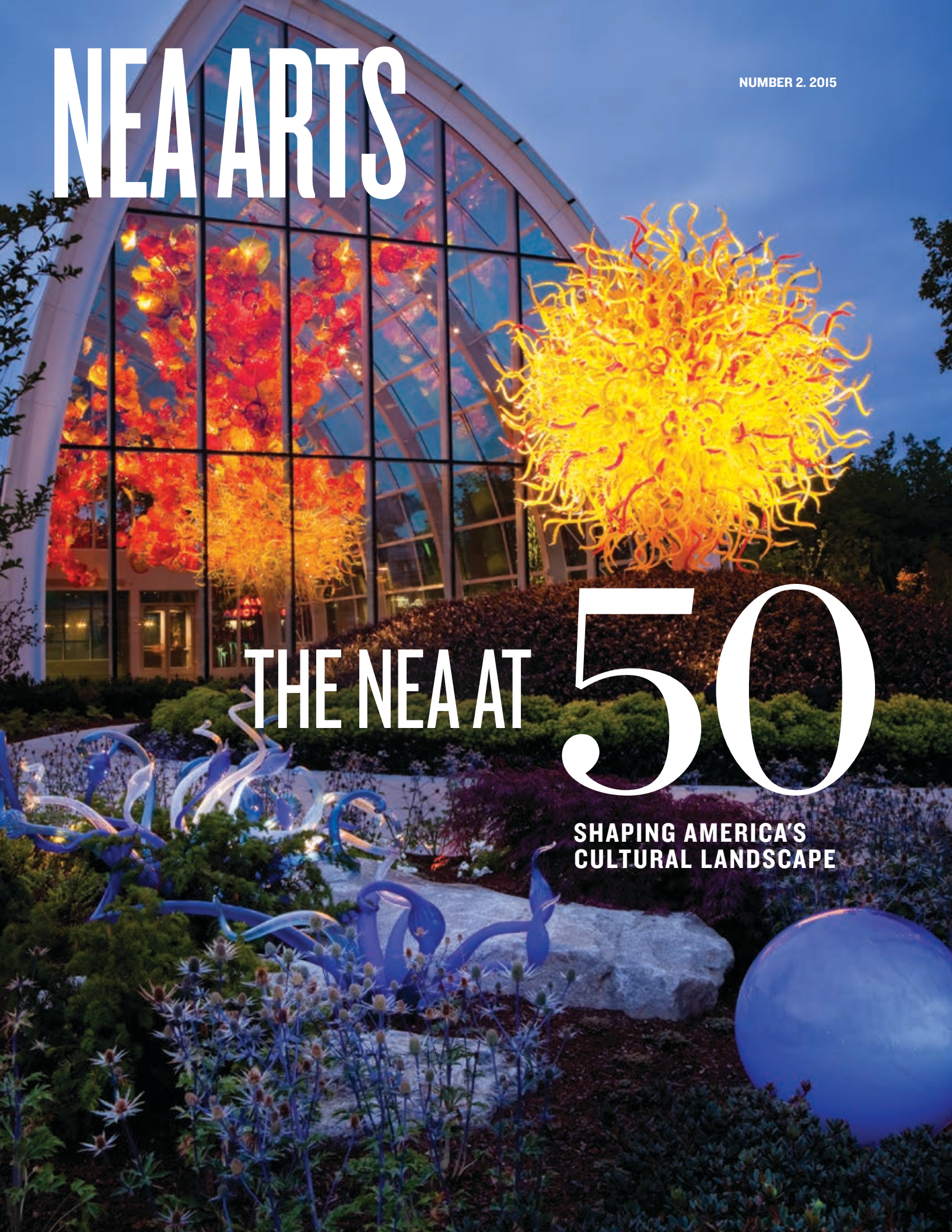


NEA ARTS

NUMBER 2. 2015

THE NEA AT 50

SHAPING AMERICA'S
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE



THIS ISSUE

When President Lyndon Johnson signed the National Endowment of Arts into existence on September 29, 1965, he said, "Art is a nation's most precious heritage. For it is in our works of art that we reveal to ourselves, and to others, the inner vision which guides us as a nation. And where there is no vision, the people perish."

For the past 50 years, the NEA has been supporting artists and arts organizations that reveal this inner vision. The grants we award have sparked the creation of new artwork; taught generations of children the power of creativity; preserved our artistic heritage; and brought the arts to stages, movie screens, television sets, and public spaces around the country. Through this, the NEA's history is inextricably linked with the American cultural canon, and has helped shape the diverse cultural landscape this country enjoys today.

In this anniversary issue of *NEA Arts*, we revisit seven NEA-funded individuals and organizations that have made an outsized impact on American culture. We look at how Jacob's Pillow has promoted and preserved the field of dance, how Dale Chihuly elevated glassblowing into a fine art, and how the Wolf Trap Institute of Early Learning through the Arts has pioneered bringing arts education to young children. We also showcase Joy Harjo's contributions to American literature, the impact Earshot Jazz has had in nurturing jazz music in Seattle, how the La Jolla Playhouse helped bring world-class theater beyond New York, and how art helped a community heal after the Oklahoma City federal building bombing in 1995.

As the NEA begins its 50th anniversary celebration, we invite you to join us by celebrating your own relationship with the arts. As President Johnson said 50 years ago, "The arts and the humanities belong to the people, for it is, after all, the people who create them."

In other words, the arts—and the NEA—belong to you.

Want to share your arts story? Please visit arts.gov/tell-us-your-story and let us know what the arts mean to you.



(Cover) *Chihuly Garden and Glass*, a 2012 exhibition by the artist Dale Chihuly (two-time NEA Visual Arts Fellow) in Seattle, Washington. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHIHULY STUDIO

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THE
HOUSE THAT
TED BUILT



CELEBRATING AND PRESERVING
AMERICA'S EPHEMERAL ART AT
JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL

BY VICTORIA HUTTER

Chanel DaSilva of the
Trey McIntyre Project
at Jacob's Pillow Dance
Festival in 2014.

PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER
DUGGAN





▲
Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Director of Preservation Norton Owen shows off the 10,000 photos that were preserved through digitization with a 2009 Save America's Treasures grant.

PHOTO BY VICTORIA HUTTER

IN THE SAME WAY THAT A PICTURE CAN BE worth a thousand words, a short film can tell a decades-long story. Made in 1937, *Kinetic Molpai* opens on a weathered New England barn. A man—modern dance pioneer Ted Shawn—enters the frame, bare-chested with eyes cast forcefully to the horizon. He moves in a simple but muscular way, eventually calling on an ensemble of six men, who make up Shawn's company, the Men Dancers. They begin a dance inspired by ancient Greek ceremonies and choreographed by Shawn. The short performance was filmed at Shawn's farm, Jacob's Pillow, in the Berkshire Hills of Becket, Massachusetts.

That farm, which dates back to around 1790, has since become the renowned and much-loved summer dance haven, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, a place where dance is created, performed, taught, and preserved. Since 1969, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has supported its work for a cumulative total of \$4.2 million, and the organization was awarded a National Medal of Arts in 2013.

Today, *Kinetic Molpai* is woven into the history of Jacob's Pillow. Taken together, film, festival, and the NEA tell the story of a truly American enterprise, one that seeks to encourage creativity, support the development of new work, document and preserve this ephemeral art form, and encourage a passion for dance among both local and international audiences.

From Farm To Festival

In Jacob Pillow's early years, 1933 to 1939, Shawn and his Men Dancers gave lecture-demonstrations for local residents when the company was not on tour. This was during the Great Depression, and Shawn wanted to demonstrate that dance could be a legitimate career for American men. At an admission fee of 75 cents, Shawn would speak to those assembled, offer a demonstration, and then present a selection of ensemble and solo dances. There was seating for 25 people for that first "tea," as Shawn called the event. Fifty-seven people showed up.

In 1942, a theater with seating for 514 was erected, the first facility in the United States built specifically for dance. The Ted Shawn Theatre is still the festival's main stage. The programs that Shawn presented there were diverse, typically including a headliner such as England's prima ballerina Alicia Markova and her partner Anton Dolin, followed by a modern piece, and then a traditional or "ethnic" dance, as it was described at that time.

This presentational approach had the benefits of attracting an audience interested in seeing star performers while expanding their imaginations for what dance could be. Jacob Pillow's Executive and Artistic Director Ella Baff said, "I think Shawn's mixed-bill approach helped audiences build awareness and 'muscle' for the form." (On the day of our interview, the Pillow announced that after 17 years, Baff would be stepping down to take a position at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.)

Diversity remains a hallmark of Jacob's Pillow performance programming. The first year the festival received an NEA grant, 1969, artists included Maria Alba's Spanish Dance Company, American Ballet Theatre (ABT), Gruppe Motion Berlin, and Arthur Hall's Afro-American Dance Company, among others. In the 2015 season, also supported by the NEA, one could see Nederlands Dans Theater 2 from The Hague, Netherlands; the world premiere of ABT dancer Daniil Simkin's *Intensio*; and Dorrance Dance with tap star Michelle Dorrance and folk/blues composer Toshi Reagon leading her band BIGLovely.

Baff explains that building an adventurous audience for dance has a lot to do with "dispelling preconceptions, welcoming the public, and guiding them to appreciate that, like all art forms, dance has many possibilities within it. Many people find an immediate personal connection to dance, and many find it difficult to approach or are simply newcomers. And we're here to help them all love it."

With 50 companies, 160 performances, and 200 free events offered over the ten-week Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, there's a lot of dance to love.

Save And Share

The archives of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival are housed in Blake's Barn, part of the original 1790 farm. The two public spaces in Blake's Barn are a gallery that displays items from the collection, and a new, adjoining reading room featuring book stacks, a large screen, and seven computer stations for students, researchers, and visiting artists to use.

Below the library, the archives are housed in climate-controlled rooms. Floor-to-ceiling shelves storing videotapes, film reels, and archival boxes of photos share space with steamer trunks from the early years of the 20th century, some storing costumes of long-ago dances.

Norton Owen is the Pillow's director of preservation, and has been with the organization in various capacities since 1976. He notes that appreciating the value of documenting and preserving dance was "baked into the Pillow from the beginning with Shawn."

"Shawn always said, 'Dance is the only art form of which we ourselves are the stuff,'" said Owen. As Shawn understood it, dance was not only something beautiful to be admired, or an evening's entertainment, but also had a rich history and was worthy of study and scholarship.

In 1986, while managing the School at Jacob's Pillow, Owen put in an application to the NEA's funding category Dance/Film/Video to continue building that rich history. His request was to support the transfer of footage of Shawn's Men Dancers from the deteriorating nitrate film stock to videotape, and to reunite the silent film with newly recorded scores by the Men Dancers' original composer/accompanist Jess Meeker. The Pillow received a \$12,000 grant.

Other preservation projects ensued. Then in 1993, the

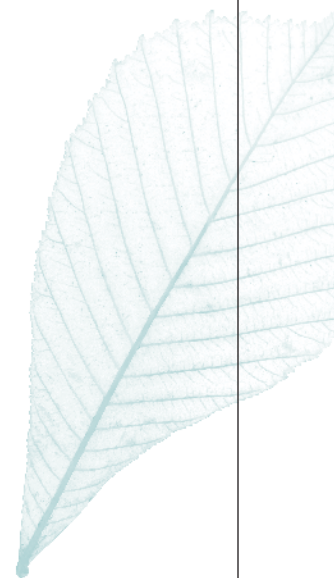
Pillow landed an NEA Challenge grant of \$556,000 for its Dance Anthology Project. The Challenge program provided large grants, or as the NEA noted in its annual report, "venture capital," to support ambitious new programs.

The Dance Anthology Project, which went on for several years, had three components mirroring the Pillow's three areas of activity: presentation, preservation, and education. The project's revivals and new commissions were built around a central artistic work or dance tradition, such as Bill T. Jones' *Still/Here* or the Cambodian Artists Project. Radiating from that central theme would be new work, educational opportunities, and documentation of the creative process. Owen observed, "What was wonderful about it was that it really did attempt to show how dance was made of all of these myriad efforts. What was part of Sam's [Sam Miller, the Pillow's then-executive director] brilliance was by getting all of this together, you begin to make a larger story," in which each component "becomes ennobled" by its contribution to the whole.

Going Digital

With the arrival of a new century and growing possibilities of digital technology, the opportunities for dance preservation became numerous and exciting.

For Jacob's Pillow, digital technology made its first major appearance in 2004 in the traveling exhibition, *America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures: the First 100*. The exhibition was conceived by the Dance Heritage Coalition, co-curated by Owen, and supported by a \$150,000 NEA leadership initiative. The exhibition included a free-standing kiosk with a touch screen that allowed visitors to search a database of text, audio, and video clips. (Among those video clips was *Kinetic Molpai*.) The next development was a



▼
The Royal Danish Ballet performing at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in 2007.

PHOTO BY MAXWELL
CITIZEN KEPLER





Jacob's Pillow-centric kiosk funded through the NEA's American Masterpieces initiative and unveiled during the Pillow's 75th anniversary season in 2007.

But as wonderful as it was to have digital materials available with a touch or a swipe, people began to ask, "Can I get this at home? Is this online?" The next step was to create an online platform to showcase these materials so anyone with an Internet connection could delve into the Pillow's holdings. That platform became Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive, or JPDI, and was launched in 2011 with funding in subsequent years from the NEA.

JPDI 2.0 debuted in May of this year. With well over 200 video clips, the web section contains curated playlists and enhanced search capacities. A game called "Guess" tests users' dance know-how by displaying randomly selected videos with multiple-choice questions. Owen noted that 30 to 40 videos are added to JPDI each year with an emphasis on filling artistic gaps so that the resource is as encyclopedic as possible.

From One Body To The Next

Presenting a wide array of live dance performances to audiences is important. Documenting and preserving those dances is important. But teaching the next generation of dancers is arguably the most important.

Training has always been a part of the Pillow experience. Shawn insisted, for both aesthetic and practical reasons, that part of the training regime for his Men Dancers was manual labor. On a practical level, Shawn's ambitions for Jacob's Pillow required development of the farm. So, in addition to hours in the studio, the men cleared land, built housing and studios, and repaired roads. But aesthetically, the shape, dynamics, power, and pride of physical labor were qualities that Shawn instilled in his choreography and wanted audiences to take away from his dances.

Today, that ethos remains via a robust internship program that supports all aspects of the festival while giving young professionals opportunities for hands-on experience in festival administration, production, and videography.

Another unique element of student life at the Pillow stems from its rural setting. Students and visiting artists live on campus in wood-frame houses, some of them built by Shawn's dancers. For a young student from Oklahoma to rub elbows in the bookstore with dancers from Brazil, or to have lunch with an artist from Cambodia, can be as life-changing as what happens in a studio or theater.

Classes are arranged in a modular structure with two- or three-week sessions for ballet, contemporary dance, social dance, and musical theater dance. Immersion is a key concept with a rigorous schedule of classes, rehearsals, and weekly performances for festival audiences.

This summer, Camille A. Brown and E. Moncell Durden led the social dance module. Brown, a dancer, choreographer,

and director, led students in an exploration of African-American dances from jazz to hip-hop. Brown said, "Teaching juba, the ringshout, and buzzard lope in the midst of ancestral ground [Jacob's Pillow was a stop on the Underground Railroad] led us on a journey of unpacking, unearthing, guiding, following, breathing, healing, understanding, self-reflection, and communal grooving."

As In Art, In Life

Walking down the gravel pathways of the Jacob's Pillow campus, going to an exhibition in Blake's Barn, or a pre-show talk with a visiting artist, or navigating around a gaggle of students on their way to a performance, the sense of history here is palpable. The innovation, strength, foresight, commitment to dance, and the utter American-ness evident in the *Kinetic Molpai* clip are very much a part of life here—just as Shawn would have wanted it. ▲

▶
Ted Shawn relaxing on the rock known as Jacob's Pillow, the landmark that gave the Becket, Massachusetts, dance festival its name, in 1943.

PHOTO BY ERIC M. SANFORD



“Many people find an immediate personal connection to dance, and many find it difficult to approach or are simply newcomers. And we’re here to help them all love it.”



NEA ARTS
06

▶ **Writer and musician
Joy Harjo.**

PHOTO BY MELISSA
LUKENBAUGH

A close-up portrait of Joy Harjo, a woman with long dark hair and a red top, looking slightly to the right. The background is a soft-focus landscape with a sunset or sunrise over water. Large, stylized text is overlaid on the image: 'HARJO' in white, 'JOY' in gold, and 'O' in white.

HARJO JOY O

AN
UNSTOPPABLE
FORCE

BY EMILY PERRY

JOY HARJO HAS ALWAYS BEEN an artist. Before she could write words, she could draw. Before she could speak, she had music. Now an award-winning writer and musician, Harjo hardly recalls a time in her life when she wasn't surrounded by art. Her earliest memories are filled with the sounds of her mother's lilting voice and the jazzy strains of trumpet spilling through the car radio. "When Miles Davis was playing a solo," said Harjo, "I could see the whole universe." Music added new hues to the palette she used to color her world. As she grew older, words excited Harjo even more. She loved language and craved more of it from a young age. When she finished all the books in the first-grade classroom, Harjo's teachers sent her on to the second-grade bookshelves.

Harjo's voracious appetite for words has never dulled. Over the course of her career so far, she has published seven books of poetry, one memoir, and four albums of original music, in addition to many other projects. Her work is rich and profound, filled with phrases that linger in the air as they roll off the tongue. Through vivid natural imagery, she marries the physical and spiritual realms. Her ability to make the reader see and feel the seemingly intangible is unmatched. As such, Harjo has garnered numerous awards, honors, and fellowships throughout her impressive career, including two NEA Literature Fellowships in Creative Writing, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers Circle of the Americas, the William Carlos Williams Award for Poetry, the Rasmuson U.S. Artists Fellowship, and a Native American Music Award for Best Female Artist of the Year. She has also served as a member of the NEA's National Council on the Arts and in numerous other advisory roles for the agency.

At 64 years old, Harjo remains an unstoppable artistic force. She is a creative polymath, having experimented and succeeded in nearly every artistic discipline. Although she is perhaps best known for her writing, Harjo is also a talented musician and playwright. She frequently performs with her band Arrow Dynamics, and plays the guitar, flute, horn, ukulele, and bass. Unlike most people, Harjo seems to thrive with a full plate. Currently, she is juggling a new memoir, a musical play, a music album, and a book of poetry. She uses a creative process she describes as horizontal, constantly drawing across disciplines and experiences to create new work, rather than limiting herself to one form. "It gets a little hairy," she said, laughing, "because I have to have a life too."

But if balancing her many projects is a burden, Harjo hardly shows it. She effuses a contagious sense of curiosity and purpose. "I always had an awareness from the time I

was very, very young that I was carrying something that I was to take care of," she said. "It doesn't necessarily belong to me. It was something much larger than me."

It is this rare sense of assurance in her work that drives her. In addition, Harjo deeply grounds herself in her cultural and ancestral history. Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Harjo is a member of the Muscogee Creek Nation. Her Native-American heritage is central to her work and identity—so much so that even her arms bear beautiful, intricate symbols of her tribe. Art literally runs in Harjo's blood. Her paternal grandmother Naomi Harjo was a talented painter whose work filled the walls of Joy's childhood home. Her aunt Lois Harjo also loved to paint, and both Naomi and Lois received their BFA degrees in the art form. Harjo's mother, although she had only an eighth-grade education, loved William Blake and taught herself the arts of poetry and music. She possessed a natural propensity for singing and performed occasionally with a country swing band.

These influences equipped Harjo with the tools to make sense of her difficult childhood. Harjo's father walked out on the family when she was young, leaving her mother alone to care for Joy and her two younger siblings. Harjo's home was no less broken when her mother remarried several years later. Her stepfather was a controlling man with an unpredictable temper. In her 2012 memoir *Crazy Brave*, Harjo recounts stories of her youth, many of which were clouded by her stepfather's verbal and physical abuse. Drawing and acting classes were a much-needed escape from Harjo's oppressive reality. "Art classes saved my life," she said. During her high school years, the Institute for American Indian Arts (IAIA) provided Harjo a safe haven away from home. She flourished in an environment filled with creative people, of whom nearly all also came from Native-American families. There she also gained the technical skills and practice that would draw her to a career in art.

Harjo received her first NEA Literature Fellowship in 1977, when she was a single mother with two children, and had just graduated from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and was looking for work. She noted in 1993, after she had won a second fellowship, that with that first grant, "I was able to buy childcare, pay rent and utilities, and my car payment while I wrote what would be most of my second book of poetry, *She Had Some Horses*, the collection that actually started my career. The grant began the momentum that carried me through the years."



▲ Harjo's 2012 memoir *Crazy Brave*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTON & COMPANY, INC.

►
Joy Harjo at a meeting of the National Council on the Arts, of which she was a member from 1998 to 2004.

PHOTO BY KATHY
PLOWITZ-WORDEN



In the process of becoming the artist she is today, Harjo has been forced to confront her own demons and resist the pressure to conform to popular stereotypes. Writing is a vulnerable, even dangerous, act. Harjo took nearly 14 years to write her first memoir *Crazy Brave*. In it, she exposes the parts of her life some might strive to conceal—the hurt caused by her abusive stepfather and the challenge of being “other,” as well as her later struggles of heartbreak and single motherhood. In facing the past and her own insecurities, however, Harjo learned to turn her enemies into her helpers. “Fear has been one of my greatest teachers,” she said.

Throughout her career, Harjo has faced the additional challenge of not fitting into a conveniently packaged genre. She writes extensively about what it means to be Native American in a primarily non-Native country. Oftentimes, Americans think unique tribal backgrounds are one and the same. People don’t want to hear about Native Americans unless they’re feather-clad and dancing, she said. Harjo jokes that if she had put a dreamcatcher on the cover of her albums, she would have sold thousands of them.

Harjo’s decision to take risks has paid off in the profound impact she has had through her work. In telling her own story, both the beautiful and the broken parts, Harjo has become a leader. Today she is seen as an icon of the feminist movement and a voice for Native peoples. While she says she never considered herself on the front lines of political action, she acknowledges that personal stories are inherently political. “Being alive is political. What you eat is political. Where you put your money is political. What you say and how you say it—everything is,” Harjo said.

She strongly believes that telling stories and creating art is a pervasive ability that’s not unique to those individuals whom society labels “artist.” She said, “Everybody has a story about creation, so we therefore are part of the need to create. I believe everyone embodies that need to

create, in some way or the other, but some of us take it on at a larger level.”

Harjo puts this idea into practice. At various writing workshops across the country, she encourages new and seasoned artists to go after art forms that intrigue or inspire them. How? By surrounding themselves with experts. If you want to be a saxophonist, she tells her students, find someone who plays and learn everything you can. In a day and age when social media and digital distractions are an arm’s length away, Harjo believes it especially important for people to learn how to “unhook.” She urges her younger students in particular to unplug from media in order to concentrate deeply and mindfully on the task at hand.

That small tradeoff between digital connection and meaningful art is a worthy one. “Art carries the spirit of the people. Arts are how we know ourselves as human beings. They show us who we’ve been, who we are, and who we are becoming,” said Harjo. In setting aside their smartphones for a minute, artists sew their own threads into the weaving of a broader cultural narrative.

To this end, Harjo believes strongly in national support for the arts, and the role of the National Endowment for the Arts in particular within the country’s cultural landscape. “As a member of the National Council on the Arts,” she said, “I was able to witness the impact of arts at the national level.” She said artists deserve a seat at the decision-making table. In her words, the NEA acts as the “cultural barometer” of the country, because when the arts thrive, the nation does too. One need look no further than Harjo herself to recognize the importance of art in promoting national cohesion, social progress, and cultural narrative. Her impact in these realms is proof enough of the power and importance of the arts—for the job of the artist is no extra. As Harjo herself said, “There would be no universities, no schools without what artists do. Higher thought is carried in different acts and products of art.” ▲

“Arts are how we know ourselves as human beings. They show us who we’ve been, who we are, and who we are becoming.”

BROADWAY ON THE BEACH

A LEGACY OF COMMUNITY AT LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE

BY PAULETTE BEETE



Montego Glover (center)
and the cast of La Jolla
Playhouse's Tony Award-
winning production of
Memphis, directed by
Christopher Ashley.

PHOTO BY KEVIN BERNE

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE is bold, audacious, and perhaps even a bit outrageous. It reads, in part: “In the future, San Diego’s La Jolla Playhouse will be considered singularly indispensable to the worldwide theater landscape as we become a permanent safe harbor for the unsafe and surprising.” Given the number of plays the Playhouse has launched into the contemporary canon—and its 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater—it’s fair to say that the mission statement is much more than a piece of marketing braggadocio. Rather it’s a vision of what a theater can be if it grounds itself in the idea of community.

La Jolla, a coastline city of roughly 38,000 people just north of San Diego proper, blossomed in the mid-1950s as a favored retreat of Tinseltown denizens. Three such Hollywood stars—Dorothy McGuire, Mel Ferrer, and inaugural National Council on the Arts member Gregory Peck—conceived a summer stock company, which performed its weeklong season in the La Jolla High School auditorium. That venture lasted a couple of decades, petering out as the ‘70s came calling.

In 1983, however, noted theater director Des McAnuff revived the company, which today operates year-round in four theater spaces on the University of California, San Diego campus. While the first iteration of the Playhouse focused on the classics, today the theater is best described, according to current Artistic Director Christopher Ashley, as “very forward-looking, very much artistically driven, very much about experimentation, and audaciousness, and adventure.”

The viability of the Playhouse’s reboot can be seen as a result of the regional theater movement that had exploded two decades earlier. At the turn of the 20th century, there were less than a dozen professional, year-round theaters of any note outside of New York City—the Cleveland Playhouse, Houston’s Alley Theatre, and Washington, DC’s Arena Stage among them. That all changed with an ambitious grant program from the Ford Foundation in 1961 “to begin strengthening the position of resident theater in the United States.” By 1966, as noted in *National Endowment for the Arts: A History*, the newly founded NEA could announce one of its primary goals as “the development of a larger and more appreciative audience for the theater.” The NEA created a number of programs to support the theater field, including grants to present live theater to high schoolers, to commission new plays, and for touring. The Playhouse received its first NEA grant in 1986 to support artists’ fees for that season’s productions.

For its first few seasons, the new La Jolla Playhouse filled its stages with a mix of classic and new plays. Today, La Jolla is a leading producer of new work with a focus on building community with theater artists it considers

transformative; with audience members; and with La Jolla residents who may not be regular theatergoers.

The group works with theater artists in several ways. First, it is committed to an artist-in-residence program. The program provides a safe, unfettered space for artists to explore whatever they’re interested in, and engages resident artists, like actor B.D. Wong and set designer Robert Brill, around questions of how the changing world informs the changing structure of plays, and how stories presented onstage reflect contemporary concerns. In addition to hosting individual artists, the Playhouse also invites a local theater company into residence every year.

The Playhouse has a healthy commissioning program as well—for playwrights at all stages of their careers—that is currently supporting new works by Daniel Beaty, Quiara Alegria Hudes, Aditi Kapil, and Alfred Geary, among others.

There are also projects—such as the DNA Festival and Page to Stage—that focus on helping playwrights develop new work. What’s unique about this support is that the Playhouse works with creative teams over extended periods of time, whether or not that results in an official “opening.” Ashley explained, “We will run them as long as the creative team, the writers, and the directors are committed to staying in town, taking what they learned from an audience the night before, then going back into rewrites and restaging in the afternoon, so that the whole time it’s in performance, it’s process. It’s never intended to be done.”

That devotion to nurturing new work includes not only world premieres—they boast at least 75 since the theater’s 1980s resurrection—but a commitment to presenting



second productions of works. While theaters often vie for the cachet of being the first-ever to produce what they hope will be the new smash hit, the Playhouse is much more interested in working with a playwright to allow the play to reach its full potential as a work of art. “It’s one of the really exciting ways to use theater, to give an artist a second draft, a second shot, the ability to keep discovering their play after the first production,” said Ashley.

Even as it nurtures long-term relationships with artists, the company pays the same attention to nurturing long-term relationships with its audience. In fact, Ashley transitioned from being a freelance director to an artistic director because, as he explained, “I was interested in a relationship with an audience that was not two hours long but that happened over a season, and over a decade, and over a body of work of a theater.”

For Ashley, it’s not just about presenting a play; it’s about giving the audience an experience. “I’d say that everybody here, not just me, is thinking about how do you create the richest possible experiences for our audiences. How can you get them as empowered as possible? How do you help them really interact with the playhouse and not have a passive experience? And how do you create engagement that really feeds into, supports, and creates more richness for the art at the center of the experience?”

That desire for people to *experience* theater, rather than just see it, is what propels the company out of the theater doors and into La Jolla’s neighborhoods to, as Ashley put it, create “connection points for people [for whom] theater has not been an ongoing part of their lives.”



For example, the NEA-supported Without Walls program has produced site-specific work such as *El Henry*, an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part 1*, co-presented with San Diego Repertory Theatre in a central plaza in the economically stressed East Village neighborhood. *El Henry* succeeded in engaging everyone from area residents who watched from their balconies to Low Rider aficionados to the area’s homeless population, which was drawn in to such an extent that they spontaneously created plays about their own lives to perform before and after the theater’s own performances.

One of the theater’s most jaw-dropping site-specific pieces was created and staged by noted puppeteer Basil Twist right on the beach. Called *Seafoam Sleepwalk*, the free show involved a 30-foot-high representation of the Greek goddess Aphrodite, which over the course of the show rose out of the ocean and then transformed into a sea monster that devoured the cast. The first showing drew around 150 people. By the eighth and final performance, “the beach was crammed, as far as you could see, with thousands of people who had heard about this extraordinary thing,” remembered Ashley. He added, “The fact that we’re making theater for our community, in a public way, and really being a town square is a thing we talk about a lot here.”

The Playhouse’s other outreach programs include the POP tour, which commissions new plays that are workshopped and then toured to primary schools for several months, and the CARE program, a partnership with other local nonprofits that works in economically disadvantaged schools to “create a sense of artistic and imaginative empowerment in the students,” according to Ashley.

This commitment to community and the artistic innovation it breeds has served La Jolla Playhouse well.

▲
La Jolla Playhouse
Artistic Director
Christopher Ashley.
PHOTO COURTESY OF
LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE

▲
Roxane Carrasco and
Lakin Valdez in La Jolla
Playhouse’s production
of *El Henry*, a site-
based adaptation of
Shakespeare’s *Henry IV,*
***Part 1*, in association**
with San Diego
Repertory Theatre.
PHOTO BY JIM CARMODY





▲ The world-premiere production of *Seafoam Sleepwalk*, conceived and directed by Basil Twist for the La Jolla Playhouse's 2013 Without Walls Festival. PHOTO BY JIM CARMODY

“I hope that our legacy is generations of people in San Diego who have grown up with theater in their lives.”

More than two dozen plays that originated at the Playhouse—the musicals *Side Show*, *Memphis*, and *Big River* among them—have moved on to stellar success on Broadway. Making it to Broadway, however, is not the primary measure of success. “We have an extraordinary track record on Broadway of moving plays there, but I take as much pride in a show which is going to go on to have a major regional life. And I take as much pride when a play really brings an artist into focus for our culture, and becomes a launching pad for a career and for their voice,” he said.

Ultimately, La Jolla Playhouse’s legacy is one of community, a posture Ashley hopes will characterize the theater well into the future. He enthused, “I hope that our legacy is generations of people in San Diego who have grown up with theater in their lives. I hope we remain part of what’s a very exciting theater city. I hope that we remain really good partners with the other arts organizations and non-profits in San Diego in terms of creating a vital arts-filled, well-thought-through, deeply felt, humane world for the people of San Diego. And I hope we’ve helped support and empower generations of important artists to help make the world a better place.” ▲

Creating Something No One Has Seen Before

ARTIST DALE CHIHULY

BY REBECCA GROSS



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHIHULY STUDIO

Chihuly's 1996 piece
Icicle Creek Chandelier
at the Sleeping Lady
resort in Leavenworth,
Washington.



▲ Artist Dale Chihuly with his works *Blue Tower*, *Star*, and *Yellow Spears* at the Tower of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem in Israel in 1999.

▶ Chihuly's *Glasshouse Sculpture* as part of the *Chihuly Garden and Glass* exhibition in Seattle in 2012.

ARTIST DALE CHIHULY IS A MAGICIAN of sorts. He has suspended elaborate chandeliers over the canals of Venice. He has made glass blossom into elaborate gardens of dazzling flora. He has defied gravity as his massive glass spirals unfurl toward the sky, and he has created crystals and sea anemones that almost seem to merit scientific classification themselves. In short, he has stretched the most fragile of mediums to its absolute limit, creating forms and colors that seem beyond possibility.

And for much of history, they were. Although glassblowing has been practiced since at least the Roman Empire, Chihuly is one of the first to work in such a grand scale, and to elevate what was once a largely decorative form to a fine art. His pieces are visually astounding, and as such, are immediately recognizable: if a work of glass makes

you gasp, chances are good that it's a Chihuly. For the same reason, they are also immensely popular. In 1999, his installation *Chihuly in the Light of Jerusalem* broke records when it drew over a million visitors to Israel's Tower of David, and the exhibit *Chihuly: Through the Looking Glass* (2011) is one of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts' top five most-visited exhibitions of all time. A recipient of two NEA Visual Arts Fellowships, one in 1975 and the second in 1979, Chihuly today has his work in more than 225 museum collections around the globe.

"People for centuries have been fascinated with glass, colored or crystal," said Chihuly as he described his work's appeal. "It transmits light in a special way and at any moment it might break. It's magic. It's the most magical of all materials."

Dale Chihuly was born in 1941 in Tacoma, Washington, an area he would later turn into a hotbed for glass. Although he had been an indifferent student, he eventually enrolled at the University of Washington to pursue architecture and interior design, a subject he became interested in after redesigning his mother's basement. It was when working with fiber arts—whose pliable, durable nature is something of a foil to the rigid fragility of glass—that Chihuly first became intrigued with the properties of what would become his preferred medium.

"I took a weaving class where I incorporated glass shards into woven tapestries," Chihuly said. Fascinated by the way the shards caught the light, he melted stained glass in his basement over a kiln and fashioned a makeshift pipe. "While I was experimenting in my basement, I blew my first glass bubble and became obsessed with learning everything I could about glassblowing," he remembered of that day in 1965. "I had never seen glassblowing, but I had a poster of a glassblower on my wall and it provided me with enough of a visual—with an idea—to blow my first bubble of glass."

From there, he went to work turning this obsession into a calling. In 1966, he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, home to the nation's very first glassblowing program. After receiving his bachelor's degree in sculpture, he worked at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine, and received a Fulbright grant to study the artisan techniques of Murano, an island off Venice, Italy, famous for its centuries-old glassblowing industry. It was here that Chihuly first observed glassblowers that functioned as teams rather than as individual artists—a rare practice among American glassblowers at the time.

"I realized if you worked with half a dozen or more people, you could achieve things you could never do alone," said Chihuly. "When I returned to the States in 1969, I was teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design [RISD]. I started working with my students as a team. From that



▶ **Chihuly's *Silvered Cranberry Ikebana with Quintet of Cobalt Stems*, 2009.**

▼ **Chihuly's artwork *Campiello Remer Chandelier* hanging over Venice, Italy, 1996.**

point on, I've worked with a group, and now I have a really big team so I can make whatever I want.”

Within a few years, this practice would become not just a preference, but a necessity. Chihuly was blinded in his left eye following a car accident in 1976, which damaged his depth perception (he has worn his signature eye patch ever since). Then in 1979, he dislocated his shoulder in a bodysurfing accident, which made it difficult to hold a glassblowing pipe.

If anything, this seemed to fuel his commitment to his practice. Today, Chihuly largely works with his Seattle-based team as a conductor might to his orchestra: he designs the pieces and gives instructions rather than physically handing the materials—similar to the Renaissance workshop tradition. With this combination of manpower and international prestige, Chihuly has been able to experiment wildly, produce prolifically, and take on pie-in-the-sky projects.



Among his favorites are *Chihuly Over Venice* (1996), which involved hanging illuminated chandeliers in the streets, in courtyards, and over the canals of Venice; *Chihuly in the Light of Jerusalem* (1999), which installed fantastical formations of spears, stars, and crystal towers in a medieval citadel known as the Tower of David; and *Chihuly Garden and Glass* in Seattle, a 1.5-acre long-term exhibition dedicated to one of Washington's most creative native sons.

His smaller-scale works showcase his attention to detail. Drawing from other cultures, he has given his own spin to *ikebana*, the art of Japanese flower-arranging, and *putti*, figures of chubby little boys commonly found in Renaissance and Baroque paintings. One of his earliest series, *Cylinders*, reinterprets Native-American textiles by fusing thread with molten glass to create intricate, unusual patterns.

But he has left his mark on the cultural landscape in ways beyond his own work. In addition to teaching at RISD, Chihuly co-founded the Pilchuck Glass School with Anne Gould Hauberg and John H. Hauberg in 1971 in Stanwood, Washington. It was the first learning institution to be dedicated exclusively to glass. A proponent of the anti-establishment, back-to-nature movements of that era, Chihuly initially fashioned the school as more of a commune, with primitive facilities (think tents) and an extemporaneous approach to art-making. Pilchuck, which has received 18 NEA grants through the years, is now one of the world's most respected glass education facilities, and offers both courses and artist residencies. Although facilities have been upgraded, the school continues to emphasize its early hallmark of experimentation and exploration.

“The whole idea of making art, as far as I'm concerned, comes from doing it over and over and over,” said Chihuly. “You have to make a lot of mistakes. Mistakes in glassblowing can become some of the most beautiful artworks.”

At the age of 73, Chihuly continues to create. His advice for budding glassblowers reflects the credo he himself has followed throughout his career. “Follow your dream; your passion,” he said. “Follow your gut and create something no one has seen before.” ▲

STARTING YOUNG

WOLF TRAP'S INSTITUTE FOR
EARLY LEARNING THROUGH THE ARTS

BY CATHERINE KORIZNO

Kids participating in a
Wolf Trap Institute for
Early Learning through
the Arts session.
PHOTO BY SCOTT SUCHMAN

WOLF TRAP NATIONAL PARK FOR the Performing Arts in Vienna, Virginia, boasts an honorable goal: to be a place where artists and enthusiasts can meet and revel in the power of performance. But even as Wolf Trap is dedicated to the performers and patrons of today, they are nurturing the artists and lifelong learners of tomorrow through arts education.

Wolf Trap established the Institute for Early Learning through the Arts in 1981 to bring professional artists to classrooms to work with children three to five years old in the disciplines of dance, drama, and music. Started through a grant from Head Start—a federal program that promotes “school readiness” for infants through kindergarteners from low-income families—the Institute addresses the achievement gap for economically disadvantaged children, which can emerge as early as 18 months when language skills of low-income children can begin to lag behind children from higher socioeconomic families.

“[Head Start] approached us to look at ways that we could use the performing arts to support children’s learning,” said Jennifer Cooper, the Institute’s director.

This was not a shot in the dark. Research shows that while arts education can improve test scores and attendance for children from all backgrounds, the effects are particularly dramatic for low-income youth. The NEA’s 2012 report *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth* found that when engaged in the arts, socially and economically disadvantaged students outperformed their peers in terms of higher test scores, better grades, higher graduation rates, and increased college enrollment.

And yet, the arts are incredibly underutilized in the classroom, something the Institute seeks to change through partnerships between students, teachers, and artists, most often in Head Start communities. Although

much focus has been on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) in education over the past decade, what has been overlooked is how arts-integrated techniques can improve STEM learning—not only are the arts *not* peripheral, they are a necessary part of the core learning process.

The Institute begins by training artists extensively in curriculum content, so they know what’s developmentally appropriate in math, literature, and science. For example, when the Institute began to focus on math in 2010, “Our artists came in and had a weeklong training in math content, so they would know the terminology, so they would know the concepts,” said Lori Phillips, associate director of professional development at Wolf Trap. “Then they applied their art form to get arts-integrated math.”

Artists are also trained in age-appropriate techniques within their own art form. Much of this understanding stems from a 1994 study by Wolf Trap on the impact of arts on preschoolers, an area that had not received much attention from researchers at the time. The NEA provided the seed money for Wolf Trap to undertake that study. “It’s been foundational,” said Cooper of the project. “We looked at the fundamentals of each art form, and developmentally appropriate ways to introduce each art form to young children.” For example, artists might suggest to teachers that music be broken down to tempo, pitch, and steady beat for their young students. For drama, teachers might focus on elements of character, setting, and voice.

“Just like we work to share what’s appropriate in curriculum subjects to our teaching artists, we want to start with what’s appropriate for arts when we’re sharing with teachers,” said Cooper. Since 1994, the results of that study have “been built into the fabric of what we’re doing.”

Following training at the Institute, artists then work in classrooms for one- or eight-week residencies, teaching children subject matter through the arts. At the same time, as Nicole Escudero, a childhood arts specialist at Wolf Trap, explained, the master artists offer teachers professional development so that they can learn to integrate the arts into their own lesson plans once the residencies have ended. Teachers can also access resources online at Wolf Trap’s Artsplay website, artsplay.org, which includes videos, audio clips, and lesson plans.

The Institute—which has been acknowledged for its achievements on *CBS Sunday Morning*, *CNN World News*, and BBC, and received a National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award (previously Coming Up Taller Award) in 1996—continues to expand its educational programming. Certain initiatives focus on specific subjects, such as Wolf Trap’s Early STEM/Arts initiative, which recently received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Traditionally, STEM subjects have been considered the realm of men, a notion that is mirrored in

Artist Laura Schandelmeier working with kids as part of the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning through the Arts program.

PHOTO BY TEDDY WOLFF



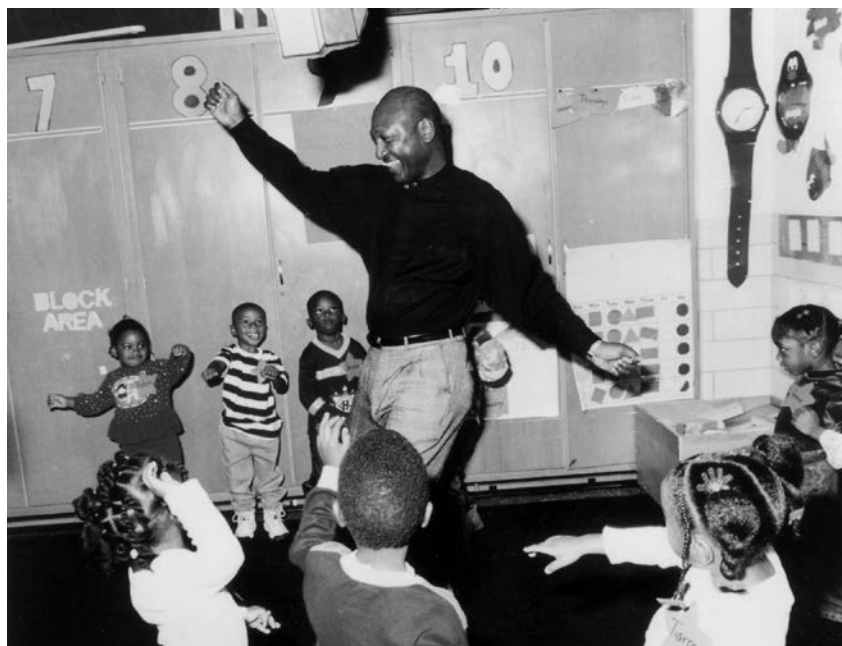
“We’re building both the love of learning in children at the same time that they’re getting introduced to the performing arts.”

classrooms, parenting, and teaching styles. But because of how early Wolf Trap’s program is administered, it instills both young girls and boys with confidence in their ability to learn these disciplines before they see gender lines and subject bias. Early STEM/Arts has also shown to be beneficial to shy students, students who speak English as a second language, and children with learning disabilities.

Over the past 20 years, the NEA has continued to support Wolf Trap’s educational programming. The agency’s initial support helped the Institute attract corporate and other federal funding, allowing it to expand the program across the country. Although Wolf Trap residencies are limited to the Washington, DC, area, the Institute has 16 affiliates across the country, in addition to partnerships with school districts and educational organizations. “The growth nationally means reaching more children, it means reaching more teachers,” said Cooper. Every year, the program inspires and educates more than 50,000 children across the country.

But is it working? All signs point to yes. “We see it anecdotally, we see it when we’re in the classrooms,” said Cooper. Escudero shared a story about a boy with a learning disability that made it difficult for him to remember details from his lessons. But when his teacher brought in a puppet for storytelling, the student could remember every detail of the story the next day, and had enough confidence in his knowledge to ask questions enthusiastically.

Sandy Kozik, a dance teaching artist who participated in a Wolf Trap Institute program in Tennessee in 2001-02, said, “We already know the teacher/teaching artist bonds



become stronger as both have to be a little more accountable when connecting to the standards. The possibilities for dancing and exploring wonderful children’s stories are endless.”

Although many such personal stories exist, Wolf Trap has fortified its argument for arts education through research. In a recent study, funded by the Department of Education, research showed that students who participated in the Institute’s Early STEM/Arts program scored higher in STEM subjects than non-Institute participants. This was especially true for math, where the Institute group scored eight percentile points higher than their peers. (Early math skills, it should be noted, are one of the strongest indicators of academic success later in life.) On a visit to Wolf Trap’s Brightwood campus in Washington, DC, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan gave the program high marks for its use of performing arts to reinforce STEM concepts.

Another study, published in 2006, found that preschool children who participated in a Wolf Trap Institute residency showed significant improvement across six different areas: initiative, social relations, creative representation, language and literacy, logic and mathematics, and movement and music.

The NEA’s goal of having the arts be part of everyone’s education, to develop America’s next generation of creative and innovative thinkers, is being realized at Wolf Trap. The impact, anecdotally and statistically, is profound. As Cooper said, “We’re building both the love of learning in children at the same time that they’re getting introduced to the performing arts.” ▲

▲ **Musician Kenneth Jackson uses music to teach preschoolers in Memphis, Tennessee, about the alphabet and numbers in the 1990s as part of the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning through the Arts program.**

PHOTO BY ROBERT A. CLAYTON

IMPROVISING WITH
THE COMMUNITY

NEA Jazz Master
James Moody
undertook a four-day
residency with the
Seattle Repertory Jazz
Orchestra in 2008 as
part of Earshot Jazz's
NEA Jazz Masters
Live Grant.

PHOTO BY DANIEL
SHEEHAN, COURTESY
OF EARSHOT JAZZ

BY FELICIA BOWINS

SEATTLE'S EARSHOT JAZZ



IN THE WORDS OF NEA JAZZ MASTER Wynton Marsalis, “Jazz music is America’s past and its potential, summed up and sanctified, and accessible to anybody who learns to listen to, feel, and understand it.” Since its formation in 1984, Earshot Jazz has diligently worked to cultivate a rich appreciation for jazz music in Seattle, Washington, and beyond, serving as a platform where people can learn to listen to, feel, and understand the dynamic beauty of the art form. And the NEA has supported the organization all along the way.

Earshot Jazz’s biggest impact has been with its annual jazz festival in the city. What started as a weeklong festival has turned into a month-long celebration, of which *DownBeat* magazine wrote, “Earshot brings emerging adventurous voices, both near and far, to mix and match with the national acts. Every year, the Earshot Jazz Festival disrupts assumptions, gets in your face and finds fresh synergies.”

The Earshot Jazz Festival introduced Seattle audiences to important artists like Jason Moran, Vijay Iyer, and Robert Glasper early in their careers as well as established artists such as NEA Jazz Masters Toshiko Akiyoshi and Keith Jarrett. While Earshot also introduced the local community to the international and adventurous work from artists like Matana Roberts, Peter Brötzmann, and Kris Davis, it has always promoted the hometown talent as well, such as Kate Olson, John Semen, and Wayne Horvitz—who composed new work for a recent festival concert with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra and guest soloist, Bill Frisell.

Based on its history of strong presenting, Earshot has been awarded nearly two dozen NEA grants through the years, in addition to participating in the NEA Jazz Masters Live program and NEA/Doris Duke Charitable Foundation’s JazzNet initiative.

Despite its international reputation, Earshot has remained a true community organization. Its initial one-page newsletter has morphed into a monthly news magazine, surveying the vibrant Seattle jazz scene. It has a team of three full-time employees, headed by John Gilbreath, a man with a large love for music and culture. Gilbreath’s lifelong fascination with jazz music started after first hearing the music of Duke Ellington at the age of ten. He began volunteering with Earshot in 1990 and has served as executive director since 1991.

Gilbreath believes strongly that “we all have to create an environment around us individually that values arts and that supports artists.” In many ways, this means keeping it local. Earshot has developed partnerships with community organizations such as the Seattle Art Museum, the Seattle Drum School, and the Seattle Jazz Experience. Furthermore, close to 70 percent of Earshot Jazz Festival

concerts are performed by local musicians, serving as a catalyst for resident artists to reach a bigger stage.

“I love to create projects with jazz artists who came up in Seattle and have moved away to develop their art,” said Gilbreath. “Often times it is young artists who have left Seattle for the jazz mecca of New York City. It’s great to bring back people like Chris Speed, Anne Drummond, or, this year, the Westerlies, hear their current work, and team them up with old classmates and colleagues.” The festival serves as a sort of homecoming event for these acclaimed artists, and allows them to remain integrated in the community that helped give them their start.

But even as it celebrates established musicians, Earshot is committed to nurturing the art form’s future. The organization has an extensive educational commitment, including artist residencies with high school jazz bands, instrumental summer programs for middle-schoolers, and jazz history lessons and performances by older musicians for school groups. Earshot also schedules daytime workshops with musicians during the festival that are free and open to the public. “The best thing that we can do is to keep fertile the ground that would nurture new jazz artists, young jazz artists, any one of whom could go on to be the next Ornette Coleman or a major influence in the future of the music,” said Gilbreath.

Perhaps this dedication to young musicians in part explains a new trend among Earshot Jazz Festival audiences: an increased percentage of young concertgoers. Gilbreath credits this increase to the ability of young people to reject preconceived notions of what jazz is or is not, and their tendency to absorb various types of music as well as performance options. In order for Earshot to remain relevant in a music world that is ever changing, they must be flexible in their approach. “Because we are flexible, we can make adjustments as we go,” he said. “It’s kind of what jazz is all about: being responsive to the environment that you’re playing in and willing to change up your approach so you can be more effective in it.”

The NEA has also been responsive to the environment, starting with its first jazz grant in 1969 (to future NEA Jazz Master George Russell) to awarding nearly 100



▲ NEA Jazz Master Toshiko Akiyoshi leads an open rehearsal for the general public at the Garfield High School in Seattle.

PHOTO BY BRUCE C MOORE,
COURTESY OF EARSHOT
JAZZ

▼
Local Seattle jazz group Monktaile Creative Music Concern's Raymond Scott Project at the Seattle Art Museum in 2007 as part of Earshot Jazz's Art of Jazz series at the museum.

PHOTO BY FLICKR.COM
USER LIFE AS ART,
CREATIVE COMMONS

grants totaling more than \$1.8 million in jazz funding in 2014, supporting organizations such as Earshot for their annual jazz festival as well as educational programs such as Arizona Classic Jazz Society's in-school musical education programs at five local elementary schools. The NEA Jazz Masters awards have honored significant artists in the field since 1982, including such jazz legends as Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, Anthony Braxton, Eddie Palmieri, and Carla Bley. Through its funding, education, and promotion, the NEA is committed to ensuring that this essential American music continues to thrive.

In fact, in 1990 Earshot Jazz received an NEA Jazz Management grant that came at a time when the young organization was shaky. Earshot began when journalist Paul de Barros and radio host and concert producer Gary Bannister grew frustrated with local jazz coverage by the *Seattle Times* (where de Barros is now a music critic). Sensing a decline in the city's historically vibrant jazz

scene, the pair sought to reinvigorate the community. They began organizing concerts in 1987, and their first weeklong festival was held in 1989. By 1990, according to de Barros, Earshot "probably would have gone the way of so many idealistic nonprofits with lots of heart but no sustainable budget and dissolved altogether" without the NEA support.

Earshot has continued to grow over the years under Gilbreath's direction and is ensuring that jazz continues to thrive in Seattle through its engagement with the community. By keeping community engagement as a priority, Gilbreath reasons, there are two main outcomes: "One, we can help shine a very positive light on Seattle's our own artists in the context of the world stage; and, two, we can bring a world of jazz to our own community, presenting new ideas from artists who are re-thinking the possibilities for the art form and honoring the jazz tradition of creative progression." ▲

“Despite its international reputation, Earshot has remained a true community organization.”



Opening the Heart and Soul

SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL REBIRTH
AFTER THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

BY REBECCA GROSS



The Oklahoma City National Memorial, which honors the victims and survivors of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in 1995.

PHOTO BY FLICKR.COM USER SCOTT1346, CREATIVE COMMONS

TWENTY YEARS AFTER A TRUCK BOMB killed 168 people in Oklahoma City, Jackie L. Jones, then head of the Arts Council of Oklahoma City, can still vividly recall certain images from the aftermath. Sirens screaming as ambulances attempted to break through gridlocked traffic. Shell-shocked pedestrians, wandering in a daze. Traumatized staff members, one whose mother worked in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, where the bomb had exploded.

But there are other memories too. A gospel choir that had gathered at the bombing site, handing out sheet music so others could join in. A masking tape mural at the convention center—turned into a staging ground for rescue and recovery operations—made by three young artists in town for the council’s now-canceled art festival. The mural showed people growing wings and learning to fly, symbolic of how aid work-

ers were “making angels,” as one rescue worker noted. There was also a call with then-NEA Director of Design Samina Quraeshi about how design could help Oklahoma City heal from the largest act of domestic terrorism the country had ever seen.

Across the city, Mary Frates, executive director of the Oklahoma Arts Institute at Quartz Mountain, received a similar call from Jane Alexander, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts at the time. “The Arts Institute should do something, and when you do, we’re here to help,” Alexander told her longtime friend.

Jones began working 20-hour days, leaving her office blinds open so that the glare of floodlights illuminating recovery efforts six blocks away would keep her grounded through the night. Her agency’s bank account was depleted with the festival’s cancellation, but Jones was able to secure emergency funding from the NEA and others. With this in place, she helped arrange moments of beauty for those who were most in need. When musicians called, she sent them to the convention center and churches, where families waited for news about relatives. She arranged for the three young artists to make tape murals on hospital room windows of the youngest survivors. The

bomb had exploded beneath the Murrah Building’s second-floor daycare center, leaving 19 children dead and sending six to the intensive-care unit at the city’s children’s hospital.

While these efforts provided immediate relief, the larger task of rebuilding would be months in the making. Working with Quraeshi, Jones began to help organize a design charette around the rehabilitation of downtown. The blast had caused \$625 million in property damage in an area that had already seen better days. The idea was to create the ideal environment for an eventual memorial, which would be erected where the Murrah Building once stood. “She immediately saw the need for pulling the community together to look forward in some way,” said Jones of Quraeshi, who died in 2013. This included designers, developers, civic leaders, engineers, architects, residents, and the financial community, all of whom shared their visions and concerns over how a rebuilt Oklahoma City might take shape.

While the design charette would address an entire city’s needs, the Oklahoma Arts Institute at Quartz Mountain decided to focus their efforts on those immediately impacted by the bombing. Through the years, Frates noted, much of the work created at Arts Institute workshops “reflected painful life experiences.” In particular, she remembered the Art Institute’s director of music, who lost his 12-year-old daughter to terminal illness. “After her death, he attended a writing workshop at Quartz Mountain and told me that it not only helped with his depression, it saved his sanity,” she said. “If it could help our students who happened to be artists, couldn’t it help people who were desperate to express themselves and had no way to do so?”

With this in mind, she began to ruminate on organizing a workshop designed specifically for survivors and relatives of victims. When she proposed the idea to Arts Institute leadership, there were the expected concerns about funding, and whether staff members were equipped to work in such an emotionally raw situation. On the other hand, “Shouldn’t we try and help if we could?” Frates asked. Staff members unanimously voted to push forward, and the Arts Institute found itself with six months to plan “A Celebration of the Spirit,” a four-day multidisciplinary workshop for 140 adults, teens, and children.

With funding from the NEA, the Arts Institute drew artists from around the country to facilitate. As a precaution, mental health workers were also stationed in every studio should participants need a professional ear.

As it turned out, this wasn’t necessary. “Although there were tears, there was a definite trajectory of positive



▲ **Kathleen Silovsky, who survived the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, creates a mask at the NEA-supported workshop held by Oklahoma Arts Institute to help survivors express their feelings and begin the healing process.**

PHOTO BY G. JILL EVANS

emotion,” said Frates. “It felt good. It felt right. It was working.” Participants wrote personal essays and poetry, wove Cherokee baskets, and made memory boxes, masks, and collages. There was also gospel singing and dance, and a special “arts adventure” for elementary-aged children.

Although Frates stressed that the workshop was not art therapy, she said there was no doubt that the experience offered therapeutic value for participants. Barbara Williams, who lost her husband in the blast, wrote, “My poetry classmates and my instructor have made me think, let me talk, and cry tears of joy instead of sadness.” Cecil Williams, who worked a block from the Murrah Building and lost a close friend and suffered long-term health issues, wrote in his journal, “At Quartz Mountain, I laughed and smiled for the first time in months.”

But the event was more than just a feel-good experience. Facilitators held participants to the same standards that they would professional artists, and the results corresponded in kind. “The faculty expressed amazement that the art was of such high quality, some even better than that of their MFA candidates,” Frates said. So good, in fact, that she and her staff thought it deserved to be showcased to a wider audience. “This work told a powerful story about the ability of the creative spirit to build hope and faith in the future and to create community. It was a story that deserved to be told outside Quartz Mountain.”

In a powerful validation of these workshop participants as artists, an exhibition of their work was organized at the Oklahoma State Capitol, before touring to nine other cities around the state. Most people, Frates said, associated the bombing with objects such as stuffed animals and trinkets that had been left at the bomb site as a makeshift memorial. The exhibition, she said, was able to provide a different sort of understanding and meaning to those who attended. “It’s what art can do,” she said. “It can open the heart and the mind and the soul to actually be there without your having experienced the blast.”

As survivors began to heal, so too did the physical city, as the design charette was equally successful. “What they did has had an amazingly long-range impact on Oklahoma City,” said Jones. For instance, one idea that emerged from the charette was to revitalize a section of downtown that had boomed in the 1920s and ‘30s with car dealerships, but had fallen into decline by the 1970s. “They said, ‘We could create something called Automobile Alley,’” Jones remembered. Today, the area is indeed called Automobile Alley, and is home to restaurants, shops, galleries, and loft apartments. The charette results were ultimately turned into a written report, and were showcased at an

exhibition at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC.

As the city began to transform rubble into tangible signs of resilience, it paved the way for Jones’s next venture: overseeing the design of the memorial itself. “The art of commemoration is very specific,” said Jones. “It has to be specific to that moment, that people, that community. The challenge of figuring out what that was for Oklahoma City—my city—was something I really wanted to take on.” The winning design featured a reflecting pool bounded by two large gates, representing 9:01 and 9:03—the minute before and minute after the explosion. One-hundred sixty-eight empty chairs (including 19 smaller ones for the children who were killed), signifying the empty seats at dinner tables, are configured in the shape of the building’s fracture.

When the memorial was dedicated in 2000, the first exhibition in its gallery was *A Celebration of the Spirit*, featuring the work made at Quartz Mountain.

Today, the memorial has become emblematic of Oklahoma City, and it ranks as one of the area’s most-visited sites. The materials from *A Celebration of the Spirit* remain in the memorial’s archives, a dual celebration of those who were lost and the strength of those who survived.

The experience marked the beginning of a new trajectory for the NEA as well. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the NEA provided emergency funding for arts organizations in the epicenter of the New York City attacks, as well as supporting the ARTifacts: Kids Responding to a World in Crisis project, where New York City-area students created artwork in response to the devastation. From 2004 to 2009, the agency conducted Operation Homecoming, which offered more than 60 writing workshops to troops, veterans, and their families to help them process and communicate painful experiences. In 2011, this initiative evolved into a formal Healing Arts Partnership with Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. Through this partnership, troops with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury would be offered writing workshops to help give voice to difficult memories and emotions. Music therapy was later added, and the program has since expanded to the Fort Belvoir Community Hospital in Virginia, where writing and visual art therapy are offered.

Oklahoma City showed the NEA and the nation how powerful the arts can be in terms of spiritual and physical rebirth. As Jones said, “There will never be a better example of how people respond to tragedy, to loss, to high emotion. What else can they use besides the arts?” ▲

“Suzy was buried at dawn on a hill overlooking the high school. Though she died in an act of war by misguided men, there were no honors. There were just the surviving Ferrells, the family that lived next door when she was brought home from the hospital as our firstborn, and the preacher who didn’t really know her. We would have asked the preacher who baptized her, but he was busy burying his own firstborn and namesake, killed in the same disaster.”

While the preacher prayed, the box containing her ashes was cradled in my arms, much as I had carried her into our house the day we brought her from from the hospital.”

Donald Ferrell, Personal Essay Workshop at Quartz Mountain October 1995

Ferrell attended Quartz Mountain with his wife. They lost their daughter Suzy, who worked on the 8th floor of the Murrah Building.

Excerpted from *A Celebration of the Spirit*, an anthology documenting a workshop at the Arts Institute at Quartz Mountain with families of victims and survivors of the Oklahoma City bombing. Used with permission.



ONLINE

As part of our online content for this issue, which you can find by visiting [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov), we interview NEA grantee and NEA Opera Honoree John Adams, a composer of hypnotic music and provocative operas; speak with Charleston, South Carolina Mayor Joseph P. Riley about his participation in two longtime NEA-funded projects: the Mayors' Institute on City Design and Spoleto USA; and look at the Moth, a nonprofit organization that presents and broadcasts storytelling at its finest, a perennial NEA grantee for the last 12 years.

Don't forget to check out our *Art Works Blog* ([arts.gov/art-works](https://www.arts.gov/art-works)) for daily stories on the arts around the country.

(Above) Composer John Adams working with John DeMain, then-musical director/conductor of the Houston Grand Opera, on Adams' first opera, *Nixon in China*, in 1987. The performance was supported by an NEA grant, as was the presentation of the opera on PBS's *Great Performances* series and the recording on Nonesuch Records.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HOUSTON GRAND OPERA



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