



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

A great nation
deserves great art.

NEA ARTS

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Film, radio, and television—the media arts—have been a high priority at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) almost from the start of the agency. In fact, one of the most significant early initiatives taken by the Arts Endowment was the creation, in 1967, of the American Film Institute to conserve America's precious cinematic heritage. For several years the AFI was funded entirely by the NEA, serving in effect as the Arts Endowment's film program.

During the chairmanship of Nancy Hanks, the NEA began to look toward expanding its media programs beyond film preservation. In 1970 it established the Public Media program, forerunner of today's Media Arts program, and in 1972 it created the funding category



PHOTO BY KEVIN ALLEN

Media Arts Director Ted Libbey.

Programming in the Arts, which since 1999 has been known as the Arts on Radio and Television. In supporting the work of media arts organizations, independent filmmakers, local exhibitors, and national broadcasters through its Media Arts program, the NEA has

affirmed the value that film, radio, and television have as art forms in and of themselves, and has recognized the enormously important role the media play in furthering the public's access to, and appreciation of, *all* the arts.

The range of media arts activity supported by the Arts Endowment has been very broad. From the mid-1970s until the late 1990s the NEA played a leading role in funding new work by independent filmmakers. It continues to fund the creation of works on film, mainly documentaries, through grants to nonprofit organizations. It funds the exhibition of film and video art at dozens of festivals around the country and assists organizations across the media spectrum in providing services such as workshops for youth, professional training, and access to equipment and facilities. It continues to support film, video, and audio preservation efforts, and plays a major part in sustaining the nation's leading radio and television broadcast series devoted to the arts, which include such well known programs as *Great Performances*, *Performance Today*, and *From the Top*.

The articles which follow highlight not only the scope of the NEA's involvement in the media arts, but the extraordinary benefits its media grants deliver to the American people.

Ted Libbey
Director, Media Arts



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ON THE COVER:

Members of the Polaris Quartet, a student group from the Music Institute of Chicago, rehearse before a *From the Top* show taped in Indianapolis, Indiana. The musicians are (left to right): violinists Andrea Jarrett and Vince Meklis, cellist Gabriel Cabezas, and violist Matthew Lipman. Photo by Lisa Utzinger

Reaching Millions with Art

The NEA's Support for Film, Radio, and Television

In the technological age of the 21st century, media has a larger influence than ever before. From film to radio to television to DVDs and the Internet, the media people use to connect with their world has been growing at a furious rate. Now one can reach millions of people easily with a program shown on television or broadcast on the Internet. That's why the media has become so important in the creation and presentation of art.

In 1967, the Arts Endowment awarded four public media grants totaling \$788,300 "in support of a range of educational television programs in the arts." As the program grew, the Arts Endowment seeded many fledgling organizations that are now household names, such as Robert Redford's Sundance Institute, which continues to receive NEA support for its Feature Film Program, a series of workshops for film professionals. Media Arts grants support a range of activities, such as production work, preservation, festivals, residencies, and workshops. Chicago Public Radio, for example, received NEA support for its annual Third Coast International Audio Festival, which convenes documentarians, feature

reporters, and audio artists from the U.S. and abroad to share their expertise and best work. Arts on Radio and Television grants support the development, production, and national distribution of radio and television programs that highlight the spectrum of arts disciplines. ETV Endowment of South Carolina, for example, has received Arts Endowment support for its radio series headlined by NEA Jazz Master Marian McPartland. Reaching more than 400,000 listeners each week, *Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz* has featured nearly 600 jazz artists ranging from NEA Jazz Masters Sarah Vaughan and Benny Carter to emerging artists over the last two decades.

The NEA has also identified critical needs in the media arts field. For instance, when hundreds of early American motion pictures, such as Charlie Chaplin's 1921 film *The Kid*, were imperiled because they were printed on unstable nitrate film stock, the Arts Endowment partnered with the Ford Foundation and the Motion Picture Association of America to create and fund the American Film Institute to preserve these his-

toric works. The NEA also partnered with the Ford Foundation to deal with another media problem: the proper lighting for recording live performances. The partnership provided research and design funding to adapt low-light cameras for theatrical use, making it possible to record live performances for rebroadcast without disruption.

The following pages profile just a few of the catalytic Media Arts projects supported by the NEA: a filmmaking residency for young people, a Midwestern film festival, a public television series about contemporary visual artists, a radio and television series that introduces young classical musicians to new audiences, a documentary film about

international adoption, and a prominent museum's leadership role in film preservation.



NEA Jazz Master Ramsey Lewis being interviewed by Marian McPartland (herself an NEA Jazz Master) on her radio show, *Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz*.

PHOTO BY MELISSA GOH

Film Stars

Cleveland Presents an International Film Festival

Cleveland, Ohio, may be better known for its orchestra, but many residents consider the Cleveland International Film Festival (CIFF) a local treasure. Since 1977, when the festival screened just eight films, Executive Director Marcie Goodman and her staff have been committed to presenting foreign and independent films that might never make it to a Midwestern multiplex. To be sure, the festival has booked its share of art house hits—including the 2008 documentary *Young @ Heart*—but the majority of movies screened at the festival would never see a Cleveland marquee, Goodman said.

For its first 14 years, the festival hosted screenings at a variety of theaters in the metro area. In 1991, Tower City Cinemas became the festival's permanent home. Since 2006, festival admissions have held steady at 52,000. In 2008, the festival received an NEA Access to Artistic Excellence grant to support its programming: more than 130 features and some 160 shorts. Features are selected mostly by CIFF's artistic planning staff, while volunteers select the best from the 1,000 shorts submitted in response to a call for entries.

Festival administrators work with educators and community leaders to plan awards and related programming. In 2008, more than 5,000 schoolchildren attended matinee screenings and talkbacks. CIFF also partnered with a local library to bring in Michael Cunningham, author of *The Hours*. After accepting the festival's new From Page to Projector Award for writing novels that successfully transfer to the big screen, Cunningham declared the honor his favorite, other than "this thingy called the Pulitzer Prize."

These educational efforts and community partnerships are two reasons why the NEA consistently awards grants

to the Cleveland festival. "There's great cachet from getting money from the NEA," Goodman said.

Local cineastes aren't CIFF's only fans: the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences recently named it as a qualifying festival in the category of Short Films, meaning that CIFF Best Live Action Short Film and Best Animated Short Film awardees may qualify as Oscar nominees.

But perhaps the greatest testament to the festival's popularity are the more than 3,000 people who bundled up and braved a late-winter blizzard to attend screenings at the 2008 festival's opening weekend. Many of those moviegoers spent the night in Cleveland's Public Square, trapped by some 15 inches of snow that fell while they were indoors watching *Jump*, *The Flight of the Red Balloon*, and *In Search of a Midnight Kiss*.

"It's sort of like a badge of courage," said Goodman. "To this day, people say, 'I was there during the blizzard.'"



Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Michael Cunningham accepts the Cleveland International Film Festival's 2008 From Page to Projector Award from Marcie Goodman, the festival's executive director.

PHOTO BY TIM JAFRANEK

Through New Eyes

Hecho en Encinal Brings Filmmaking to Rural Texas

In the rural southern Texas community of Encinal, the scarcity of opportunities to become involved in the arts is a fact of life. Since 1996, local arts organization Art's For Everyone, or Hecho en Encinal as it's better known, has provided a variety of dance, music, literary arts, theater, and visual arts programming for the community, including after-school art clubs, theater and dance performances, and oral history projects.

One discipline Hecho en Encinal hadn't explored, however, was the media arts. Working with local filmmakers, Hecho en Encinal reached out for guidance to Kentucky's Appalshop, whose signature Appalachian Media Institute (AMI) provides media production training for youth, teachers, and community groups in central Appalachia. With help from the NEA, Hecho en Encinal and Appalshop created the Rural Filmmaker Exchange to help the two organizations share ideas.

The exchange began in June 2007 in Encinal with a mixed group of 10 young people from Encinal and from the AMI program, two Appalshop filmmakers, and a professional filmmaker from nearby Laredo, Texas. The filmmakers and youth from Appalshop's AMI program joined the Encinal community for film screenings and a three-day intensive youth media workshop. The young filmmakers together planned, shot, and edited two short topical documentaries, which they shared with the community during a special screening.

Prior to the workshop, the attitude among Encinal youth was that their town did not have any interesting material for a documentary. The Appalshop students helped the young Texans to recognize what made their community unique. The first documentary produced during the workshop explored life on a South Texas ranch, while a second film, *Bus Ride Stories*, featured a series of interviews by students making the 55-mile



PHOTO BY MARITZA BAUTISTA

Young filmmakers from Hecho en Encinal, Appalshop, and Indonesia shoot footage for their documentary on energy with filmmaker Tom Hansell as part of the 2008 Rural Filmmaker Exchange.

round trip from Encinal to the area's middle and high schools.

A year later a group of Encinal filmmakers and two young participants traveled to Appalshop's Kentucky headquarters in Whitesburg for another three-day AMI workshop and film screenings by participants. Their experience at Appalshop overlapped with a visit by a group from rural Indonesia, an opportunity that allowed the Texas group to see how filmmakers from a very different rural area were tackling issues in their own community. The Encinal group joined the international filmmakers on several projects, including a documentary about energy consumption.

As a result of the Rural Filmmaker Exchange, Hecho en Encinal developed its own annual youth media workshops modeled on the AMI program. Media del Monte is a six-week summer program to study and discuss documentaries, learn to use the filmmaking equipment, and create their own films. As Hecho en Encinal board member Sean Chadwell noted, the greatest lesson taught by the program was that "you don't have to be from New York or Los Angeles to be a filmmaker."

Up Close and Personal

Susan Sollins Discusses the Television Series *Art:21*

Broadcast on PBS since 2001, *Art:21—Art in the Twenty-First Century* features intimate profiles of contemporary visual artists. To date, more than 7,399 airings on 459 PBS stations have featured artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Maya Lin, Martin Puryear, and William Wegman. Here's an excerpt from a recent e-mail exchange with *Art:21* Executive Producer Susan Sollins. Read the complete interview at www.arts.gov/features/index.php?choosemonth=2009_03.

NEA: What do you hope viewers learn from *Art:21*?

SUSAN SOLLINS: I trust that the takeaway is an enthusiasm and interest in today's artists, and that *Art:21*'s public understands through the series that artists work extremely hard, that their ideas are substantial, and that new art often needs new forms to contain it. Our artists not only reflect our society, but also tell us a great deal about our identity and the issues that are in the vanguard of our political, cultural, and social discourse. And they provide us with role models for creative thinking in many areas of our collective life as a nation.

NEA: What types of outreach activities are part of *Art:21*?

SOLLINS: Events include screening and discussion programs for adults and young people, artist talks, and professional development workshops for teachers. We have developed an extraordinarily large network of organizational partners across the country—including museums, community galleries, youth organizations, libraries, school districts, and PBS stations—with which we collaborate in order to reach local audiences more directly. Over the last few months we have collaborated with the Museum of Modern Art to present a workshop on teaching with contemporary art, the Smithsonian Museum of American Art to host a monthly screening series, and the New York City Public Library to present a series of artist talks. Last season we worked with Americans for the Arts and more than 350 local venues



COURTESY TANYA BONAKDAR GALLERY, NEW YORK

***Scala Naturae*, 1994, by Mark Dion, one of the artists featured on the television series *Art: 21—Art in the Twenty-First Century*.**

during National Arts and Humanities Month to present 400 screening events in all 50 states and 20 countries internationally.

NEA: How important is NEA funding to *Art:21*?

SOLLINS: NEA has played a crucial role in *Art:21*'s existence and growth. At the earliest stages of development, the NEA provided the seed money that was necessary to kick-start the organization. Since that time, *Art:21* has received crucial funding from the Arts on Radio and Television program for the production of the series, and from the Access to Artistic Excellence program for our education and outreach activities. Without this funding from the NEA, or the endorsement that funding implies, *Art:21* would simply not exist.

Telling Tales

Katahdin Produces Documentary Filmmaking Outside the Mainstream

In 1966, the Borshays, a California family, adopted eight-year-old Cha Jung Hee from South Korea. Or so they thought. The real Cha Jung Hee had been reclaimed by her family days before the adoption. Instead, the little girl the Borshays named Deann was given Cha Jung Hee's name and told to keep it secret by the orphanage, who then erased her previous identity. This compelling story is the subject of Deann Borshay Liem's autobiographical documentary, provisionally titled *In The Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

In The Matter of Cha Jung Hee is just one of the compelling films currently in progress at Katahdin Productions. Founded in 2003 by Lisa Thomas, the mission of the Berkeley, California-based company is "to tell compelling stories often ignored by mainstream media—stories that inspire, engage, and even enrage." As Katahdin's executive director, Liem oversees the company's fundraising, outreach, and other strategic initiatives, allowing other filmmakers to have a similar chance to tell their own stories.

Among other Katahdin projects are *Homeland: Four Portraits of Native Action*, about Native-American eco-activists, and *Dorothea Lange: Grab a Hunk of Lightning*, which also received NEA support. *The Garden*, a Katahdin-sponsored film about a community garden in south central Los Angeles, was nominated for a 2009 Academy Award for Best Documentary, having taken top honors in 2008 at SILVERDOCS and the Camden International Film Festival.

In The Matter of Cha Jung Hee was seeded by a Sundance Production grant, and Katahdin received support from the Arts Endowment for post-production activities. "I'm really grateful to the NEA for supporting the project," said Liem. "It's a seal of approval for other donors and other funders. The NEA review process is very rigorous and having undergone that peer review and getting funds is a great boost for any project to move forward."



PHOTO BY CHELSEA WALTON

Filmmaker Deann Borshay Liem searches for the real Cha Jung Hee in a documentary produced by Katahdin Productions.

Liem's film focuses on three women, all named Cha Jung Hee, who are all the same age as the filmmaker. Liem also interviews other Korean adoptees from around the world about their own struggles with issues of identity. "I decided to use this story of searching for this girl, Cha Jung Hee . . . as an opportunity to explore the history of international adoptions from Korea and the broader context of trans-racial international adoption."

In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee will air in 2010 on *P.O.V.*, PBS's long-running showcase for independent nonfiction films, which also receives NEA support. Liem plans to develop a curriculum guide for schools and a discussion guide for general viewers. In addition, she is working to carry on the work her personal story has inspired by connecting the approximately 200,000 Korean adoptees all over the world and their families through online social networking—a service she hopes will one day grow to include adoptees of any ethnicity.

Young at Heart

From the Top Showcases Young Classical Musicians

“Just get your show picked up by twelve to 15 radio stations.” That’s what veteran radio producers told Gerald Slavet when he announced plans for *From the Top*, a radio show that would feature kids playing classical music. “We were met with great skepticism,” Slavet said. At a public radio conference, station managers asked him, “Why would I ever put a kid on the radio when I can pull Yo-Yo Ma off the shelf?” A few conceded that the kids he booked were good, but said there weren’t enough prodigies in the talent pool to justify more than one season for such a show.

summer home in western Massachusetts. The production team sent out demo recordings and launched an aggressive marketing campaign. By the time *From the Top* officially went on the air in January 2000, nearly 100 stations had signed on to broadcast the program. The show’s mix of music, interviews, and sketch comedy, all featuring teenage musicians, soon proved a winning combination with listeners. With Boston’s Jordan Hall as its base, the show toured the country, taping episodes from coast to coast. Today *From the Top* is preparing to enter its tenth season. The number of subscribing stations from across the nation has held steady at 220, with airplay in nine of the top ten markets. The show has branched into television, taping a dozen shows each year at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

The NEA began supporting the fledgling project in 2001 with an Arts on Radio and Television grant. The program’s continued quality has ensured ongoing Arts Endowment support; in 2008 *From the Top* received \$135,000 toward the radio show and the three-year-old television series, some of which is invested in *From the Top*’s education programs.

“There’s quite a lot going on, and there’s quite a lot more to do,” said Christopher O’Riley, the concert pianist who has served as host almost from the beginning. “What’s been gratifying is that we have succeeded in creating an arena for young people to connect with their audiences, and use their personal passions as a way to make them emissaries for classical music in the United States.”

Ostensibly, *From the Top* is a program that shows off



PHOTO BY DAVID BALSOM

Accompanied by host Christopher O’Riley, 10-year-old violinist Alice Ivy-Pemberton rehearses a Bartók rhapsody before a *From the Top* radio taping at New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall in Boston, Massachusetts.

Slavet and his co-producer, Jennifer Hurley-Wales, pressed on. In late summer of 1999, they partnered with the New England Conservatory and WGBH-FM, one of Boston’s public radio stations, to begin taping episodes of *From the Top* at Tanglewood, the Boston Symphony’s



PHOTO BY DAVID BALSOM

Priscilla Wadsworth, a flutist from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, performs for a *From the Top* radio taping in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania.

prodigiously talented musicians—from violinists to composers to singers—ages eight to 18. But it's more than that. It's a show about kids who like classical music, and what makes them tick. "It's all [generated] from the kids," O'Riley said. "There's an awful lot of delving into who they are, and the most important, unique things about them."

Thousands of musicians audition for *From the Top* each year. The best players don't automatically make the stage. Producers evaluate the diversity each student would offer in terms of musical talent, demographics, and personality. Once performers are selected, they respond to questionnaires and speak with staff by phone. Then it's time to brainstorm. When a swim team captain from Texas made the show, a *From the Top* roving reporter showed up at practice to interview her teammates. More recently, a young pianist from California voiced concerns about competing against guys with bigger, stronger hands in competitions, so the producers compiled a segment on famous female pianists.

"There's a lot of preparation that goes on," O'Riley said. "It's not a bunch of us sitting around, wondering what smart alecky things we can do."

From the Top has gradually poured more resources into tracking alumni and encouraging students to return home as cultural leaders. Every young musician participates in a leadership workshop, and each year several student performers are profiled in McGraw-Hill's *Spotlight on Music* textbooks.

In 2005, the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, a non-profit founded by the late Washington Redskins owner, challenged Slavet and the *From the Top* team to book more low-income students.

In return, each of those students would receive a \$10,000 scholarship and the chance to compete for additional funding. To date, the program has distributed \$1 million in scholarship money. Finding young performers like Joshua Jones, a 16-year-old percussionist from Chicago who took up the marimba because he was "always banging on stuff," takes some persistent searching. It's worth the effort. "Our kids illustrate that anyone who learns discipline, passion, and focus can succeed at almost anything," Slavet said.

Many of the series' featured young performers go on to become professional musicians. As O'Riley travels the country playing concertos with orchestras, he often crosses paths with alumni. At Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, he was reunited with Carol Jantsch, a tuba player who, at age 17, played "Flight of the Bumblebee" on *From the Top*. Now she's a principal brass player in the renowned Philadelphia Orchestra. In January 2009, O'Riley shared the stage with violinist Jason Moody, a first-season *From the Top* performer who is now a member of the Spokane Symphony. But he's equally proud of Nicole Ali, a violinist and pianist who has gone on to conduct stem cell research at Harvard. As the show prepares to enter its tenth season, O'Riley knows the list of distinguished alumni will only grow.

Taking a Look Back

The Museum of Modern Art Preserves American Film History

Given its extensive visual arts collection, it would be expected that New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) would receive funding only under the NEA's museum discipline. But in fact, since the 1970s, the NEA has been a major supporter of MoMA's efforts to preserve and protect its collection of approximately 23,000 films.

The museum's film department began in 1935 as a library of seminal works on film that were no longer in distribution, such as silent and international films. While its collection contains films from around the world, as part of its role as a founding member of the International Federation of Film Archives, MoMA also is committed to the acquisition and preservation of American film heritage, including classic films such as Academy Award Best Picture winners *It Happened One Night* (1935) and *On the Waterfront* (1955).

MoMA's curators consider a number of factors when selecting films for preservation, such as scarcity of surviving prints or negatives and whether the film is an "orphan," meaning it no longer has a rights holder or will be lost without the museum's help. In FY 2008, a \$50,000 Arts Endowment grant supported the preservation of ten American films from MoMA's archive, including *His Majesty, the American*. Starring Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., the romantic comedy was the first motion picture produced by the fledgling United Artists studio. Like others in the collection, *His Majesty, the American* had been copied onto 16mm acetate film some time around World War II to keep it from being lost when 35mm nitrate film became scarce. In restoring the film to its original 35mm format, conservators extended intertitles to their original length and repaired tinting, resulting in a print of superior quality that's closer to the original.

The museum's conservation program ultimately results in greater accessibility, as the restored films can



IMAGE COURTESY OF MOMA STILL'S ARCHIVE

***Brute Force*, 1947, starring Burt Lancaster and Hume Cronyn, is one of the films restored by the Museum of Modern Art in New York City with funding from the NEA.**

be used for MoMA's public programs, screened at film festivals, or viewed by film scholars. According to conservator Peter Williamson, "[It] opens a window into what filmmaking was like." This glimpse into the past is the reason MoMA recently focused on restoring six films from its Thomas Edison Company Collection produced between 1913 and 1917. Although this period in the company's history previously had been dismissed by scholars as unimportant, MoMA maintains that these works are valuable as indicators of culture at the time the films were produced and of what people then considered entertaining.

A number of the restored films will eventually be available on DVD, expanding their reach considerably. However, just as a print of a painting is not the same as the original, MoMA respects each film as a piece of modern art, recognizing the value of restoring works to their original format. As former film curator Steven Higgins asserted, MoMA's mission is to "restore films as film and make them available as film."

Caught in the Act

Great Performances Brings the Performing Arts into American Homes

While most Americans weren't able to make it to New York's Richard Rodgers Theater to see Jennifer Garner's Broadway debut as Roxane to Kevin Kline's Cyrano in the 2007 production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, they were able to catch Garner and Kline's performances for free when *Cyrano* premiered on PBS's *Great Performances* series in January 2009. For more than 35 years, *Great Performances*, produced by Thirteen/WNET with support from the NEA, has transformed American television into concert halls, dance theaters, and Broadway auditoriums, bringing works by Leonard Bernstein, Twyla Tharp, and Aaron Copland, to name a few, directly into American homes. The nation's longest continuously running arts program, *Great Performances* has garnered an impressive 61 Emmy Awards and a slew of other top honors.

When it launched in 1972, *Great Performances* spotlighted classical symphonic and opera performances as well as regional theater. Two years later, thanks to partnership funding from the NEA, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and Exxon, *Dance in America* debuted as a separate series that was ultimately folded into the *Great Performances* family while retaining its own branding. As Executive Producer David Horn explained, "With *Great Performances*, while we [feature] regional opera and theater and music organizations, it does take on an international aspect as well. But we still retain in our dance programming a primary focus on American dance companies, choreographers, and performers." Today, according to Horn, fans of *Great Performances* can expect to see "anything from modern drama to modern dance to classic ballet to musical theater. You name it, we do it on *Great Performances*."

Each *Great Performances* and *Dance in America* episode has an estimated cumulative reach of nearly three million viewers, or approximately 1,200 times the capacity of a large performing arts venue such as New York's Carnegie Hall. This reach is increased exponentially by the availability of selected clips and full



PHOTO BY JOE SINNOTT, WNET NEW YORK

Kevin Kline, Jennifer Garner, and Daniel Sunjata star in *Cyrano de Bergerac* on the PBS series *Great Performances*, supported by the NEA.

episodes on the series' Web site, and the series' availability on DVD. The Web site also features lesson plans so teachers can integrate *Great Performances* video clips into their curricula.

Horn maintained that it's the idea of access that fuels the program. "Over the years we've received a few e-mails from somebody, who ultimately became a performer, in a small town . . . or somewhere outside of one of the major cultural cities in this country, and the first time they saw a dance [performance], they saw an



PHOTO BY PETER MCBRIDE - WOLF TRAP FOUNDATION FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

opera, they saw real theater, was on public television, usually *Great Performances*. And that inspired them to want to enter into a career as a performer, or in some other capacity in the arts. And that story gets repeated over and over again. . . . Particularly with the cutbacks in arts funding over the last several years, I think that our service is even more important.” Horn also credited *Dance in America* with being particularly important to conserving the nation’s dance heritage by creating video archives that can be used to recreate future performances of work by masters like George Balanchine.

The *Great Performances* team delivers 14–16 new episodes each year, many in partnership with the nation’s pre-eminent arts organizations, including the Metropolitan Opera, the Roundabout Theatre Company, and the Chicago Symphony. One 2008 show teamed Thirteen/WNET with the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts and the National Park Service. “Dance in America: Wolf Trap’s Face of America” showcased Wolf Trap’s commissions of dance makers, musicians, and performing artists from across the U.S. to create site-specific dance works at U.S. national parks, including Yosemite National Park, Coral Reef National Monument, and the Wright Brothers’ National Memorial. Another recent episode, “Pavarotti: A Life in Seven Arias,” was a retrospective of the tenor’s life featuring

Hawaii’s famed dance company Hālau O Kekuhi performs at Volcanoes National Park in “Wolf Trap’s Face of America,” a *Dance in America* presentation.

rare, archival footage and interviews with Pavarotti’s friends and colleagues.

Horn credits the NEA with helping to ensure the series’ survival. “Once the NEA has given you a grant, it’s like the seal of approval. It makes it so much easier to get other individuals and foundations on board. It’s even more critical now because corporate funding has pretty much dried up for public television. . . . It’s also the thing that helps us maintain a strong focus on American performing artists and companies.”

Despite the nation’s economic woes, Horn remains optimistic about the future of *Great Performances*. “We hope that we’ll be able to continue to leverage the grant that we get from the NEA to be able to get this important work that American companies are doing on television for the rest of the country to see. We really want to figure out a better way to get younger audiences to view the things that we do. We think there’s a lot of vitality out there. We sense from the signals we’re hearing that the new administration has committed to the culture and arts in this country, and we just hope to be part of that, as we have been for over three decades.”

Sowing Seeds

NEA's Support for Independent Filmmaking through AFI and Sundance

As he kicked off the 25th annual Sundance Film Festival in January 2009, Robert Redford recognized the effects of the current economy on today's filmmakers: "If you want to come into this business, you need to want it more than anything else in life because it's going to be a hard road." Luckily, today's filmmakers have opportunities for both training and public visibility due to organizations such as the American Film Institute and the Sundance Institute, both of which have been funded by the NEA since their inception.

Following the meeting of the first National Council on the Arts in 1965 the need was identified for an organization that could both protect America's film heritage and shape and support the future of this art form. With an initial National Endowment for the Arts grant of \$1.3 million, the American Film Institute (AFI) was established in 1967. Over more than 40 years, AFI has preserved more than 27,500 feature films, shorts, newsreels, documentaries, and television programs from 1894 to the present for safekeeping at the Library of Congress. In addition, AFI programming includes more than 3,000 events annually, and its Life Achievement Awards, which honor individuals whose careers in motion pictures or television, have greatly contributed to the enrichment of American culture. The AFI Conservatory has trained more than 3,500 artists in cinematography, directing, editing, producing, production design, and screenwriting.

The NEA's ongoing support for AFI has ranged from preservation projects to educational outreach programs to exhibitions. Until 1995, the NEA also provided funding for AFI to award competitive independent filmmaker grants for both new and experienced filmmakers.

More recently, the NEA has supported one of AFI's signature education programs, the Directing Workshop for Women. Established in 1974 with a class that included Maya Angelou and Ellen Burstyn, the workshop was designed to provide training in film and television for women already involved in the film industry—such



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE

AFI Directing Workshop for Women participant Taryn Anderson planning a shot.

as actresses, studio executives, and screenwriters—at a time when very few women worked as professional directors. Although more than 30 years have passed since the program's inception, female filmmakers remain underrepresented in the field, and the workshop continues to serve a vital role. In 2007, women directed only six percent of the 250 top-grossing films.

Each year, AFI selects eight participants for the directing workshop through a highly competitive process. Classes focus on how to budget, schedule production activities, and work with actors, designers, and cinematographers. Participants also discuss and edit the short screenplay that each has selected to direct. After



PHOTO BY FRED HAYES

Director Andrew Dosunmu (right), a 2005 fellow in the Sundance Institute's Feature Film Program, with Sundance founder Robert Redford.

three weeks of intensive classroom instruction, the participants enter five weeks of formal pre-production followed by a five-day shoot and post-production. The directors are responsible for hiring their own crews and casting actors. Each receives a stipend of \$5,000 and may raise up to \$20,000 more for production costs. AFI helps promote the final films with a public screening to which agents, managers, and production companies are invited.

Executive Vice Dean for the AFI Conservatory Joe Petricca said that many participants describe the program as “the final key to making the leap to a professional career in directing.” Without the NEA’s support he says, the Directing Workshop for Women probably would not exist or could not be offered free of charge, an aspect which is necessary for most of the women involved.

Following the final screening, participants in the workshop go on to promote their films at festivals such as Sundance. The exposure these festivals provide is essential, a fact which Robert Redford recognized when he approached the NEA in 1980 with his plan to create a nonprofit institute dedicated to independent film-

making. With a modest initial grant of \$5,000, the Sundance Institute held its first Filmmakers Lab, allowing independent filmmakers to spend four weeks working with film producers, directors, writers, and actors. The following year, the NEA’s support of the Sundance Institute grew to \$35,000; more recently, the agency’s annual support has topped \$100,000. Today Sundance receives NEA funding solely for its Feature Film Program, providing workshops for

screenwriters, composers, producers, and directors.

Speaking at the 2008 Congressional appropriations hearing for NEA funding, Robert Redford described the importance of the agency’s early support: “I will always be grateful to the NEA for believing in us at that time. It was instrumental in getting us started. It wasn’t just the seed funding, but the seal of approval that gave the idea the impetus.”

For AFI and Sundance, the focus remains on allowing the artists to create new and exciting projects. Redford describes the first year of his lab: “In the remote natural setting and removed from the pressures of the marketplace, each emerging artist was encouraged to take creative risks and to craft a film true to their own, unique vision.”

In a sentiment echoed by Joe Petricca, former NEA Chair Frank Hodson asserted, “For major studios, return on investment is the bottom line. [These programs] provide a place in which financial return is not the first criterion.”

Numerous filmmakers can trace their successes back to the training and connections they received through AFI and Sundance, and the NEA can take pride in knowing that its early and continuous support of these organizations has contributed to today’s thriving independent film field.

In The News

NEA New Play Development Program Selections

In October 2008, the NEA announced the seven inaugural selections for the NEA New Play Development Program, which is administered for the agency by Washington, DC-based Arena Stage. Launched in December 2007, the new initiative is intended to help the nation's nonprofit theaters bring more new plays to full productions. Two projects named NEA Outstanding New American Play selections will receive \$90,000 each to support development activities in collaboration with the playwright, including a full production: McCarter Theatre's (Princeton, New Jersey) production of Tarell Alvin McCraney's trilogy *The Brother/Sister Plays* and Center Theatre Group's (Los Angeles, California) production of Rajiv Joseph's *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*.

Five additional theaters were selected to receive \$20,000 each as NEA Distinguished New Play Development Projects: California Shakespeare Theater (Berkeley, California); The Children's Theatre Company (Minneapolis, Minnesota); The Foundry Theatre (New York, New York); Lark Play Development Center (New York, New York); and Rude Mechanicals (Austin, Texas). The NEA funding will support development activities in collaboration with playwrights, such as workshops and staged readings.

In December, the Arts Endowment released *All America's a Stage*, a research report examining developments in the growth, distribution, and finances of America's nonprofit theater system since 1990. The study analyzed nearly 2,000 nonprofit theaters, utilizing data from several sources, including the Internal Revenue Service, Theatre Communications Group member survey data, the U. S. Census Bureau's Economic Census data, and data from the NEA's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. While the research revealed decreasing attendance rates and vulnerability during economic downturns, it also indicated broad growth and generally positive fiscal health for the nation's nonprofit theaters. The survey also quantified the catalytic effect of Arts Endowment funding on the

theaters' ability to leverage contributions from other sources: each dollar in NEA grant support is associated with an additional \$12 from individual donors, \$1.88 from businesses, and \$3.55 from foundations.

Save America's Treasures Awards New Grants to Conserve U.S. Cultural Heritage

Forty organizations and agencies from across the country will receive \$10.52 million in Save America's Treasures grants to support a range of cultural heritage projects.

Save America's Treasures is a partnership program of the NEA, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the National Park Service, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services to fund the preservation and conservation of the nation's irreplaceable and endangered historic properties, sites, documents, artistic works, and artifacts. Through Save America's Treasures, the NEA will support projects such as the documentation, restoration, and archival preservation of the only existing radio broadcasts of the historic August 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.



A Native-American doll from the Clowser Collection at the Days of '76 Museum in Deadwood, South Dakota, one of the artifacts being preserved with a Save America's Treasures grant.

A Breath of Fresh Air

Talking Art on the Radio

The opening of *Fresh Air* is unlike any other introduction on public radio. Four saxophones of the Microscopic Septet blast out a syncopated three-chord theme. The piano and drums join in, and then listeners hear the assuring voice of Terry Gross saying, “This is *Fresh Air*.” The music introduces a program that also is unlike any other on public radio. Since 1975, when Gross began hosting a local arts-focused talk show on WHYY-FM, Philadelphia’s public radio station, she has been bringing audiences in-depth interviews with artists, authors, and entertainers who are at the forefront of American cultural movements.

Through the years, *Fresh Air* has added staff and become syndicated. Today, more than 450 American public radio affiliates broadcast the program to roughly 4.5 million listeners. Overseas, *Fresh Air* can be heard on the World Radio Network. The NEA began funding *Fresh Air* in 1988, and in 2008, awarded WHYY-FM a \$65,000 Arts on Radio and Television grant. “We are so grateful for that funding,” Gross said.

Fresh Air receives NEA support not only because it is a quality radio program, but because the show consistently devotes much of its one-hour time slot to arts coverage. Before booking guests for the show, Gross and her staff read more books, listen to more CDs, and watch more movies than they can possibly count. “Our ambition is to [present] the people who are good, as opposed to people who are doing mediocre or boring work,” Gross said. “We really want to pick out the best things and call our listeners’ attention to [them], but



PHOTO COURTESY OF WHYY

Terry Gross has hosted *Fresh Air* on WHYY-FM, a Philadelphia public radio station, since 1975.

it requires a whole lot of screening in advance.”

Her mission has become more urgent in recent years, Gross said. Across the country, local book and music stores are closing in record numbers. She sees *Fresh Air* as a counterbalance. For example, Philadelphia residents can no longer listen to the latest jazz releases at Tower Records, but they can hear critic Kevin Whitehead review jazz albums on *Fresh Air*.

“Just because the marketplace is passing this music by doesn’t mean that we should,” Gross said. “These are people who are doing really important art, but they don’t have a market base. Our job is to

connect these people with their audiences, people who might really like their work if they knew it existed.”

When opportunity allows, Gross interviews artists whose work will elucidate current events. On Inauguration Day, for example, *Fresh Air* broadcast interviews with street artist Shepard Fairey, creator of the iconic Barack Obama poster, and the poet Natasha Trethewey—a 1999 NEA Literature Fellow—whose work often elucidates her biracial heritage.

“We talk to people from the arts world—books, movies, music—to better understand their culture, and to see what’s happening through their eyes,” Gross said.



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