



Written Statement of Mario Garcia Durham: Chair, Performing Arts Alliance and Cristine Davis:  
General Manager, Performing Arts Alliance

**Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies**  
Committee on Appropriations | United States House of Representatives

**The Importance of Funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)**  
**March 23, 2016**

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the subcommittee, we thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the Performing Arts Alliance (PAA). **We urge the Committee to appropriate \$155 million to the National Endowment for the Arts for FY17.** PAA member organizations include:

- Alternate ROOTS
- American Composers Forum
- Association of Performing Arts Presenters
- Chamber Music America
- Chorus America
- Dance/USA
- Fractured Atlas
- League of American Orchestras
- National Alliance for Musical Theatre
- National Association of Latino Arts and Culture
- National Performance Network
- Network of Ensemble Theaters
- New Music USA
- OPERA America
- Theatre Communications Group

The Performing Arts Alliance is a national network of more than 33,000 organizational and individual members comprising the professional, nonprofit performing arts fields. We submit this testimony to highlight the importance of federal investment in the arts.

For 50 years, the National Endowment for the Arts has held a significant federal leadership role for the arts and culture in America. Its grants reach every congressional district and support arts organizations serving their communities in a variety of ways. Through the support of direct NEA grants and NEA partnerships with state arts agencies, arts organizations are helping people experience high-quality artistic presentations, access arts education and opportunities for artistic development, find their voices and share their stories, and build connections across differences. The following examples of recent NEA grantees within the PAA network are a sample of the significant ways performing arts organizations are able to serve their communities with the support of the NEA.

NEA funds benefit every congressional district, expanding access to exemplary arts performances, education opportunities, and renowned artists for all U.S. communities.

The **Repertory Dance Theatre** in Salt Lake City, UT—a member of Dance/USA—has had a long-term commitment to touring rural areas of the Mountain and Desert West including Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. Its tours include arts education activities offering curriculum material relating to history, music, art, and the environment. The company received FY15 Art Works support for the creation, preservation, and touring of dance works in celebration of its 50th anniversary. Funding will also support an arts education residency in the San Juan School District of Utah, a Title I school district serving rural schools with a large population of Native American students.

**Artown** in Reno, NV—a member of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters—presented a World Dance & Music Series that featured U.S. and international artists representing the cultures of Mexico, Argentina, India, and Uruguay. This outdoor performance series was offered free to the public with the support of FY15 Art Works funding. Outdoor arts festivals are among the most accessible performing arts events. In its 2010 study, *Live from Your Neighborhood: A National Study of Outdoor Arts Festivals*, the NEA noted that festivals draw demographically diverse audiences that appear to mirror characteristics of the U.S. population.

Art Works grants support the presentation of classic performances for today's audiences. **Figures of Speech Theatre** in Freeport, ME received FY16 Art Works support for its premiere of *The Little Match Girl Passion*. This production combines two classic works: Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl* and reinvents them through a theatrical staging that includes vocalists, bunraku-style puppets, masked dance, projected shadows, and film. Figures of Speech Theatre is a member of the Network of Ensemble Theaters. **PORTopera** in Portland, ME is presenting the classic opera *Carmen* this season with the support of FY16 Art Works funds. In addition to a mainstage production, the project invites young filmmakers to choose a musical theme from the opera and collaborate with a writer and musician to create a short film of their own. PORTopera is a member of OPERA America.

NEA grants support projects that help people from different communities make connections to each other and matters greater than themselves.

Inclusion is a value of the NEA, and Art Works grants support artistic projects that intentionally engage people, artists, and communities of all demographics. An example of this is the project *A Fool's Journey* by the **Interact Center for the Visual & Performing Arts** in Saint Paul, MN. Interact, a member of Theatre Communications Group, has a mission to “create art that challenges perceptions of disability.” Through its *Fool's Journey* project, the company will collaborate with nationally recognized playwright/actor/storyteller Kevin Kling and **The Bricklayers** mask theater (a member of the Network of Ensemble Theaters) to create new theatrical works exploring the role of the fool in history, literature, and theater. This project is supported by an FY16 Art Works grant.

Young writers from Maine’s immigrant and refugee families connect with their communities through **The Telling Room**’s Young Writers and Leaders Program. The Telling Room is based in Portland, ME and is a member of Fractured Atlas. Through this program, young writers connect with adult writers, artists, and the community to tell their stories and share their experiences. Through writing, students build their self-confidence and strengthen their literary and English language skills. The project, which received an FY15 Art Works grant, culminates with the students giving multimedia presentations to a live audience.

NEA grants support projects that provide valuable opportunities for artistic development for young and emerging artists.

One of the guiding principles of the NEA’s Art Works program is “art is work for the artists and arts professionals who make up the field.” The valuable opportunities for training and for creation of work provided by NEA-supported projects are important to artists who are emerging professionals and those who are still students.

Salt Lake City’s **Ballet West** produces an annual *Innovations* series which provides a platform for new, experimental choreography for renowned and up-and-coming choreographers. *Innovations 2016*, which is supported by an FY16 Art Works grant, will showcase new works created by Ballet West company dancers, helping them to emerge from the corps and introduce themselves to audiences as choreographers. The 2016 series will also feature a new work created by internationally-recognized choreographer Jessica Lang. Ballet West is a member of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters.

Arts organizations create opportunities for K-12 students and lifelong learners to hone their craft alongside accomplished master artists. **American Composers Forum**, based in Saint Paul, MN, received an FY16 Art Works grant to support its BandQuest program, which fosters the artistic development of middle school band students. The program brings world-class U.S. composers to middle schools to write music specifically for those students. Students experience a unique opportunity to train with and learn professionalism from an accomplished artist. **Centrum** in Port Townsend, WA—a member of Chamber Music America—received FY15 Art Works support for its workshop series that presented renowned master artists, including Sherman Holmes, an NEA National Heritage Fellow. Holmes and other master artists led week-long, intensive workshops for musicians to explore the legacy of American blues music.

NEA funding supports arts organizations’ work to educate communities about local and national history and create safe spaces for community dialogue.

Art Works grants are supporting arts organizations’ projects to connect us to our nation’s past and to encourage community conversations about history’s impact on our society. In Saint Paul, MN, the Penumbra Theatre and the History Theatre each received FY16 Art Works support for productions addressing issues of race and social justice. Both are members of Theatre Communications Group.

**Penumbra Theatre**'s production of *Sunset Baby* by Dominique Morisseau explores the legacy of the revolutionary Black Power movement through the eyes of different generations. The company will develop contextual materials and audience engagement activities that explore issues of race and social justice, such as classroom study guides, post-play discussions, and a possible panel discussion with former Panther Party members including Erika Huggins and co-founder Bobby Seale.

This season, **History Theatre** produced *George Bonga: Black Voyageur* by Carlyle Brown with the support of FY16 Art Works funding. The play examines race, power, and justice in early Minnesota history through the story of George Bonga, a fur trader who became a legendary figure in Minnesota's history. Born in the early 1800s and of Native American, French, and African-American heritage, Bonga's life spanned the closing of the fur trade era, the influx of new European settlers, and the appropriation of Indian lands through treaties. The production included opportunities for post-performance discussions with experts and scholars on local history.

The artistic programming of the arts organizations supported by the National Endowment for the Arts gives vitality to their communities in numerous ways beyond the examples provided here. The federal investment in the NEA places value on the role of arts and culture in our society, and it realizes significant returns that are both measurable and intangible. We celebrate the NEA's FY16 budget increase—the first since FY11—and urge you to please support no less than \$155 million to the National Endowment for the Arts in FY17. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,



Mario Garcia Durham  
Chair  
Performing Arts Alliance



Cristine Davis  
General Manager  
Performing Arts Alliance



Written Statement of Mario Garcia Durham: Chair, Performing Arts Alliance and Cristine Davis:  
General Manager, Performing Arts Alliance

**Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies**  
Committee on Appropriations | United States Senate

**The Importance of Funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)**  
**April 20, 2016**

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The Performing Arts Alliance is a national network of more than 33,000 organizational and individual members comprising the professional, nonprofit performing arts fields. We submit this testimony to highlight the importance of federal investment in the arts.

For 50 years, the National Endowment for the Arts has held a significant federal leadership role for the arts and culture in America. Its grants reach every congressional district and support arts organizations serving their communities in a variety of ways. Through the support of direct NEA grants and NEA partnerships with state arts agencies, arts organizations are helping people experience high-quality artistic presentations, access arts education and opportunities for artistic development, find their voices and share their stories, and have critical dialogue about important social issues.

The following examples of recent NEA grantees within the PAA network are a sample of the significant ways performing arts organizations are able to serve their communities with the support of the NEA.

NEA grants support arts education projects that offer professional development to educators and arts learning opportunities for students.

Chamber Music America member **Community Music Works** in Providence, RI received FY15 Art Works support to provide free lessons in instrumental music, music theory, and improvisation to local at-risk children and youth. The organization also provided a leadership development program for advanced students as well as performance opportunities.

**AXIS Dance Company** in Oakland, CA, recently received Art Works support for its Dance Access Education and Outreach programs to be offered in the Bay Area and in cities nationwide as the company tours. AXIS' events—such as dance classes, teacher trainings and youth dance camps--will be offered to youth and adults with and without disabilities. Included in the offerings are a dance apprentice program for students with spinal cord injuries and movement experiences for veterans. AXIS is a member of Dance/USA.

The Integration of the Arts and Literacy Academy was developed by the **Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts** in Louisville, KY to offer professional development programs for arts teachers and teachers of literacy, reading, and English language arts. Supported by FY16 Art Works funding, this project will help teachers from rural, urban, and suburban Kentucky schools learn to integrate music, dance, drama, and visual arts with creative writing and interactive storytelling based on children's books. The Center for the Performing Arts is a member of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters.

With the support of NEA funds, arts organizations are developing works that address current affairs and create safe spaces for community dialogue on social issues.

**Metro Theater Company** in St. Louis, MO, a member of Theatre Communications Group, is addressing issues of race and social justice in its production of "And in This Corner....Cassius Clay" by Idris Goodwin. The presentation is supported by FY16 Art Works funding. Set in Louisville, Kentucky, during the 1950s and early '60s, the play portrays prize-fighter Cassius Clay's boyhood through his mid-20s, during the Jim Crow era in the South. As contemporary St. Louis communities process the aftermath of the present-day shooting events in Ferguson, aspects of the play may resonate, such as the police officer who mentors Clay and introduces him to boxing. Outreach activities associated with this production will encourage civic engagement and youth empowerment.

**Sandglass Theatre** in Putney, VT received FY15 Art Works support for its biannual International Puppets in the Green Mountains Festival, which will feature performances by international puppet artists around the theme of immigration and humanization, as well as the Voices of Community Series, a theater series exploring issues of diversity with residencies by visiting artists. Sandglass is a member of the National Performance Network.

NEA funds benefit every congressional district, expanding access to exemplary artistry to all people in all U.S. communities.

With the support of FY16 Challenge America funding, **Pro Musica** in Joplin, MO is able to offer free public performances and outreach activities by artists such as Project Trio and the Harlem Quartet, intended to serve rural communities. This organization is a member of Chamber Music America. The Quartet's outreach activities include audience talk-backs about the music, instrumentation, and composers whose work is being performed.

The **St. Louis Children's Choir**—a member of Chorus America—has used FY16 Art Works funding to support its Serving St. Louis through Song community engagement project. The choir will bring its music to St. Louis Area elementary, middle, and language-immersion schools, the St. Louis Juvenile Detention Center, the St. Louis Children's Hospital, and residential care facilities for senior citizens.

**Manship Theatre** in Baton Rouge, LA, a member of Dance/USA, received FY16 Challenge America support for residency projects with tap dance artists Savion Glover, Marshall Davis, Jr., and jazz drummer Jack DeJohnette. Glover and Davis will give a lecture and demonstration at Family Youth Services Center, in partnership with the East Baton Rouge Department of Juvenile Services. Together, all three artists will perform at a public concert at Manship Theatre.

**Great Falls Symphony** in Great Falls, MT, is able to offer outreach concerts and lead master classes for rural high school students with the support of an FY16 Challenge America Fast Track grant. The Symphony, a member of the League of American Orchestras, will also perform in a concert preview that will be aired on Montana's public radio station and perform during an open rehearsal for local piano students and piano teachers.

NEA grants support projects that help people from different communities share their stories and histories, helping audiences make connections across cultures.

**Knoxville Opera**, a member of OPERA America, received an FY16 Challenge America Fast Track Grant to support OPERATION Outreach!, a series of free public performances, in-school productions, and education programs intended to engage underserved audiences of East Tennessee. In addition to presentations of classic works such as Puccini's "Tosca," Knoxville Opera will present its African-American Voices Series, highlighting the importance of diversifying the opera field. The series will feature African-American opera artists discussing their careers, achievements, and experiences as minorities within the field.

**Miracle Theatre Group (Milagro)**, in Portland, OR, received FY16 Art Works support for the West Coast premiere of "Contigo Pan y Cebolla" by Hector Quintero. The tragic comedy is set in Havana during the late 1950s just prior to the Cuban revolution. It centers on a poor family struggling to make ends meet as costs increase but wages remain stagnant. The play is a popular work of Cuban realism and will be produced in its original Spanish. The theater will host a series of bilingual post-play conversations with community members and local scholars to illuminate Cuban history. Milagro is a member of the National Association for Latino Arts and Cultures.

**Portland Playhouse**, in Portland, OR (a member of Theatre Communications Group), received Artworks Support for the development and West Coast premiere of "You for Me for You" by Mia Chung. The play tells the story of two North Korean sisters facing starvation at the hands of a corrupt regime who are separated when they decide to flee the country. The work invites audiences to rethink perceptions of North Korea and the immigrant experience. In partnership with the Korean American Coalition and Asian American Network of Oregon, the theater plans to stimulate public dialogue around the themes of the play by hosting talkback discussions with artists.

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**The NOCCA Institute (New Orleans Center for Creative Arts)**, a member of Chamber Music America, received FY16 Art Works funding for its Artists-in-Residence Program. Visiting artists convened for master classes, concerts, and other activities with youth, emerging and mid-career artists, and the general public.

With the support of FY16 Art Works funds, **Dorset Theatre Festival** in Dorset, VT—a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG) —administered its New Play Development Program. Via a new works incubator to nurture new voices in theatre, the program will mentor playwrights in the development of new plays from conception to production. A similar effort to support new voices is underway at the **Nashville Repertory Theatre** due in part to support from Art Works funding. The Theatre's Ingram New Works Project will aid the creation of new plays by participating playwrights who will write plays of their choice, rather than a play chosen by the institution. This theatre is also a member of TCG.

The artistic programming of the arts organizations supported by the National Endowment for the Arts gives vitality to their communities in numerous ways beyond the examples provided here. The federal investment in the NEA places value on the role of arts and culture in our society, and it realizes significant returns that are both measurable and intangible. We celebrate the NEA's FY16 budget increase—the first since FY11—and urge you to please support no less than \$155 million to the National Endowment for the Arts in FY17. Thank you for considering our request.

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