



EST/Sloan Mainstage Play about Controversial Gynecology Pioneer Extended Three Times

[Behind the Sheet](#), an Ensemble Studio Theatre (EST)/Sloan-commissioned play written by Charly Evon Simpson and produced by the EST/Sloan Project, opened January 17 in New York City. After a glowing [Critic's Pick review in the New York Times](#) by top theater critic Ben Brantley, the play sold out all of its scheduled performances. To meet demand, the play was extended twice. These additional performances sold out in less than 24 hours each, so the Foundation supported an unprecedented third extension, this time through March 10. The play is inspired by the life of Dr. J. Marion Sims, a controversial 19th century physician credited as “the father of modern gynecology.” It explores the



fictionalized lives of the enslaved black women Sims experimented on to become a pioneer in his field. Information on the historical context of the play and Sims' life and contributions was available in the program, as well as online in an [expanded essay](#). The play has received positive coverage from [Science Friday](#), [New Scientist](#), [Science Magazine](#), [PRI](#), and [TheaterMania](#), among others. The production of this play is part of a 2016 grant to EST to commission, develop, produce and disseminate new science plays in New York and across the country.

FILM

***The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* Wins Sloan Feature Film Prize at Sundance**

The 2019 [Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize at the Sundance Film Festival](#) was awarded to Chiwetel Ejiofor's *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, based on the true story of a young boy in Malawi who helps



his famine-plagued village by building a wind turbine to fuel an irrigation pump after reading about it in a library book (cast pictured left with real-life inspiration William Kamkwamba and Sloan VP Doron Weber). The film premiered on January 25 in Salt Lake City and on January 26 in Park City. The jury, consisting of chemist and marine biologist Mandë Holford; theoretical astrophysicist Katie Mack; screenwriter and producer Sev Ohanian (*Searching*); producer Lydia Dean Pilcher (*The Talented Mr. Ripley*); and actor Corey Stoll (*House of Cards*, *Ant Man*), cited the film “for its inspirational

and culturally nuanced true-life tale of the transformational power of science and the inventive spirit to improve everyday lives everywhere, and for its moving depiction of intra-family dynamics and a pivotal father-son relationship.” The film has received positive coverage from the [Los Angeles Times](#), [The Atlantic](#), [The Observer](#), [The Chicago Tribune](#), and [The Guardian](#) and is currently available via streaming on [Netflix](#).



25th Film from Sloan Pipeline Premieres at Sundance



Sloan-awarded director Michael Tyburski and writer Ben Nabors’s *The Sound of Silence*, formerly known as *Palimpsest*, also premiered at the Festival. The film, whose script won the 2014 Sloan Screenwriting Grant at the Hamptons International Film Festival, follows Peter Lucien, a New York City “house tuner,” who manipulates the sounds in people’s apartments to improve their moods. Peter Sarsgaard (*Garden State*, pictured left) plays the house tuner and Rashida Jones (*Parks and Recreation*) plays one of his clients. *The Sound of Silence* has received positive reviews from [The Hollywood Reporter](#), [Variety](#), and [IndieWire](#), among others.

Sloan Celebrates Talented Young Filmmakers with Four New Awards at Sundance

Two women filmmakers were awarded the Sundance Institute’s prestigious Sloan Commissioning Grant for 2019. Skye Emerson won for her screenplay *Challenger*, about the complex life of astrophysicist Sally Ride, the first woman in space. Gillian Weeks won for her screenplay *The New Miracle*, about the world’s first “test-tube baby” and the birth of in vitro fertilization. Neilkanth Dave and Zachary Parris were awarded the Sundance Institute’s Sloan Episodic Storytelling Grant for their script *DELTA-V*, about an Indian propulsion theorist recruited to work on the Space Shuttle program at NASA and his immigrant bride. Director and Screenwriter Anthony Onah was awarded the Sundance Institute’s Sloan Lab Fellowship for his screenplay *Goliath*, based on the true story of Tyrone Hayes, a black scientist working to prove the harmful effects of a popular weed killer. After the panel discussion, Sloan hosted a reception at the Festival to recognize the winners of the four Sundance/Sloan awards and *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (pictured right at the reception, Sundance's Founding Director Michelle Satter, Emerson, Weber, Onah, Eijofor, and Weeks).



Sloan Panel at Sundance Brings Together Scientists and Filmmakers



Attendees crowded into Filmmaker Lodge for the sold-out Sloan panel discussion “The New Storytellers” during the Sundance Film Festival. The popular panel focused on bringing science to the big screen and featured scientists and filmmakers including Sev Ohanian; neuroscientist and science communicator Heather Berlin; actress Kerry Bishé (*Halt and Catch Fire*); astrophysicist and writer Janna Levin, and executive producer of NOVA Paula Apsell as moderator (panelists pictured left). The [full panel discussion](#) was livestreamed and is available to watch on YouTube.



Sloan-Awarded *To Dust* Opened in Theaters February 8

The Sloan-awarded film [To Dust](#), a dark comedy written and directed by Shawn Snyder and produced by Alessandro Nivola, Emily Mortimer, and Josh Crook, opened in select theaters on February 8. The film, which follows a Hasidic man who becomes obsessed with the body's decomposition after the death of his beloved wife, has won multiple Sloan awards, including the 2015 NYU First Feature Award, the 2016 Tribeca Film Institute Grand Jury Prize, and the 2018 Film Independent Distribution Grant. *To Dust* stars



Géza Röhrig (*Son of Saul*) as the widower and Matthew Broderick (*The Producers*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*) as the biology teacher who reluctantly helps him in his scientific pursuits. It has received positive coverage from [The Chicago Sun-Times](#), [The Los Angeles Times](#), and [The Washington Post](#). At a preview screening organized by the Museum of the Moving Image, producers Mortimer and Nivola introduced the film and Snyder, Röhrig, and Sloan-supported microbiologist Maria Gloria Dominguez-Bello

discussed the film, death, and the necrobiome. You can watch [the full discussion](#) via YouTube.

Sloan-Supported Filmmaker Caroline Friend Wins 2019 Horizon Award

Writer and director Caroline Friend was one of [two women filmmakers honored with the prestigious Horizon Award](#), which celebrates up-and-coming female directors. Her film *Under Darkness*, which won



the 2016 Sloan Production Grant at USC's School of Cinematic Arts, was selected as a winner from over 400 Horizon Award submissions. The film follows a young Jewish woman during World Word II who uses photography to both remember the past and create records for the future. It is based on the incredible true story of Faye Schulman, photographer and soldier. The Sloan award to Caroline Friend's film was part of a 2015 grant to USC, one of our six film school partners, for screenwriting and production of science and technology films.

TELEVISION

American Experience's *Sealab* Premiered in February

[Sealab](#), the most recent documentary in the Sloan-supported *American Experience* series, premiered on February 12 on PBS. The film tells the little-known story of an elite group of divers working in a pressurized underwater habitat at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. The United States Navy-developed



project, which began in the early 1960s, advanced understanding of deep-sea diving and rescue, as well as the psychological impact of prolonged confinement. This show is the latest of four produced through Sloan's two million dollar grant to American Experience, which supports projects like *The Eugenics Crusade*, *The Secret of Tuxedo Park*, *Rachel Carson*, and *The Race Underground*. The next Sloan-supported American Experience documentary, [Chasing the Moon](#), is scheduled to

premiere across three nights beginning on July 8 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the moon landing.



Sloan-Supported *The Eugenics Crusade* Wins Writers Guild Award



American Experience’s Sloan-supported documentary *The Eugenics Crusade*, written by Michelle Ferrari, was awarded a Writers Guild Award in the category of “Documentary Script — Other than Current Events.” The film explores the dark history of eugenics and its role in American society. The Writers Guild also nominated NOVA’s Sloan-supported two-hour television special *Black Hole Apocalypse*, written by Rushmore DeNooyer, in the category “Documentary Script — Current Events.” The two-hour NOVA special was hosted by astrophysicist Janna Levin and explores the frontiers of black hole science.

NEW MEDIA

Sloan-Backed Libretto on West African Contributions to Rice Growing Technologies Premieres

“[Casop: A Requiem for Rice](#),” a Sloan-supported contemporary classical musical piece about the enslavement of West Africans in the South Carolina and Georgia Lowcountry and the underappreciated exploitation of their technologies for growing rice, debuted on February 13 at Carnegie Music Hall in



Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The libretto was written by Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) history professor Dr. Edda Fields-Black (pictured left) and was based on her original research. The music was composed by three-time Emmy-winning composer John Wineglass and performed by members of the Color of Music Festival from South Carolina. The full program can be streamed online via [Facebook](#). The event was supported by a \$125,000 Sloan grant to CMU in 2019.

Grammy-Winning Opera Singer Discusses Music and the Mind at Sloan-Supported Panel

“[Music and the Mind](#),” a Sloan-supported panel discussion featuring Grammy-winning opera singer Renée Fleming (pictured right) in conversation with Rutgers University arts faculty members and neuroscientists, took place February 26 at State Theatre New Jersey. Panelists, including Fleming and



Daniel Schneider, Director of the Rutgers University Dementia Clinic, discussed the effects of music on the brain, including Fleming’s own discoveries singing inside an fMRI machine. “Music and the Mind” was produced as part of the Sound Health Initiative, Fleming’s collaboration with the National Institute of Health and the National Endowments for the Arts to explore the intersection of music, health, and neuroscience. The program was supported by a \$5,000 Sloan grant to State Theatre New Jersey in 2019.



AAAS Releases Sloan-Funded Perceptions of Science in America Report



The American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) recently released a report on [Encountering Science in America](#), the second in a series of reports for the Sloan-funded “Public Face of Science Initiative.” Three key takeaways from the report are: 1. There is a diverse and expanding range of opportunities for people to encounter science. 2. More social science research is needed to understand the impacts of science communication and engagement. 3. Understanding participant motivations is a critical component of effective science communication and engagement. AAAS received a 2017 Sloan grant to support a two-year study and accompanying workshop on better understanding public attitudes toward science.

Foundation-Supported Exhibit at the Whitney Museum Continues To Shine

[Programmed: Rules, Codes, and Choreographies in Art, 1965-2018](#), a Sloan-supported art and technology exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, is on view now through April 14, 2019. The cross-disciplinary exhibition “traces how rules and instructions in art have both responded to and been shaped by technologies.” The museum has hosted multiple events illuminating the technology in the exhibit, including a [conversation between curator Carol Mancusi-Ungaro and](#)



[writer Ben Lerner](#) on the unique preservation questions that emerge around technology-based art, as well as [a panel discussion](#) with artists Jonah Brucker-Cohen, Katherine Moriwaki, and Tamiko Thiel and theorist Erkki Huhtamo at The New School on the histories of technological art. It also [published an essay](#), written by curator Christiane Paul, defining digital art, chronicling its development from the 1960s, and connecting this history with the exhibition. *Science Friday* recently [conducted an interview](#) with Paul and two artists whose work is featured in the exhibit, Joan Truckenbrod and W. Bradford Paley. *Programmed* has also received positive coverage in [Scientific American](#), [The Guardian](#), [ARTnews](#), [Musée](#), [Sotheby's Museum Network](#), and [Forbes](#), among others. Support for the exhibit comes from a recent multi-media authorization grant to the Whitney Museum for \$100,000.



BOOKS

House and Senate Re-Introduce Congressional Gold Medal Bill to Honor *Hidden Figures* Women

In recognition of Black History Month, [the U.S. House and Senate re-introduced bipartisan bills](#) to award the highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, to the real-life women scientists portrayed in the Sloan-supported book *Hidden Figures*. The bills would honor Katherine Johnson and Christine Darden (pictured left), and posthumously Mary Jackson and Dorothy Vaughan, for their contributions to



science during the space race. Senators Chris Coons, Lisa Murkowski, and Kamala Harris introduced the Senate bill with 60 of their colleagues. “Women played an important role at NASA during the Space Race, but for many years their accomplishments remained hidden. This bill will help recognize these extraordinary women and bring their accomplishments into the light so they can serve as an inspiration to younger generations of women in science, particularly those of color,” said Coons. Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson and Congressman Frank Lucas introduced the companion House bill. Sloan has been involved behind the scenes in getting the bill introduced since 2018.

NASA Renames Facility After *Hidden Figures*’ Katherine Johnson

NASA recently [renamed one of its facilities](#) in Fairmont, West Virginia after Katherine Johnson, the real-life inspiration for one of the characters in the Sloan-supported book *Hidden Figures* and Oscar-



nominated film of the same title. The Katherine Johnson Independent Verification and Validation Facility, founded in 1993, has performed work on approximately 100 NASA missions and ensures the safety and success of these missions by making sure software performs correctly. “I am thrilled we are honoring Katherine Johnson in this way as she is a true American icon who overcame incredible obstacles and inspired so many,” said NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine. “It’s a fitting tribute to name the facility that carries on her legacy of mission-critical computations in her honor.” The redesignation was signed into law by President Donald Trump last December after bills passed in both the House and Senate.

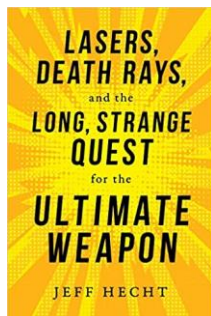
Physics and Dance, by Emily Coates and Sarah Demers, Published in January

[Physics and Dance](#), written by [Emily Coates](#), a former member of New York City Ballet, and [Sarah Demers](#), a CERN particle physicist, was published January 22. A sold-out book launch at the New York Live Arts Theatre included live performances from distinguished dancers Yvonne Rainer, Patricia Hoffbauer, Lacina Coulibaly, and Daniel Ulbricht. The book combines images, line drawings, and video content with a course book to examine introductory concepts in physics and dance. It received positive coverage from [Dance Magazine](#) and its authors were featured in a [two part](#) interview on the Museum of the Moving Image’s [Sloan Science and Film](#) website. Coates and Demers received a Sloan grant in 2014 to support research, supplementary images, drawings, and accompanying video for this book.





***Lasers, Death Rays, and the Long, Strange Quest for the Ultimate Weapon*, by Jeff Hecht, Published in January**



Lasers, Death Rays, and the Long, Strange Quest for the Ultimate Weapon, by Jeff Hecht, was published January 8. The book looks behind the scenes at scientists' attempts to find military uses for lasers. From depictions in science fiction in the 1950s to President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Initiative (or "Star Wars") to recent developments in laser technology today, the book covers the full history of lasers. It has received positive coverage from [Nature](#), [Publishers Weekly](#), and [Kirkus](#), and Hecht has discussed the book with [Cool Science Radio](#) and [Space.com](#). Hecht received a Sloan grant in 2018 to support the research and writing of this book.

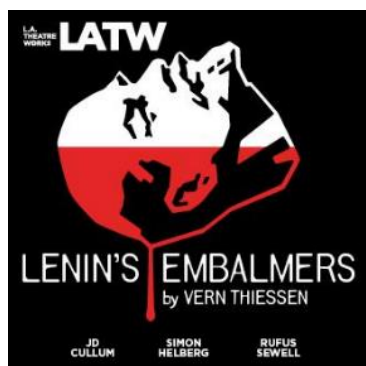
THEATER

MTC/Sloan-Commissioned Play about Climate Change Opens May 7

[Continuity](#), a Sloan-commissioned play written by Bess Wohl (pictured left) and produced by Manhattan Theatre Club's (MTC) [Sloan Initiative: Setting the Stage for Science and Technology](#), opens May 7. The play is set on a soundstage in New Mexico, meant to look like a melting ice sheet in Greenland. A director, science advisor, and film crew are working to create a big-budget thriller about climate change and eco-terrorism. The play is a biting comedy, balancing hilarious moments with the devastating consequences human actions could inflict on the environment. *Continuity* will run for five weeks, with the possibility of extending, and feature at least one talkback with scientists. As the play was originally commissioned and developed by Sloan, the foundation awarded MTC a grant from authorization to support *Continuity's* theatrical run.



***Lenin's Embalmers* Added to L.A. Theatre Works' Sloan-Supported *Relativity* Podcast**



[Lenin's Embalmers](#) by Vern Thiessen is the latest play to be added to L.A. Theatre Works Sloan-supported [Relativity series](#) of science radio dramas, now numbering 35. The play, originally an [Ensemble Studio Theatre/ Sloan Foundation Mainstage production](#), takes place immediately following the death of Vladimir Lenin and follows two Jewish scientists ordered to indefinitely preserve his body. In addition to being available via the *Relativity* podcast, the play can be ordered as a CD. Past plays produced as part of the *Relativity* podcast include [Spill](#) by Leigh Fondakowski and [Boy](#) by Anna Ziegler. The recording of science plays as part of the *Relativity* series is part of a 2017 grant to L.A. Theatre Works.



UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE

Consumer Reports Finds Security Flaws in Wi-Fi and Bluetooth Enabled Toys

Using the Sloan-supported Digital Standard for digital privacy and security criteria, Consumer Reports [tested a sampling of Wi-Fi and Bluetooth enabled toys](#), including a smartwatch, a smart speaker in a dinosaur toy, a robotic toy, and a robotic ball, all of which share data with smartphone apps. Testing found security flaws with all the products, from lack of security support due to the toy company shutting down to vulnerable connections and unclear privacy policies. “We encourage companies to do a better



job securing their products across the board, and to clearly label them with important information about their data practices,” Consumer Reports said. The study also recommended that parents limit what they share, set strong passwords, and talk to their children about online safety. Work with the Digital Standard is part of a 2018 grant to Consumer Reports to research consumer attitudes on digital privacy, convene experts and test technology platforms on their privacy practices, and educate consumers about digital privacy and security.

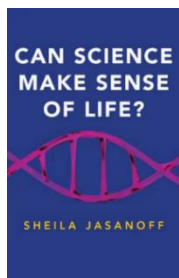
SLOAN IN THE NEWS

Sloan Film Program’s “Path-Breaking” Work Praised by *Inside Philanthropy*

A [recent article by *Inside Philanthropy*](#) praised the Sloan Foundation’s Public Understanding of Science and Technology Film Program as a leader in the philanthropic community. “Sloan’s work in this niche has been quietly path-breaking,” the author stated, “and, lately, other funders have caught up to the foundation’s vision.” The article highlighted the program’s partnerships with Film Independent, SFFILM, and the Sundance Institute, and mentioned many others. It concluded with, “Sloan’s work in bridging the ‘two cultures’ of science and the humanities has been ahead of the curve. Arts funders are increasingly integrating science into the ‘arts experience,’ while science funders like Simons laud ‘the positive effects of infusing the culture with scientific thinking.’”



Can Science Make Sense of Life? Reviewed by Doron Weber in *Washington Post Outlook* Book Review



Sloan Foundation VP and Program Director Doron Weber was the author of a February 8 *Washington Post* book review of sociologist and founder of science and technology studies at Harvard University Sheila Jasanoff’s new book *Can Science Make Sense of Life?* The book looks at science as embedded in society and questions whether other voices, such as those of philosophers, ethicists, policy makers, lawyers, and artists are needed in discussions of science and society. The review is available via [The *Washington Post*](#) website or [PDF](#).

Program Team: Doron Weber, *Vice President, Programs and Program Director* | Ali Chunovic, *Program Associate* | Delia DiBiasi, *Senior Program and Investments Assistant*