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TEA names 26th annual Thea Awards recipients; Awards Gala to be held in Anaheim in 2020

BURBANK, California USA, Nov 19, 2019 -- The Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) announced the new slate of TEA Thea Awards recipients - to be formally awarded April 18, 2020 at the 26th annual TEA Thea Awards Gala in Anaheim, presented by Chimelong Group. TEA made the announcement to an international crowd at a press conference during the annual IAAPA Expo in Orlando.

"TEA congratulates the new TEA Thea Awards recipients, representing excellence, innovation and leadership in the creation of compelling places and experiences," said TEA International Board President Michael Blau of Adirondack Studios. "We invite our community to join us in Anaheim April 16-18, 2020 to celebrate these achievements at the annual TEA Summit and Thea Case Studies, crowned by the TEA Thea Awards Gala presented by Chimelong."



Nearly 1,000 entertainment professionals converge on the Los Angeles area every year for the TEA Thea Awards Gala - an elegant, black-tie dinner event - preceded by the TEA Summit conference, which devotes much of its two days of sessions to exploring the Thea Awards recipients. The Thea Awards were founded in 1994 by TEA, a global nonprofit serving the visitor attractions industry, and the prestigious TEA Thea Award is considered one of the industry's greatest honors.

The themed entertainment industry touches all genres of visitor attractions, internationally - including destination theme parks and waterparks, regional theme parks, museums, visitor centers, resorts, parades, immersive experiences and spectacles. The industry has exploded globally in the last decade and is significant to international business in terms of travel, tourism, land development, hospitality, retail, entertainment, education, IP and branding, design, architecture and technology.

While the TEA Thea Awards recipients are *announced* each November, they are formally *awarded* the following spring. From hundreds of nominations received each year, the Thea Awards Committee deliberates at length to produce the annual slate of recipients, which is submitted to the TEA International Board of Directors for approval. Chair of the Thea Awards Committee for the 2019-20 cycle is Susan Bonds of 42 Entertainment.

Ticket sales open soon for the TEA Summit and Thea Awards Gala, April 16-18, 2020 at Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, CA at www.teaconnect.org. #TEAtheas #TEASummit

26th Annual TEA Thea Awards Recipients

Descriptions provided by the TEA Thea Awards Committee



26th Annual TEA Thea Awards Recipients announced on November 19, 2019

The Buzz Price Thea Award – Recognizing a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements

- **Nancy Seruto**, Shanghai Disney Resort Creative Executive, Walt Disney Imagineering

Thea Classic

- **Pageant of the Masters**, Laguna Beach, CA, USA

Thea Awards for Outstanding Achievement (AOA) - recipient name, location (AOA category)

- **Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure**, Universal Orlando, USA (Attraction)
- **Warner Bros. World, Abu Dhabi**, UAE (Theme Park)
- **The Cool Planet Experience**, Wicklow, Ireland (Museum, Limited Budget)
- **Wonderbox at Paradise City**, Incheon, South Korea (Family Entertainment Center)
- **Fram Museum**, Oslo, Norway (Museum Upgrade)
- **The Hebrew Bible Experience**, Museum of the Bible, Washington DC, USA (Museum Exhibit)
- **Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of The War of the Worlds**, London, England (Connected Immersion)
- **Poverty Encounter**, Children's Hunger Fund, Sylmar, CA, USA (Connected Immersion, Limited Budget)
- **Popcorn Revenge**, Walibi, Belgium (Attraction, Limited Budget)
- **The Google Assistant Ride**, 2019 CES Trade Show, Las Vegas, NV, USA (Brand Experience)
- **Le Premier Royaume**, Grand Parc du Puy du Fou, Les Epesses, France (Attraction)
- **The Legend of the Gods**, Huaxiacheng Tourism Scenic Area, Weihai Huaxia City, Shandong, China (Live Show Spectacular)
- **Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run**, Disneyland Resort, CA, USA (Attraction)
- **Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge**, Disneyland Resort, CA, USA (New Park Land)
- **Christie Eclipse 4K RGB Pure Laser Projector** (Technical Innovation)

TEA Peter Chernack Distinguished Service Award (recognizing exceptional volunteer service to the Association)

- **Wendy Heimann-Nunes** – Nolan Heimann LLP

The Buzz Price Thea Award – Recognizing a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements

- **Nancy Seruto, Shanghai Disney Resort Creative Executive, Walt Disney Imagineering**

Nancy Seruto brings a rare blend of business acumen and creative talent, plus the ability to lead highly creative and interdisciplinary teams in a way that brings out the best in those around her. She has also been an active leader involved in promoting cultural exchange and supporting initiatives that foster inclusivity. Her 30+ year career as supplier, creative, project manager and entrepreneur has taken her around the world and touched pretty much every discipline and market sector of themed entertainment, including theater and performing arts, touring exhibits, museums, theme parks, retail, restaurants, live events and casinos. Nancy oversaw several projects over the the past decade with Walt Disney Imagineering, including Treasure Cove and Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for the Sunken Treasure in Shanghai Disneyland.

Thea Classic

- **Pageant of the Masters, Laguna Beach, CA, USA**

The Pageant inspires and exposes people to works of art that they may have otherwise never been aware of, through a technique called Tableaux Vivant or Living Pictures, a unique combination of elements blending live performance, storytelling and the theater arts for an educational and entertaining experience that has been enjoyed by some 140,000 guests. This illusionary stage show has taken place every summer since 1933, recreating classical and contemporary art works in faithful detail. Each season more than 500 volunteers donate their skills and talent to make paintings come to life on four stages surrounded by a canyon in a 90-minute program that includes a professional narrator and orchestra accompaniment.

Thea Awards for Outstanding Achievement (AOA) - recipient name, location (AOA category)

- **Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure, Universal Orlando, USA (Attraction)**

This "story coaster" at Universal's Islands of Adventure™ puts guests onto the motorbike of Hagrid - one of the most beloved characters in the Harry Potter canon - for a wild ride through the mysterious Forbidden Forest of the wizarding world. The bike has been bewitched by the befuddled Arthur Weasley and the ride takes immersive experience to a new level in its combination of storytelling and innovative roller coaster technology with rich environments and sets - including an actual woodland of more than 1,200 live trees, populated by many of the story's most infamous creatures.

- **Warner Bros. World™ Abu Dhabi, UAE (Theme Park)**

The first-ever Warner Bros. branded indoor theme park brings together more than 50 branded characters of Warner Bros. Animation and DC Entertainment, letting guests enter the worlds and meet the characters of Looney Tunes, DC Super Heroes and more under one roof. Warner Bros. World is divided into six lands, with 29 rides, interactive attractions, themed dining, live entertainment and retail. All the elements work together to deliver a unique experience for a broad

theme park audience of all ages. Sets and area theming are exceptionally well done, down to the finest details. Offerings include exceptional multimedia experiences, such as dark rides Batman: Knight Flight (using robotic arm technology) and Ani-Mayhem (using a trackless vehicle system) - both standout attractions among a host of highly themed and story-driven dark rides, theater shows and other family-oriented experiences. In its official comments, the TEA Thea Awards Committee wrote, "This park represents what we in the themed entertainment industry all strive for in terms of excellence in design."

• The Cool Planet Experience, Wicklow, Ireland (Museum, Limited Budget)

The Cool Planet Experience applies impressive technology, scenic environments, theatrical lighting and effects, clever visuals and gamification to captivate guests from the moment they receive their interactive wristbands. Located in an historic estate, the experience targets schoolchildren and their families, making climate change relevant at a personal level, inspiring them to become Agents for Change and remain engaged beyond the actual visit. Each activity - Science Dome, Race to 2030, Forest of Hope and more - uses a different form of real-time interactive gaming technology and media for cognitive and physical engagement. Use of the RFID wristband personalizes the visit for each guest and provides a post-visit relationship.

• Wonderbox at Paradise City, Incheon, South Korea (Family Entertainment Center)

Wonderbox is an indoor, fantasy theme park spanning 3,900 square meters over two stories, a visually exciting playground for both adults and children. From the whimsical digitally mapped building exterior to the mystical universe within, Wonderbox has raised the bar for indoor entertainment centers. It combines 10 specially themed traditional rides, carnival skill games, live performance, adventure play and interactive media. Highlights include "Luna Carnival," taking over the entire space several times a day; the ever changing, cinema-quality digital media art that extends the sense of space and the Wonder Food Truck serving up world-class fare. The TEA Thea Committee wrote, "Wonderbox demonstrates true excellence in harmonizing environmental design with guest experience to bring out the child in everyone."

• Fram Museum, Oslo, Norway (Museum Upgrade)

First opened in 1933 as a museum of polar exploration history, since 2011 the Fram Museum has been in the process of updating the exhibits, interactives and media that contextualize its centerpiece, Fram herself - a wooden ship considered to be the strongest such ever built and part of three important polar expeditions between 1893-1912. Visiting the historic ship is now a multimedia, multisensory adventure as guests step onto the deck and are plunged into a stormy, perilous Arctic journey. In the engine room, they hear rumbling, see flames and smell diesel fuel; elsewhere, they get a sense of freezing cold and the sounds of ice crushing the ship. The Fram museum upgrade showcases the power of immersive storytelling to entertain and educate.

• The Hebrew Bible Experience, Museum of the Bible, Washington DC, USA (Museum Exhibit) In this 14,000-square-foot, 30-minute walk through experience, guests visit 15 immersive scenes interpreting key stories from the Hebrew Old Testament (Torah). Informed by rigorous theological scholarship and reviewed by a diverse panel of experts, the narrative is carefully non-denominational, designed to inform without proselytizing, proving a thoughtful interpretation that audiences can engage with whatever their type or level of observance. Each room is unique in presentation format and aesthetic design - as if conceived and executed by a different artist each time - and this diversity of presentation helps keep guests engaged and anticipatory. The sensitive treatment is combined with impressive effects and astute theatrical pacing. In its official comments, the TEA Thea Awards Committee wrote, "The Hebrew Bible Experience represents an outstanding solution to a formidable, interpretive design challenge and demonstrates a high level of excellence."

• Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of The War of the Worlds, London, England (Connected Immersion)

This feature-length, walk-through experience effectively combines physical and virtual environments with live performance, guest interaction and effects to an unprecedented extent, keeping the audience engaged for 110 minutes. The story unfolds across more than two dozen physical rooms/scenes, interspersed with nearly as many virtual/digital scenes delivered along the way. Twelve live characters play in the scenes, sometimes accompanying the guests in person and sometimes trading off to virtual actors. Guests pass from built environments to VR and back again to experience the settings, characters and action. This novel and highly ambitious re-imagining of the classic story pushes past previous limits into the future of seamless multimedia storytelling. In its official comments, the TEA Thea Awards Committee referred to "daring combinations that come together in a well-orchestrated narrative; brings something new to the classic story and makes it feel fresh; shows the new narrative power of combining immersive theater with virtual technologies to deliver much larger moments."

• Poverty Encounter, Children's Hunger Fund, Sylmar, CA, USA (Connected Immersion, Limited Budget)

The Poverty Encounter team created a 90-minute, guided walk-through immersive experience with the purpose of educating children and their parents about the millions of children living in extreme poverty around the world, including in the United States. The guided walking tour makes excellent use of multi-sensory storytelling tools, and at the end of the

tour, instead of feeling there is nothing one can do, guests are given a concrete activity, as well as ways to remain engaged after the visit.

• Popcorn Revenge, Walibi, Belgium (Attraction, Limited Budget)

“This attraction, hands down, had us grinning from ear to ear,” wrote the TEA Thea Awards Committee. Brand new IPs are tricky to execute and difficult to immediately captivate the imagination, but Popcorn Revenge’s delightful mix of quirky characters, pun-filled signage and simple-yet-effective gameplay - all under the guise of a richly themed Bollywood cinema - delivered on that premise and more. In a footprint of just 800 square meters this unique family attraction demonstrates excellence in design and décor and provides unique technical solutions in an accessible and affordable option for regional parks. Instead of all the vehicles taking visitors on the same linear track, each (trackless) vehicle follows its own unique route. This ‘erratic’ or unpredictable ride choreography result in a variable visitor experience with no two rides or experiences the same, thanks to a proprietary software that delivers seemingly endless combinations. Each player’s score builds up over time and is displayed and rewarded at the end of the game. Popcorn Revenge highlights a new frontier in balancing high-energy creative with successful investment.

• The Google Assistant Ride, 2019 CES Trade Show, Las Vegas, NV, USA (Brand Experience)

With only four days of physical operation at the annual Consumer Electronics Show, one of the largest trade shows in the world, The Google Assistant Ride carried more than 25,000 guests through a custom 30,000 square foot show building and delivered a theme park quality experience. Another million-plus virtual riders explored the attraction via 360 interactive video. The 15-minute experience included a three-minute puppeteer interactive preshow and a five-minute ride incorporating extensive use of animatronics, an original song, fog and scent machines as well as on-board video to demonstrate Google technologies. The story followed a hapless father as he grappled with numerous obstacles on a “not-so” epic journey to buy a birthday cake - ample opportunity to showcase Google Assistant technologies making everyday life easier. The run achieved 37 million social network impressions. In its official comments, the TEA Thea Awards Committee wrote, “Until now, an exceptional ride-based attraction at a consumer trade show was simply unheard of - and it’s no small task to punch through the clutter at CES. This achievement has created a gateway to new possibilities.”

• Le Premier Royaume, Grand Parc du Puy du Fou, Les Epesses, France (Attraction)

This 18-minute walk-through is the newest attraction at Puy du Fou, well-known for immersing its visitors in the rich and vibrant living history of France since its inception in 1978. Guests journey through a decisive period in history and legend of the Frankish king Clovis, in 5th century France. As the Roman Empire falls and Attila the Hun invades, Clovis is caught between ancestral traditions and a quest to create the first United Kingdom of the Franks. In some 14 scenes covering about 24,000 square feet, guests explore detailed historical environments, rich soundscapes, seamlessly integrated show lighting, massive animated props, animatronic figures, dazzling special effects, live character actors and projection including an epic 360-degree film experience depicting the tragic battle of Tolbiac. In its official comments, the TEA Thea Awards Committee wrote, “Puy du Fou has created a tangible world of legend and lore, allowing guests to time travel through French history. With excellence in design, technological integration and execution, Le Premier Royaume delivers an epic level of storytelling.”

• The Legend of the Gods, Huaxiacheng Tourism Scenic Area, Weihai Huaxia City, Shandong, China (Live Show Spectacular)

The Legend of the Gods - one of a series of “Legends” productions created by Shandong Huaxia Cultural Tourism Group - is a seasonal, one-hour show and Chinese cultural celebration. It delivers a phenomenal theatrical vision married to world-class production and execution. Guests cross a gangplank to enter a vehicle - seating 2,100 - shaped and themed as a boat, to experience a live, multimedia spectacular in a breathtaking, outdoor setting. The boat travels along a track through a man-made lagoon to carry them into the story. They visit seven distinct scenes - some set on land and some on water - with 200 performers, animatronic figures, live horses, pyrotechnics, 300 square meters of LED projection walls, fountains, special effects, a 5,000-ton waterfall, an erupting volcano and monumental set pieces. But the show - which forms the centerpiece of the Huaxiacheng Tourism Scenic Area - could not exist were it not for the 16-year commitment and dedication of resources by Huaxia Chairman Xia Chunting to reclaim and restore thousands of acres of mining quarry - an undertaking that included moving 60 million cubic feet of fill and planting 11 million trees. In its official comments, the TEA Thea Awards Committee wrote, “Awe and wonder abound and astound. Legend of the Gods is, to our minds, peak entertainment, excellence on a celestial scale and more than worthy of the award. In particular, the committee commends Chairman Xia for his environmental commitment.”

• Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run, Disneyland Resort, CA, USA (Attraction)

Bringing to life one of the most iconic experiences in pop culture, Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run immerses guests into an intimate, story-driven, guest-driven adventure unique in theme park history. The experience combines numerous bleeding-edge technologies seamlessly and invisibly, from the innovative loading system that provides an individualized experience while supporting ample throughput; to interactive controls and interfaces that stimulate repeat ridership; to spatial audio and in-cabin lighting effects; to the bespoke, ultra-high-resolution game engine. All work together to complete the illusion of piloting one of the most famous spaceships in all of movie history. The vehicle is screen-accurate

in every detail inside and out, and the view from the cockpit presents cinema-quality, real-time visuals. The Thea Awards Committee commends Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run as a crowning Disney achievement.

• Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, Disneyland, CA, USA (New Park Land)

The TEA Thea Awards Committee considers Star Wars: Galaxy Edge to be the most ambitious addition to Disneyland in more than 60 years; a groundbreaking new land that invites guests into a new chapter of the Star Wars saga - and in which the guest is the star. We've never seen a theme park land like this before and it just might change how we create them in the future.

Introducing an entirely new planet within the Star Wars canon, this multifaceted experience combines epic and detailed placemaking, themed retail and dining, immersive theatrical techniques and interactive attractions into an audacious, genre-redefining, 14-acre adventure that lets park guests live their own Star Wars story in ways never before possible within the boundaries of a conventional theme park. The intricate layout, sophisticated use of scale, extension of character details and high quality of execution combine to make this an outstanding example of story-driven, experiential design blurring the line between guest and experience, making every detail "in-world" authentic.

Every facet of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge offers a high level of guest agency. Traditional character meet-and-greets become story-driven, chance encounters throughout the land. Retail experiences such as Savi's Workshop become emotional and heroic calls to action, allowing guests to feel the Force for themselves as they engage in activities such as crafting their own Lightsaber. Cast member interactions evoke a wholly-created, local lexicon and slang. Rides and attractions become fully participatory and encourage group collaboration.

• Christie Eclipse 4K RGB Pure Laser Projector (Technical Innovation)

The first public use of the Christie Eclipse 4K RGB Pure Laser Projector, after five years in development, was in a permanent, custom installation at the prestigious Hayden Planetarium in New York City. It premiered in July 2019, combining six units to project a unified image onto the planetarium's 87-foot diameter dome. Eclipse provides an unparalleled visual experience. This fully packaged and integrated projector is a true step into the future of projection, delivering a highly saturated color range for ultra-realistic, immersive experiences, combining true HDR performance with an expansive color gamut approaching the full Rec. 2020/Rec. 2100 color space. Audiences are immersed in a degree of detail and depth of color never before possible in any pro AV projection system, with a previously unimaginable 20,000,000:1 contrast ratio. "Video black" has become true black. This projector was developed by a Christie R&D group focused on projection advancement targeting the specific needs of the themed entertainment industry. The Thea Awards Committee commends this group for its specific contribution and continuing interest to support the industry with uniquely relevant technologies.

TEA Peter Chernack Distinguished Service Award (recognizing exceptional volunteer service to the Association)

• Wendy Heimann-Nunes – Nolan Heimann LLP

Wendy Heimann-Nunes is a well-known attorney and a familiar face in the themed entertainment community. Her company, Nolan Heimann LLP, a corporate sponsor of the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), describes itself as one of "attorneys and advisers who help you develop your ideas, protect your work, leverage your assets, structure the right deals and operate at your maximum potential." The law firm of Nolan Heimann serves many small to midsize companies and individuals who have creative or technological assets as their core business. "It's my passion to help these creators and innovators protect, monetize and leverage what they do," says Heimann-Nunes. TEA values and honors Wendy Heimann-Nunes as a generous volunteer who has assisted and supported the organization over the years, sharing her expertise to the benefit of TEA and the community that TEA serves. Wendy Heimann-Nunes has demonstrated thorough dedication to our unique industry.

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