



**Testimony in Support of FY2016 Funding for the  
National Endowment for the Arts  
Submitted to the Senate Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Appropriations Subcommittee**

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The League of American Orchestras urges the Senate Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee to support Fiscal Year 2016 funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at a level of \$155 million. We ask Congress to continue recognizing the important work of this agency to increase public access to and engagement with the arts, promote the creation of new artistic works, and cultivate a sense of cultural, community, and historic pride, all while supporting millions of jobs in communities nationwide.

The League of American Orchestras leads, supports, and champions America's orchestras and the vitality of the music they perform. Its diverse membership of approximately 800 orchestras runs the gamut from world-renowned symphonies to community groups, from summer festivals to student and youth ensembles. Orchestras unite people through creativity and artistry, fuel local economies and civic vitality, and educate young people and adults. The League remains committed to helping orchestras engage with their communities, and the NEA plays an invaluable role through its direct grants, Federal/state partnerships, and research on trends in public participation and workforce development.

The award of a competitive NEA grant is widely considered an affirmation of national artistic significance. The ability to present nationally recognized programs is highly valued by communities large and small, and being an NEA grant recipient is critical in securing additional funding for a variety of programming and operations. In Fiscal Year 2014, the NEA's Grants to Organizations included 116 direct grants to orchestras in the *Art Works* and *Challenge America* categories. The following ten highlighted awards from total \$220,000 in NEA support.

**NEA Funding Enables Orchestras to Innovate and Collaborate Across Disciplines**

Grant support from the NEA helps make it possible for orchestras to collaborate with partners in other artistic disciplines to offer innovative programming. An *Art Works* grant supported a concert opera production by the **Lexington Philharmonic** of composer Osvaldo Golijov's "Ainadamar (Fountain of Tears)." This Spanish work combines singing, visual arts, flamenco dance, and orchestral music in its exploration of the life of playwright Federico Garcia Lorca. In

addition to the main performance, the grant supports lecture-demonstrations and school performances. The orchestra's 100 full and part-time employees work with all the area colleges and universities, providing professional artistic learning opportunities and teaching. Moreover, the orchestra partners with more than 60 area nonprofit, educational, and arts organizations per year. This particular NEA-supported project is especially meaningful because it fully exercises each of the orchestra's core values of artistic excellence, innovation, collaboration, and accessibility.

The **St. Louis Symphony Orchestra** also received *Art Works* support for a cross-disciplinary opera program, presenting Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Aida," incorporating multi-sensory video and lighting installations designed by visual artist S. Katy Tucker to supplement the music and story line of the opera and give concertgoers an enhanced environment in which to hear and see the music at historic Powell Hall. Each concert will be preceded by engaging, interactive conversations led by acclaimed music director David Robertson. The nation's second-oldest orchestra founded in 1880, the symphony employs 93 musicians and 61 full-time staff and serves upward of 300,000 individuals each season through an average of 120 orchestral concerts, 250 free education/community activities in a 125-mile radius of the City of St. Louis, and weekly radio broadcasts and tours and recordings – their latest winning the 2015 GRAMMY® Award for "Best Orchestral Performance."

### **NEA Funding Supports Orchestral Commemoration of Key Historical Moments**

The **Kansas City Symphony**, with 80 full-time musicians and 35 full-time staff members, is presenting *Upheaval and Transformation*, a season-long exploration of the music leading up to World War I. Featuring works by Debussy, Mahler, Nielsen, Ravel, Schoenberg, Richard Strauss, and Stravinsky, the *Art Works*-supported project commemorates the start of World War I, combining with several other community arts events including exhibits, concerts, and performances in Kansas City by the Nelson-Atkins Museum, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Harriman-Jewell Series, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, and Friends of Chamber Music. This community-wide artistic exploration is especially important to the city due to the presence of the National World War I Museum in Kansas City. Music Director Michael Stern, who holds a degree in American history from Harvard University, has written special program notes and discusses the project at pre-concert talks with audience members. In June, a Symphony ensemble will perform Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* (*The Soldier's Tale*) at the National World War I Museum followed by a panel discussion about the cataclysmic impact of the Great War on the arts and our society.

Reflecting upon more recent events, the **Detroit Symphony Orchestra** (DSO) will utilize its NEA grant for a performance of New Orleans-born jazz trumpeter and composer Terence Blanchard's "A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)," along with related educational activities. In commemoration of the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, the suite of 13 original pieces will be performed by Blanchard and members of his band along with symphony musicians as the centerpiece of three-day festival *A Musical Tale of Two Cities: Motown Meets the Big Easy*. Additional activities include: pre- and post-concert performances by students

groups from the DSO's Civic program and the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, a concert by a funk jazz group from New Orleans, a pre-concert talk by Blanchard and other special guests, a jazz community forum, a masterclass with Blanchard, and a screening of the documentary "When the Levees Broke" along with a Q&A session. The orchestra, which employs 76 musicians, 201 part- and full time staff, received NEA support for this project, along with a substantial grant from the Knight Foundation's Knight Arts Challenge, which is a powerful illustration of the public/private partnership that makes projects such as this possible.

### **NEA Funding Broadens Access for Underserved Communities and Young Students**

Together with the organizations it supports, the NEA is dedicated to improving public access to the arts. An *Art Works* grant made possible the **Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra's** presentation of a new concerto written for percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie, a master class, and a lecture-demonstration exploring the importance of listening skills with Glennie, who is profoundly deaf. The orchestra sent its co-principal percussionists to the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind to work with music students for two days preceding Glennie's visit, teaching the students about rhythm and creating sounds. When Glennie arrived in Spartanburg, the students performed on stage for her alongside the co-principal percussionists, and then learned directly from Glennie afterward. With just two full time staff and 60 musicians, the Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra was thrilled and excited to bring such a meaningful project to its community and to students who could learn from such a uniquely accomplished artist.

The **Central Ohio Symphony** received a *Challenge America* grant to bring The Great Animal Orchestra project to residents of the rural Buckeye Valley East community, including elementary students of Title I schools. This presentation, involving more than ten partnerships, will provide students of Buckeye Valley Easy Elementary an opportunity to learn to create and write music with a guest artist composer, and their compositions will be played by Symphony musicians. The NEA grant is a first for the orchestra and it has been matched by a corporate grant and has prompted the city government to support the orchestra's yearly operations for the first time. Thanks to these partnerships and support, the orchestra will fund a week long residency with composer Richard Blackford, who will work with high school students, senior citizens, and the community at large to share his expertise and skills. With an administrative staff of two, the Central Ohio Symphony employs more than 100 musicians during the year and plays a significant role in economic development in the downtown area of Delaware, Ohio.

Another *Challenge America* recipient is the **Burlington Chamber Orchestra (BCO)**, whose Music for Minors program brings professional musicians into Vermont classrooms. The Music for Minors program helps realize the orchestra's vision of reaching students who have not had an opportunity to extensively study music—whether due to geography, cultural differences, or economic limitations. Students first learn about music in the classroom from BCO musicians and then are invited to attend, free of charge, a May concert to solidify the classroom learning. This year's "Annual Celebration of Youth" concert will feature a young student composer from North Country High School in Newport and this year's winner of the BCO's Young Artist Solo Competition—a saxophonist from Bellows Free Academy in St. Albans.

An *Art Works* grant to the **Eugene Symphony**, which employs six full-time staff, four part-time staff, and 83 part-time musicians, made possible a concert and weeklong residency by NEA Jazz Master and Grammy Award-winning saxophonist Branford Marsalis. In addition to drawing a near-capacity audience to his Eugene Symphony debut, 300 of whom were first-time attendees at a Eugene Symphony event—Mr. Marsalis took part in related community programs which included free lectures for the general public and artistic development programs for young musicians at the middle-school, high-school, and collegiate levels. One example of Mr. Marsalis' numerous activities included master classes for two high-school jazz bands and one middle-school jazz band, during which he provided critical feedback on how to improve their performance. In all, Mr. Marsalis's concert and residency activities engaged over 4,000 students and adults throughout the greater Eugene community.

Focusing its NEA grant entirely on young musicians, the **Tucson Symphony Orchestra's** (TSO) Young Composers Project teaches elementary through high school students to compose original works for orchestra. Saturday sessions begin with basic theory, ear training, and score reading as students learn about clefs, keys, modes, notation, chords, rhythm, form, ranges, and transposition. Each session includes a listening component with score study focused on orchestral repertoire, and students learn to use Finale music notation software in the project lab, working closely with TSO musicians to create their own works. The project culminates in public reading sessions and recording of their work by the Tucson Symphony Orchestra and TSO String Quartet.

The **New York Youth Symphony** also focuses its NEA grant in support of its Youth Symphony Composition Program. Student composers participate in a series of interactive seminars, workshops, and guest lectures on composition and participants hear performances of their work by guest musicians. Drawing from the classical repertoire and range of musical traditions throughout the world, students explore a variety of composers, study scores, instrumentation, recordings, and orchestration books. Through class discussion, written exercises, and composition, students will cultivate their own musical voices in this tuition-free program led by professional composers and musicians. The New York Youth Symphony has four full-time and 12 part-time staff and engages numerous professional chamber coaches and professional orchestral musicians to provide compositional and orchestral coaching.

Thank you for this opportunity to convey the tremendous value of NEA support for the communities served by orchestras across the nation. These are but a sampling of the innovative compositions, thoughtful programming for underserved regions and populations, and lifelong learning opportunities orchestras provide in service to adults and children from all walks of life. The Endowment's unique ability to provide a national forum to promote excellence and engagement through high standards for artistic products and the highest expectation of accessibility remains one of the strongest arguments for a federal role in support of the arts. We urge you to support creativity and access to the arts by approving \$155 million in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.