performers and Vendors

CHICAGO – Asian American Arts Chicago (AAAC) announces the Festival schedule and that tickets are now on sale for **EVOLUTION: Asian American Arts Festival**, **Saturday, May 2** from 12 - 8 p.m. and **Sunday, May 3** from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. at the historic Lookingglass Theatre's Water Tower Water Works, 163 E. Pearson St. at Michigan Ave. **EVOLUTION: Asian American Arts Festival** is a two-day celebration of the transformation and creativity of **Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiians in Chicago** and includes more than **125 artists and performers, from a variety of disciplines including dance, theatre, interactive art displays, film and music and a food and craft market** representing the community. The complete festival schedule is now available at AAAC.art with tickets, $25 - $120, online, in-person and Festival Passes, are available at AAAC.art.

Asian American Arts Chicago's mission statement is to support and amplify artistic expression from the Asian American diaspora in Chicago, Illinois. AAAC produces festivals, performances and supports a database of Asian American identified artists to provide better representation, equity and opportunity.

"Chicago has the fifth largest Asian American population in America and we're the fastest growing group in Chicago and nationally. Yet, as a Korean American performing artist for more than 25 years in Chicago, I wasn't given the same opportunities as my peers," said **Executive Producer Mia Park**. "This Festival creates space for Asian American, Pacific Island, and Native Hawaiian makers and creators to showcase their work and connect. The aim of the festival is to amplify and celebrate these voices."

Producer **Seoyoung Park** adds, “As an Asian-identifying female artist based in Chicago, I’m excited that this festival will bring together Asian American, Pacific Island and Native Hawaiian artists and audiences to celebrate creativity and connection. It’s an important step toward building a stronger, more unified community.”

Highlights of Chicago’s brightest talents participating in EVOLUTION currently include:

Saturday, May 2
Festival hours: 12 - 8 p.m.

Upstairs
12 - 8 p.m.
Vendor/Music: Henna Zamurd Butt

12:15 p.m. (60+ minute showcase)
Spoken Word Showcase: Lisa Low, Randy Kim, Sofia Javed

1:45 p.m. (30+ minute showcase)
Theatre Showcase: Catherine Yu, Zihan Xiong, Zachary Series, Aqdas Aftab, Tanima

2:45 p.m. (45 minute performance)
Performance Lecture: Olivier

4 p.m. (30 minute performance)
Multimedia Dance: Noori, Wannapa P-Eubanks

4:45 p.m. (40 minute performance)
Theatre: Rusty Allen

5:45 p.m. (40+ minute showcase)
Standup Comedy Showcase: William Paik, Bok Joy, Yzzy Zarate, Jerry Tran

6:45 p.m. (55 minute showcase)
Films by KT Wester, Leena Kurishingal, Christina Seo

Downstairs
12:30 p.m. (45 minute performance)
Live Music: Sona Umbra

2 p.m. (45 minute performance)
Live Music: Kay tear

3 p.m. (30 minute showcase)
Dance Showcase: Preeti Veerlapati, Vrisa Odedra, Mustafa Anwar

4:30 p.m. (15 minute performance)
Performance: AiRos 頌恩 medill

5 p.m. (40 minute performance)
Live Music: My Little Realities

6 p.m. (15+ minute showcase)
Drag: Twinka Masala, Tiffany Miller
Audiences are encouraged to bring dollar bills to tip the performers.

7 p.m. (30 minute performance)
Live Music: Ochin Pakhi

Sunday, May 3, 2026
Festival hours: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Upstairs

10:15 a.m. (40 minute performance)
Theatre Solo Show: Lauren Kee

11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Pop-Up Book Workshop: Jaerin Son

11:30 a.m. (30 minute performance)
Theatre Solo Show: Huy Nguyen

12:30 p.m. (60 minute performance)
Theatre Solo Show: Kento Morita

2 p.m. (45 minute showcase)
Film Showcase: Hannah Ii-Epstein, Okyoung Noh, Asuka Lin

3 p.m. (40 minute showcase)
Spoken Word Showcase: Ada Cheng, Jeannie Hua, Ivy McPherson

4 p.m. (20 minute performance)
Solo Performance: Xiaolu Wang

4:45 p.m. (60 minute showcase)
Comedy Showcase: Becca Nix Tham, Mantra, Stir Friday Night

Downstairs
Flashmob Dance: Ajumma Rising

10:15 a.m. (20+ minute performance)
Music: Treblemakers

11:30 a.m. (45 minute performance)
Music: Dawn Xiana Moon

1 p.m. (40 minute performance)
Music: Steven Cristi Music

2 p.m. (10 minute performance)
Tap Dance: Megan Davis, Martin Bronson, Tristan Bruns

3 p.m. (20 minute performance)
Dance: IS/LAND with Qū Jié, Olivia Lemmenes, Tuli Bera

4 p.m. (45 minute performance)
Music: Sierra Sikora Music

5 p.m. (30 minute performance)
Music: SamaSama Project

Highlighted performances include:

- **Sierra Sikora** is a 19-year old Filipino American guitarist and singer songwriter making huge waves

- Native Hawaiian **Hannah Ii-Epstein** is artistic director of Nothing Without a Company and presents her short film

- Korean American puppeteer and artist **Jaerin Son** presents an interactive workshop teaching festival goers how to create their own pop-up books, and displays her handmade puppets

- **Jerry Tran** is a Vietnamese American comedian who produces and hosts comedy shows at First Sip Cafe, a longtime staple in Chicago's historic Argyle neighborhood

- **Twinka Masala** is an award-winning drag king who hosts South Asian and Middle Eastern drag shows and facilitates drag workshops

- **Kirin Kane** is a queer multiracial AAPINH person who uses mixed media sculpture and installation to investigate the intricacies of cultural belonging.

2D/3D Art: Images of fine art will be displayed in rotation on a monitor in the upstairs lobby throughout the festival. Expect multiple images from these fine artists: Aireen Arellano, Kirin Kane, Bazigha Khan, Jenny Lam, Heather Marcum and Donna Noel.

Highlighted food and craft market vendors for EVOLUTION currently include:

- Food vendor **Pink Mu** makes fresh Korea kimbap, triangle kimbap and korean-style rice krispies daily

- **Banato** is a women-owned company making fruit based beverages and fruit based popsicles. Banato will sell out of their happy yellow food cart

- **The Punk Rock Stitcher** is Sam Riesmeyer who hand embroiders dragons using Chinese silk. Their designs are inspired by traditional Chinese art and contemporary tattoo artists

- **Shayne Draws Food** is craft vendor Shayne Chammavanijakul, a Thai-American food writer and illustrator whose work explores culture, identity, and nostalgia through the lens of food

- **Henna Zamurd Butt** is an East African Asian artist who sells small-batch functional and sculptural ceramics alongside a selection of cyanotype and hand-printed works.

  *Performers, artists, vendors, etc. subject to change.

EVOLUTION: Asian American Arts Festival Ticket Information:

Limited tickets will be sold online and provide priority entrance to the Festival. All tickets include Festival souvenirs, access to live performances, interactive art

displays and the food and craft market. If entry lines form due to venue capacity, online ticket holders will have priority entry. Walk-up tickets will be available as capacity permits. Guests may check the AAAC Instagram account story for live updates on festival admission at @AAArtsChicago.

Online tickets

$120 VIP ticket includes handcrafted gourmet pastry, festival photograph, festival souvenirs, attendance to all performances, access to the food + craft marketplace and re-entry permitted

$65 One-day Pass includes festival photograph, festival souvenirs, attendance to all performances, access to the food + craft marketplace and re-entry permitted

$35 General Admission includes festival souvenirs, attendance to all performances, access to the food + craft marketplace with no re-entry permitted

$30 Students ages 13 years and older with ID includes festival souvenirs, attendance to all performances, access to the food + craft marketplace with no re-entry permitted

$25 Children ages 5 - 12 years must be accompanied by an adult. Please note that there may be performances or art work intended for mature audiences.

The EVOLUTION: Asian American Arts Festival Leadership includes:
Executive Producer Mia Park has been a polymath creative force in Chicago for over thirty years. Acting highlights include TV shows “Chicago Med,” “Chicago Fire,” “Chicago PD,” “Shameless,” and “Empire.” Theatre credits include Goodman Theatre and Court Theatre. Music credits include Chicago’s only Asian American female rock band, Kim, The Miyumi Project and Panda Panda. Creative producing credits include founding A-Squared Theatre Workshop, producing the national Asian American Theatre Festival, APIDA Arts Festival, Covers for Cover music fundraising series and Old Town School of Folk Music programming. Park teaches taiji and yoga, is an adjunct professor at The Theatre School at DePaul University and teaches acting at the Second City Training Center.

Producer Seoyoung Park is an actor, theatre director, educator and producer of AAAC’s EVOLUTION Festival. Born and raised in Seoul, she considers Chicago her second home. Recent acting credits include Seattle Rep’s *The Heart Sellers*, Northlight Theatre’s *The Heart Sellers* (2025 Jeff nomination, Performer in a Principal Role), and TUTA Theatre’s *Attempts on Her Life* (2024 Jeff, Best Ensemble), *Tom&Eliza* and *The Long Christmas Dinner*. She directed TUTA Theatre’s Lab Performance *Three Horse Men*. She is a member of TUTA Theatre Company, an Artistic Coalition member of Artemisia Theatre and the executive director of Alien Theatre Company. She holds an MFA in acting from DePaul University and a B.A. and M.A. in acting from Chung-Ang University.

Other Festival leaders include photographer and film documentary director **Kelly Ngo** from **Chromatone**, a creative studio that specializes in the commercial space, particularly in food and beverages. Ngo is a Vietnamese-American photographer, storyteller and creative director based in Chicago and draws inspiration from quiet observation, color and form and the emotional undercurrents of everyday life.

Aimee Alker is the vendor manager for EVOLUTION and served on the play selection committee for the APIDA Arts Festival. A Chicago-based writer and editor, she's spent years immersed in the Asian American arts community, performing with Circa-Pintig, A-Squared Theatre Workshop and the Nara Movement Project. She’s

currently working on a writing project and is thrilled to champion fellow AAPI artists to help shape a festival that feels vibrant and deeply rooted in the community.

Anthony Nguyen is a Vietnamese American concert/live performance photographer who served on the Festival Selection Committee. He is a staff photographer for Riot Fest and Chicago Theatre and an attorney with entertainment and business law experience.

ABOUT ASIAN AMERICAN ARTS CHICAGO

Asian American Arts Chicago is a not-for-profit organization. The mission of the Asian American Arts Chicago Festival is to amplify and unify Asian, Pacific Island and Native Hawaiian artists in Chicago by showcasing their work at premier cultural institutions, providing greater representation, equity and opportunity.

By showcasing and bringing together the creativity and imagination of Asian, Pacific Island and Native Hawaiian, AAAC Festival envisions a strong and sustainable AAPINH arts community that is an integral presence in Chicago's culture - evocative of our past, declarative of our present and innovative towards our future. The programming includes a self-populated artist directory, networking events and a festival dedicated to AAAC.

###