



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS

A great nation  
deserves great art.

# NEA ARTS

A GREAT NATION DESERVES GREAT ART



## NEA International Activities

*Partnering to Celebrate the Arts Worldwide*



**3** The Big Read  
Goes International

**7** NEA's International  
Literary Exchanges

**9** The NEA's  
Partnership with  
the U.S. Department  
of State

**10** The NEA and  
International  
Cultural Exchange  
Residencies

# NEA International Activities

## Partnering To Celebrate the Arts Worldwide

**Through the creative expressions** of our diverse and dynamic artists, communities around the globe can gain an understanding of the vibrant cultural life in the United States. In addition, it is essential to give our own audiences more opportunities for substantive encounters with high-caliber artists from other shores. For more than 30 years, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has played a leadership role in this arena through catalytic partnerships with foreign governments, other federal agencies, the state arts agencies and regional arts organizations, and private funders.

Innovative partnerships have opened the door to NEA International Literary Exchanges, which expand cross-cultural dialogue about literature through the publication of contemporary literary anthologies in translation. To make world literature accessible to more

Americans, the agency also has expanded its national reading initiative The Big Read to include international authors.

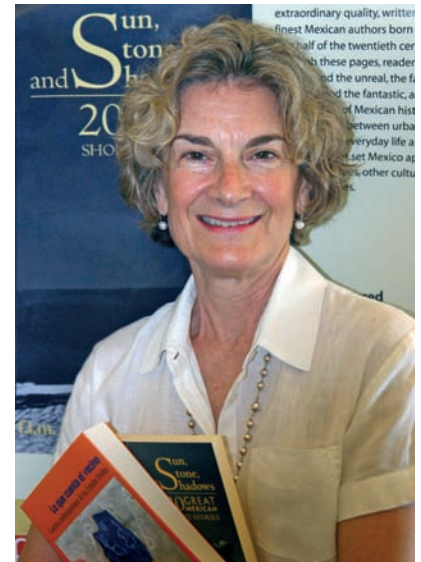
The NEA has further enhanced its international role since the U.S. rejoined the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2003.

NEA Chairman Dana Gioia was among delegates accompanying Mrs. Laura Bush to Paris to commemorate the return. Subsequently, the NEA organized several cultural presentations to showcase U.S. arts and culture at events hosted by U.S. Ambassador to UNESCO Louise Oliver.

For cultural officials visiting the United States, our decentralized system for support of arts and culture appears overwhelmingly complex. To assist visitors in understanding our infrastructure, the NEA published *How the U.S. Funds the Arts* in 2004 (revised in 2007). This publication provides information on the NEA and its competitive peer review process, descriptions and budget figures for other federal agencies, and explains the relationship between the nonprofit sector, tax incentives, and the role of private philanthropy in the United States.

In the following pages, I invite you to read more about the NEA's truly transformative array of international partnerships and activities.

*Pennie Ojeda*  
Director, International Activities



**International Activities Director Pennie Ojeda. Photo by Brandon Jones.**



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS

A great nation  
deserves great art.

#### NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

Dana Gioia *Chairman*  
James Ballinger  
Miguel Campaneria  
Ben Donenberg  
Makoto Fujimura  
Mark Hofflund  
Joan Israelite  
Charlotte Kessler  
Bret Lott  
Jerry Pinkney  
Stephen Porter  
Frank Price  
Terry Teachout  
Karen Wolff

#### EX-OFFICIO

Sen. Robert Bennett (R-UT)  
Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)  
Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN)  
Rep. Patrick Tiberi (R-OH)

#### NEA ARTS STAFF

Paulette Beete *Editor*  
Don Ball *Managing Editor*  
Pennie Ojeda, Rebecca Ritzel,  
Elizabeth Stark *Contributors*  
Beth Schlenoff *Design*

#### ON THE COVER:

**Mark Morris Dance Group performs *All Fours*, one of two works the company presented at the 2007 Holland Festival in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, with support from an USArtists International grant. Photo by Stephanie Berger.**

# Crossing Checkpoints

## The Big Read Goes International

**One of the ideas** behind the NEA's national reading program The Big Read is that, through literature, neighbors are able to get to know each other better and make lasting connections. The same is true for global neighbors who live across borders rather than down the block. With that in mind, the NEA has expanded The Big Read to include titles by authors from Russia, Egypt, and Mexico. These international reads feature U.S. communities reading the literature of the other country, while partner communities in that country read American classics. Although each international Big Read has its own personality, the programs are all propelled by a sense of cross-cultural cooperation, conversation, and, ultimately, understanding. As NEA Director of National Reading Initiatives David Kipen has commented, "There's no country in the world that couldn't benefit from this kind of cultural exchange—maybe ours especially. Too often publishing is a one-way street, with the rest of the world getting so much of our writing in translation, and America seeing so little writing from abroad."

In many cases the selected U.S. titles are already available in translation. The NEA, however, works with partners to fill in any gaps. For example, with funding from the U.S. Department of State, Egyptian publisher Dar Sharouk published a new Arabic translation of *Fahrenheit 451* with a special preface by Ray Bradbury. The Arts Endowment also works with partners to make sure that translated versions of The Big Read educational materials are culturally appropriate for overseas audiences.

The first bilateral Big Read took place in the Russian cities of Saratov and Ivanovo in October 2007 with events around Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Prior to the launch, through a partnership with Open World Leadership Center and CEC ArtsLink, the NEA hosted a delegation from both cities for an orientation in DC to help them prepare to host Big Read activities. The

visiting Russian partners next traveled to Huntsville, Alabama, and Asheville, North Carolina, where they were able to exchange ideas with their counterparts while taking a first-hand, up-close look at two different Big Reads focused on Lee's novel.

Kipen, NEA International Activities Director Pennie Ojeda, and NEA Chairman Dana Gioia next traveled to Russia to attend the cities' inaugural Big Read activities. Reporting on The Big Read Blog ([www.arts.gov/](http://www.arts.gov/)



**Galina Alekseeva, Chairman Dana Gioia, and Vladimir Tolstoy at a special presentation on Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* at the NEA in Washington, DC. NEA file photo.**

**bigreadblog**) about a visit to Ivanovo's children's library, Kipen enthused, "Teen after teen stood up and got straight to the heart of *To Kill a Mockingbird* . . . A girl in back asked if the second-class citizenship that the black townspeople endured in the book was so different from what the Chechens are going through nowadays. A local student invited for the occasion spoke movingly of the prejudice he still suffers as the son of a Tartar. And a teenage guy—a guy!—talked about the universality of a good book, and allowed as how 'Writers have no nationality.'"

The U.S. segment of The Big Read Russia focused



three American communities on Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, launching in spring 2008 with projects hosted by Muncie Public Library (Indiana), Ephrata Public Library (Pennsylvania), and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The communities used *Ivan Ilyich* as a springboard for a range of activities, including an Internet forum on the novella with Russian students, a panel discussion on literary translation, and a "White Nights" festival.

One of the hallmarks of the cross-cultural Big Reads is the participation of international scholars and cultural specialists. In March 2008, Vladimir Tolstoy, the great-great-grandson of Leo Tolstoy and director of the State Museum-Estate of Leo Tolstoy at Yasnaya Polyana, and Galina Alekseeva, the museum's director of academic research, visited the U.S. to illuminate communities about Tolstoy's life and work. Vladimir Tolstoy and Alekseeva traveled to Muncie and Champaign, where the itinerary included television and radio broadcasts with local high school and college students, a discussion group with teachers, and Champaign's Big Read kick-off event at which Vladimir Tolstoy read from his distinguished ancestor's work in Russian. Kipen noted that the many connections made during the U.S. and Russian

**Arts Midwest and delegates from the four lead U.S. organizations for The Big Read Egypt/U.S. visited Cairo and Alexandria to meet their counterparts in April 2008. Photo courtesy of Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.**

phases of the program "just underlines the continuing need for a program that uses a book as a bridge between nations, or even just between neighbors."

The NEA will continue to meet that need by launching two additional international Big Read programs this fall. Presented in partnership with the U.S. Department of State and Arts Midwest, The Big Read Egypt/U.S. will focus on Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz's 1961 novel *The Thief and the Dogs*. Four American organizations will host the project: Columbia University in the City of New York, Florida Center for the Literary Arts at Miami Dade College, South Dakota Humanities Council/South Dakota Center for the Book, and Alabama's Huntsville-Madison County Public Library. In Egypt, the project is spearheaded by the Egyptian Association for Educational Resources and the American University in Cairo, and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria. Egyptian Big Readers can choose to read *Fahrenheit 451*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Chairman Gioia announced The Big Read Egypt/

U.S. at the 2008 Cairo International Book Fair along with State Department officials. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Alina L. Romanowski remarked, “Through literature and The Big Read Egypt/U.S., our nations will deepen our understanding and respect of one another, one community at a time, one page at a time.”

Through a State Department cultural exchange program, U.S. organizers visited Cairo and Alexandria in April 2008 to meet their Egyptian counterparts and learn more about Mahfouz and Egyptian culture. As Huntsville-Madison organizer Sophie Young reported, “On top of enhancing our own ways of sharing the novel, [traveling to Egypt] enabled our organizers to work with the Egyptian community here more sensitively and allow them a wider berth in sharing their understanding of the novel and related issues.” (Read more from Sophie Young at [www.arts.gov/features/index.php?choosmonth=2008\\_08](http://www.arts.gov/features/index.php?choosmonth=2008_08).)

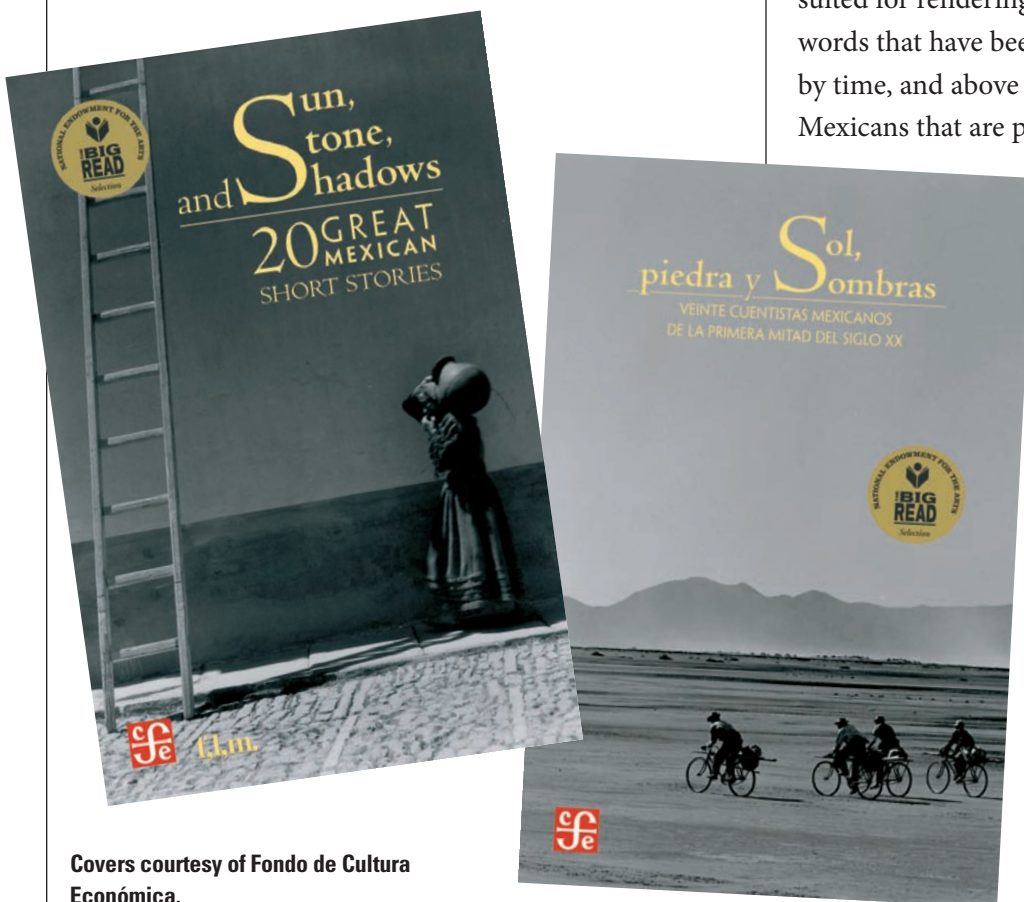
The third international Big Read will be a little closer to home—The Big Read Mexico. The El Paso Public Library will host Big Read activities in El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, while the University of

Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College will host activities in Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Mexico. El Paso Public Library Director Carol Brey-Casiano called the program especially appropriate for a border community. “Thousands of citizens from El Paso and Juarez cross the border every day to work, play, shop, and visit relatives, so it’s a natural progression for us to offer reading programs that appeal to citizens of both countries.”

Communities will read an anthology created especially for The Big Read, *Sun, Stone, and Shadows: 20 Great Mexican Short Stories*, featuring short fiction by twentieth-century Mexican writers such as Rosario Castellanos, Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz, and Juan Rulfo. Available in English and Spanish, *Sun, Stone, and Shadows* was published by Mexico’s Fondo de Cultura Económica. The Embassy of Mexico in the U.S. and the Embassy of the U.S. in Mexico are also partners in The Big Read Mexico. This anthology marks The Big Read’s first venture into short fiction. As anthology editor Jorge F. Hernández wrote in the collection’s introduction, “[P]erhaps the short story is the vehicle best suited for rendering snapshot scenes, actual places, words that have been shared by generations or forgotten by time, and above all, flesh-and-blood portraits of Mexicans that are perfectly credible—even when they’re

no more than inventions of ink on paper—whose biographies are eternal, precisely because they’ve been read.”

Wondering where in the world The Big Read will show up next? Although nothing is yet confirmed, it’s a sure thing that The Big Read will continue to traverse borders—both metaphorically and literally. Or to quote Kipen, “There’s no checkpoint a great book can’t cross.”



Covers courtesy of Fondo de Cultura Económica.

## Laying the Groundwork

In an address this past May at the World Economic Forum about the Egyptian Education Initiative, Mrs. Laura Bush, honorary chair of The Big Read, said “[The Big Read Egypt/U.S.] exchange will help inspire a love of literature in Egyptians and Americans while laying the groundwork for future collaboration between our nations.” Mrs. Bush also visited the Fayrouz Experimental School for Languages in Sharm el Sheikh where she joined students in a Big Read Egypt/U.S. roundtable discussion. In the following excerpt from the roundtable, Mrs. Bush discusses *Fahrenheit 451*, one of three Big Read titles that will be read by Egyptian communities.

Ray Bradbury got the [idea] for *Fahrenheit 451* when he read about the burning of the library in Alexandria. [Chairman Gioia] asked Mr. Bradbury to write the introduction for the Arabic copy that you all will get later of *Fahrenheit 451* that will be distributed to Egyptian participants in The Big Read Egypt/U.S. Mr. Bradbury notes in the introduction:

As you can well imagine, when I was 15 years old and heard about the burning of the books in the streets of Berlin—but even more importantly, I heard about the burning of the books in Alexandria, Egypt, 5,000 years before—it killed my soul. I openly wept, because I could imagine all those wonderful essays, the poems, the plays, the thoughts, the philosophies of those ancient people lost because a fire had burned them up and destroyed them forever.



**Mrs. Laura Bush meets with Dr. Mohamed Ismail Anis Serageldin, director of the Alexandria Library, one of the partners in The Big Read Egypt/U.S. White House photo by Shealah Craighead.**

So, the one thing we all should learn from Ray Bradbury and from each other is how important our literature is to talk about our own ideas, the ideas of each of our countries, and how we can share those ideas with other countries through reading our important literature, that we can become closer to each other and friends with each other.

And then I think the most important point Ray Bradbury makes is it doesn't matter if books are burned if you don't read. If you don't read, then you're missing—might as well burn books, because you won't know what's in them—all the kinds of ideas of all the generations before us, especially in Egypt, where you have such a very, very old culture with so many, many ideas that now have spread around the world. It's so important to get to know what those ancient people thought, and now to let each other know.

# Translating Experience

## NEA's International Literary Exchanges

“Literary exchanges are one of the most effective ways to introduce people of different countries to one another.” So stated Chairman Dana Gioia when he introduced the NEA’s new initiative, International Literary Exchanges, in 2007. Less than four percent of books published in the United States are translations—and those that are lucky enough to be translated aren’t necessarily easy to find in your neighborhood chain bookstore. Through creative partnerships with other governments, the NEA provides the means to make contemporary foreign literature more available. The initiative, part of the U.S. Department of State’s Global Cultural Initiative, helps U.S. nonprofit presses to publish foreign works in English. Likewise, the participating foreign governments are expected to produce a volume of translated contemporary U.S. writing for their citizens, making U.S. literature more widely available in other languages.

The initiative began when the NEA, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico supported *Lineas conectadas* and *Connecting Lines*, bilingual volumes of contemporary U.S. and Mexican poetry, respectively. Since then, cultural ministries in several other countries have expressed interest in literary exchanges. By early 2009, the NEA will have provided support for five sets of anthologies, bringing the literature of Mexico, Russia, Northern Ireland, and Pakistan to readers in the United States. Conversely, thanks to the work of presses in those nations, more poems and short fiction by American authors are being read abroad.

To produce these anthologies, the NEA has tapped poets, translators, and editors who are respected in the

small but vital field of literary translation. Olivia Sears, director of the San Francisco-based Center for the Art of Translation, served as translation editor for the anthology *Best of Contemporary Mexican Fiction*, forthcoming in February 2009 from Dalkey Archive Press.

“Having an NEA that is interested in translation is tremendous,” Sears said. “And the fact that these anthologies are being printed bilingually demonstrates the value of literary translation. That’s unusual.”

In all the books except the Northern Ireland anthologies, texts in both languages appear on facing pages. *Contemporary Russian Poetry* was the first time Dalkey Archive Press had printed in Cyrillic; the Illinois press released the volume of Russian poetry in 2007.

The market for these anthologies goes beyond the U.S. borders. *Contemporary Russian Poetry* is selling well in Europe, where Russian poetry is more popular than in the United States. “English is a bridging language,” Dalkey’s Associate Director Martin Riker said, explaining that many books are translated from English into other languages. “These anthologies are benefitting the



Russian poets (from left to right) Evgeny Bunimovich, Julia Nossova (interpreter), Elena Fanailova, and Yuli Gugolev read at the Library of Congress on April 7, 2008 as part of the Dalkey Archive Press-sponsored book tour for *Contemporary Russian Poetry: An Anthology*. Photo by Brandon Jones.

entire English-speaking world.” The Russian partner, the Foundation for Creative Projects, produced a bilingual anthology of contemporary American poetry for sale in Russia in October 2007.

To drum up stateside interest in Russian poetry, Dalkey sent three Russian poets on a book tour that included a Washington, DC reading at the Library of Congress and a Chicago event cosponsored by the Poetry Foundation. Marketing the books is crucial, Riker said, praising the NEA for giving Dalkey the leeway to support a promotional budget as part of its pub-

lishing grant. “Foreign writers aren’t known here,” Riker said. “It’s kind of a Catch-22. The NEA wants to encourage more diversity in our own literature, but how do you get people to pay attention?”

The prospect of introducing contemporary American poets to readers abroad thrilled Kevin Prufer, the poet and editor tapped with selecting poems for an anthology that will be published in Pakistan later this year. He imagined his readers as curious and educated, but unfamiliar with anything written in the States after 1950. Compiling the anthology was what he called a “noble” task.

## International Literary Anthologies

### Mexico

*Connecting Lines: New Poetry from Mexico*, Luis Cortes Bargallo, editor, and Forrest Gander, translation editor, Sarabande Books, 2006

*Lineas conectadas: nueva poesía de los Estados Unidos*, April Lindner, editor Sarabande Books, 2006

(A project undertaken by the NEA, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, and the National Autonomous University of Mexico.)

*Lo que cuenta el vecino (What the Neighbor Says)*, Jon Parrish Peede, editor, National Autonomous University of Mexico, 2008.

*Best of Contemporary Mexican Fiction*, Álvaro Uribe, editor, and Olivia Sears, translation editor, Dalkey Archive Press, 2009.

### Russia

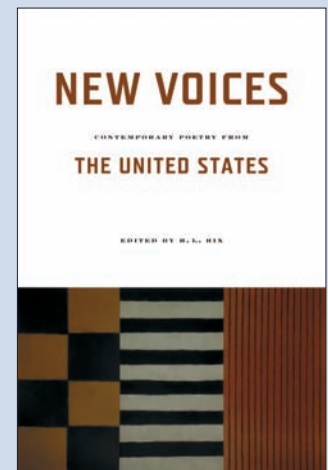
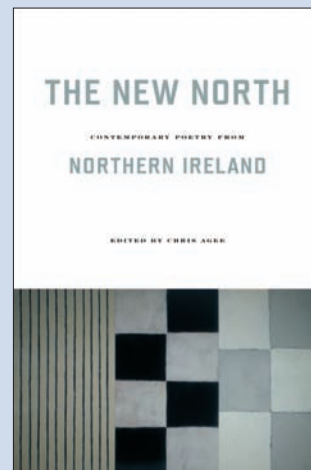
*Contemporary Russian Poetry: An Anthology*, Evgeny Bunimovich, editor, and J. Kates, translation editor, Dalkey Archive Press, 2007

*Contemporary Poetry in the U.S.*, April Lindner, editor, OGI Press, 2007

(A partnership between the NEA and the Moscow-based Foundation for Creative Projects.)

### Northern Ireland

*The New North: Contemporary Poetry from Northern Ireland*, Chris Agee, editor, Wake Forest University Press, 2008



*New Voices: Contemporary Poetry from the United States*, H.L. Hix, editor, Irish Pages, 2008

(A project undertaken by the NEA and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.)

### Pakistan

*Contemporary Poetry of the United States*, Kevin Prufer, editor, and Mushir Anwar, translation editor, Pakistan Academy of Letters, 2009

*Modern Poetry of Pakistan*, Iftikhar Arif, editor, and Waqas Khwaja, translation editor, Eastern Washington University Press, 2009

(A joint venture of the NEA and the Pakistan Academy of Letters with the assistance of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan.)



# Global Conversations

## The NEA's Partnerships with the U.S. Department of State

**The NEA works with** the U.S. Department of State on a variety of programs, so it was fitting that the Arts Endowment was included in its Global Cultural Initiative. This partnership between the State Department and U.S. cultural institutions promotes projects designed to connect foreign audiences with American artists and art forms, allow Americans to share their expertise in arts management and performance, and provide education about the arts and cultures of other countries. The initiative was launched in September 2006.

The NEA's primary contribution to the initiative was the development of International Literary Exchanges. (See pages 7–8.) The NEA, however, also collaborates with the American Film Institute (AFI), the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH), the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services on AFI Project: 20/20, a program for U.S. and international filmmakers that fosters cross-cultural dialogue, exchange, and collaboration using film to overcome language and borders.

Currently 11 filmmakers have been invited to take part in the project, which provides opportunities for them to interact with their peers, screen their films, engage audiences in dialogue, and present master classes. To date, filmmakers representing 12 countries have participated in 20/20 and collectively visited 16 countries and 12 U.S. cities. Topics in this year's films include the clash of tradition and modernity in Mali, the daily lives of U.S. truckers, and a host of ideas, places, and cultures rarely seen in popular U.S. films much less in China, Turkey, St. Louis, or Dallas.

The NEA also participates in the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program, which invites foreign nationals recognized as potential leaders to the U.S. to develop and strengthen ties with Americans and American institutions. For those visiting with an arts and culture background, the NEA presents an overview of U.S. arts funding and arranges for them to meet



**A still from *Faro-Goddess of Water*, a film by Malian Salif Traoré, who visited Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, and Turkey as a participant in AFI Project: 20/20. Image courtesy of PCAH.**

with NEA discipline directors in their area of interest. In 2007–2008 the NEA hosted more than 175 cultural officials from 37 countries, including Vietnam, Iran, and Nigeria.

Working with the State Department, the NEA also assures the excellence and diversity of artists representing the U.S. at international visual arts exhibitions. The Federal Advisory Committee on International Exhibitions, chartered in 1989, is made up of seven distinguished experts on contemporary visual art in the U.S. The committee recommends artists to the State Department for such esteemed international festivals as the Venice and São Paulo Biennales.

These NEA/State Department partnerships are integral to the growth and vitality of international cultural exchanges and representative of the ability of art to create conversation among cultures. As 20/20 participant Mohammed Naqvi said, following the screening of his film *Shame* in Lithuania, “When we met the students and journalists, it was almost surprising at how much ‘America’ and ‘Americans’ are mistrusted and misrepresented. . . . I now more than ever see the importance of 20/20. It truly is a cultural exchange—and it truly does bring cultural misconceptions about each of us to the forefront and gives us an opportunity to address them.”

# Art Ambassadors

## The NEA and International Cultural Exchange Residencies

**The NEA's primary mission** to bring great art, artists, and arts experiences to all Americans includes not only support for domestic programs, but also an engagement with the global arts and culture community. The agency meets this need, in part, through partnerships with U.S. organizations that facilitate U.S. residencies for international visitors and international residencies for Americans. Three of these collaborative efforts are the Open World Cultural Leaders Program, the ArtsLink Residencies, and the U.S./Japan Creative Artists' Program. The Open World and ArtsLink programs focus on Russia, Central Europe, and Eurasia, bringing that region's accomplished artists to the U.S. for intense periods of cultural immersion. These visiting arts leaders use their time in the U.S. to advance their artistic mastery, observe the inner workings of U.S. arts organizations, and share their creative expressions and traditions with Americans. The same is true for the U.S./Japan Fellows who find their relationship to their own artmaking, teaching, and arts management practices in the U.S. transformed by their time in Japan, a country where 2006 fellow Sheri Simons noted, "culture and tradition and language are . . . absolutely intertwined."

Though varied in scope, length, and number of participants, what these programs have in common is that visitors and hosts alike act as de facto global ambassadors, exchanging ideas and exploring one another's cultures, not across a diplomatic conference table, but in an art or dance studio, at a concert, in a classroom, or simply over a shared meal at a kitchen table.

### Open World Cultural Leaders Program

The Open World Leadership Center is an independent federal agency that administers one of the few exchange programs in the government's legislative branch. The center funded few cultural leaders

until it partnered with the NEA in 2004 to create the Open World Cultural Leaders Program, which offers two- to three-week residencies at U.S. cultural institutions to Russian artists and arts managers. With an average of 75 participants annually, Open World has brought more than 300 cultural delegates to the U.S. for residencies since 2003.

Leading Russian arts professionals and institutions nominate participants, whose applications are then vetted by the U.S. Embassy and Open World's partner organization, CEC ArtsLink. NEA support has assisted organizations such as the Brubeck Institute in Stockton, California, the American Dance Festival in Durham, North Carolina, and the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa in Iowa City to host visiting artists.

Open World fellows participate in activities such as behind-the-scenes tours of cultural institutions and performance venues, performance and teaching opportunities, and seminars on arts administration. Most recently, a delegation of Russian icon painters visited New Mexican artists who craft *retablos* (portable altar boxes) for a



**NEA Jazz Master Chick Corea (left) jams with Russian jazz musician Stanislav Dolzhkov in Louisville, Kentucky, as part of the 2008 Open World Cultural Leaders Program. Photo courtesy of Open World.**



**2007 ArtsLink Fellow Ilya Belenkov (Russia) performing with the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in Takoma Park, Maryland. Photo courtesy of Ilya Belenkov.**

cross-cultural discussion on religious art. And just this past March, emerging Russian jazz artists in residence at the University of Louisville School of Music took part in a master class with NEA Jazz Master Chick Corea.

Ambassador John O’Keefe, Open World’s executive director, noted that these cultural collaborations are as important for the U.S. as for the Russian delegates. “The United States benefits through the strengthened relationships and professional networking that occur as a result of Open World exchanges . . . Open World hosts and their American communities make a difference in international relations at the grassroots level. We find that, though many of our delegates arrive with a healthy skepticism and a belief that the program may be orchestrated to show only one side of America, [time] in our communities melts that shell of cynicism.”

### **ArtsLink Residencies**

CEC ArtsLink is a nonprofit cultural exchange organization that focuses on Central Europe, Eurasia, and Russia. In addition to working with Open World on the Cultural Leaders Program, CEC ArtsLink also hosts its own international cultural exchange programs, which include the ArtsLink Residencies in partnership with the NEA. Since 1993, the program has sponsored five-week residencies in the U.S. for more than 400 artists

and arts managers from 26 countries, including Croatia, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan, to name a few. The NEA supports residency costs for U.S. organizations that host the visiting fellows.

After the region’s many political changes in the mid-90s, CEC saw an opportunity to use the arts to “engage with those people who were formerly isolated and who also saw us as enemies and viewed us with suspicion,” explained Executive Director Fritzie Brown. “[We] really saw the diplomatic benefit of artists, who live to communicate anyway, exchanging ideas and learning about one another’s culture.” She added that even

though countries in that part of the world are no longer as isolated, more applications are coming in from the very eastern countries of Central Asia. “This means these people are coming into the conversation, and it extends the conversation to include issues of Muslim identities as well as those historical and political differences that we had seen in the past.”

ArtsLink Residencies alternate annually between visual and media artists and writers and performing artists. Fellows come to the U.S. with a variety of goals. Some plan to work on collaborative projects with U.S. artists, some want to study U.S. fundraising and development models, and others hope to learn new techniques in their particular discipline. The selection panel looks for individuals who have “a broader notion of what a residency can do and a cultural curiosity and flexibility.” Brown noted the importance of fellows having a realistic view of what their time in the U.S. can provide. The outcome, however, sometimes exceeds everyone’s expectations. “One of the things that we always used to say to our fellows . . . was if you expect to have a show at [a major museum], you’re going to be disappointed, but now we can’t say that because our fellow Dan Perjovschi from Romania had a show in the atrium at New York’s Museum of Modern Art.”

As of 2007, 204 U.S. arts and culture organizations in 33 states and the District of Columbia have participated, including New Orleans’s Contemporary Arts Center, which hosted Hungarian saxophonist-composer Viktor

Toth, and Maryland's Liz Lerman's Dance Exchange, which hosted dancer-choreographer Ilya Belenkov. After the residency, the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange reported to Brown, "[It] provided a helpful lens for considering the value of our tools and the degree to which they do or do not cut across aesthetic lines. It was like suddenly seeing your own work through a different pair of eyes and a different culture, so this is much appreciated."

### U.S./Japan Creative Artists' Program

The earliest of the NEA's ongoing international partnerships, dating back to 1978, is the U.S./Japan Creative Artists' Program, a partnership with the Japan-United States Friendship Commission (JUSFC). The commission is an independent federal agency that provides support to programs that develop and strengthen the relationship between Japan and the U.S. More than 150 U.S. artists have received these highly competitive,

## Making Art Outside the Box

Sculptor Sheri Simons was a U.S./Japan Creative Artists' Program fellow for six months in 2006. Simons heard about the fellowship during graduate school, when she was an assistant to an artist who had received a U.S./Japan fellowship. She explained that she was interested in the fellowship because "as an artist I know that my work grows when I'm thrown into really foreign situations . . . and I knew that art would kind of be my life jacket in that." Simons had originally intended to research *o-mikoshi*, or portable shrines used in community festivals, but her immersion in Japanese culture changed her mind. "It was slowly dawning on me that although I'd gone to Japan to research the construction and usage of these portable shrines, I was becoming more interested in them as mnemonic markers of experience and the transmission of a communal sense of space. . . . [I also realized] that in addition to religious or agricultural observance, 'festival' is actually another form of community experience." Simons added that her fellowship experience also broadened her skill as a researcher. "I had a relatively short but productive journey throughout Japan learning what it really means to research. I took trains for thousands of miles, walked and biked over four islands, stayed in at least 25 cities, sat at the tables of many wonderful families, participated in *o-mikoshi* hoisting, and looked into the faces of at least a million strangers."

For Simons, the single most important thing she received from her fellowship was a sense of perspective. "It's not just learning about Japan but learning about



**Sculptor Sheri Simons working on a piece inspired by the *o-mikoshi* she encountered on her residency through the U.S./Japan Creative Artists' Program. Photo courtesy of Sheri Simons.**

your own situation where you will eventually go back and live. Here's how they treat nature. Here's how they treat elders. Here's what they think about materialism. If I didn't have that I'd always be just working off of the same deck of cards."



multidisciplinary fellowships since the program's inception, including NEA Literature Fellows Suji Kwock Kim and Tony D'Souza. The program receives more than 100 applications each year in all arts disciplines, which are judged not only on artistic merit and excellence, but also on the applicant's potential to successfully complete the independent residency. Each year, five fellows receive financial support to spend five months in Japan pursuing a self-directed path of cultural exploration, study, and networking. Fellows receive a monthly stipend to support their living expenses and professional expenses in Japan. They also receive support for roundtrip transportation and pre-residency language courses.

Although the residencies are conducted independently, arriving fellows receive an in-depth orientation, help with navigating Japan's housing market, and introductions to key contacts in their fields from the International House of Japan, another primary program partner. While many of the artists conduct their residencies in Tokyo, fellows have studied everywhere from metropolises, such as Kyoto and Hiroshima, to small, isolated fishing villages. Fellows are not required to complete a specific project during their residency. They are, however, encouraged to become part of Japan's cultural life, and many offer presentations—such as gallery

**Roy Staab, who participated in the U.S./Japan Creative Artists' Program in 1995, contributed his outdoor sculpture *NOGIKU* to a special installation by former Creative Artists participants commemorating the re-opening of the International House of Japan in Tokyo in 2007. Photo courtesy of International House of Japan.**

shows, poetry readings, and concerts—during their time in Japan.

JUFSC Assistant Executive Director Margaret Mihori noted that the fellowships bring an added dimension to international cultural exchange. "While individual performance arts troupes and museum exhibits are exchanged back and forth as single projects between the United States and Japan, the fellows under this program have comprised a steady stream of arts exchange that continues to operate long after individual fellowships are over. The enrichment of each artist and through them, the community, continues to multiply year after year."

Returning fellows have gone on to receive major acclaim, honors, and prizes based on work they started while on their fellowship. But the most indelible mark left by the residency seems to be on the fellows themselves. As 1994 fellow Wendy Maruyama, a furniture-maker, has said, "My work still is inspired by my initial trip to Japan, and I never expected to continue or even begin working this way."

# In the News

## NEA Presents Grants Workshops Across the U.S.



(From left to right) Director of the Museum of Glass Tim Close, Chairman Gioia, and U.S. Representative Norm Dicks (Washington-6th District) during a reception at the Museum of Glass following a grants workshop hosted by the Tacoma Art Museum in Tacoma, Washington, in June 2008. Photo by Victoria Hutter.



U.S. Representative Sam Farr (California-17th District) listens to Alex Vardamis, president of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation, during a grants workshop and grant announcement with Chairman Gioia at the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas, California, in May 2008. Photo by Elizabeth Stark.



U.S. Representative Virgil Goode (Virginia-5th District); Jerry Meadors, artistic/managing director of The North Theatre; Robert Frankel, NEA acting deputy chairman for grants and awards; and J. Baggett, executive director of the Virginia Commission for the Arts at a grants workshop in Danville, Virginia, in June 2008. Photo by Elizabeth Stark.

## Brubeck Receives Benjamin Franklin Award for Public Diplomacy

On April 8, 2008, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice honored NEA Jazz Master Dave Brubeck with one of the inaugural Benjamin Franklin Awards for Public Diplomacy, recognizing the pianist and composer for his civilian service to international cooperation. Brubeck's participation in a State Department goodwill tour in 1958 launched him as a semi-official jazz ambassador for the United States and resulted in repeated trips to Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Secretary Rice lauded Brubeck for his "patriotism, and [his] leadership in representing America by introducing the language, the sounds, and the spirit of jazz to new generations around the world."



**Chairman Gioia, NEA Director of Government Affairs Ann Guthrie Hingston, and Dave and Lola Brubeck at the Benjamin Franklin Awards for Public Diplomacy ceremony in April 2008. NEA file photo.**

## NEA Lifetime Honors Announced

The 2008 NEA National Heritage Fellows will come to Washington, DC in September for events culminating in a concert at the Music Center at Strathmore on September 19, 2008. The recipients are Nez Perce drum maker, singer, and tradition-bearer Horace P. Axtell; saddlemaker Dale Harwood; quilter Bettye Kimbrell; Peruvian *retablo* (portable altar boxes) maker Jeronimo E. Lozano; the Oneida Hymn Singers of Wisconsin; Korean dancer and musician Sue Yeon Park; Ethiopian liturgical musician/scholar Moges Seyoum; *capoeira* (Afro-Brazilian art form) master Jelon Vieira; traditional jazz musician/bandleader Dr. Michael White; bluegrass musician Mac Wiseman; and traditional arts specialist and advocate Walter Murray Chiesa, the recipient of the 2008 Bess Lomax Hawes Award. The NEA National Heritage Fellowship program is presented with support from the Darden Restaurants Foundation.

The six 2009 NEA Jazz Masters recipients will be honored on October 17, 2008, at Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center, in New York City. They are guitarist and vocalist George Benson, drummer Jimmy Cobb, saxophonist Lee Konitz, harmonica player and guitarist Toots Thielemans, and trumpeter Snooky Young. Legendary recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder will receive the 2009 A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy.

For more information on all of these lifetime honors, please visit [www.arts.gov/honors/index.html](http://www.arts.gov/honors/index.html).

## New NEA Study Released

On June 12, the NEA released *Artists in the Workforce: 1990–2005*, the first nationwide look at artists' demographic and employment patterns in the 21st century.

According to NEA Director of Research and Analysis Sunil Iyengar, "This report brings cohesion to a large, diverse, and important constituency served by the NEA. It recognizes artists as a distinct and dynamic component of the total labor force."

The report reveals that not only do artists represent 1.4 percent of the U.S. labor force, they are one of the largest classes of workers in the nation (1.9 million), only slightly smaller than the U.S. military's active-duty and reserve personnel (2.2 million). Other key findings include the following: between 1970 and 1990, the number of artists more than doubled, from 737,000 to 1.7 million; opportunities for artistic employment are greater in metropolitan areas, with half of all artists living in 30 metropolitan areas; and, while artists are twice as likely to have a college degree as other U.S. workers, they generally earn less than workers with similar education levels.

To order or download a copy of *Artists in the Workforce: 1990–2005*, please go to [www.arts.gov/research/ResearchReports\\_chrono.html](http://www.arts.gov/research/ResearchReports_chrono.html).

# Expanding Creativity

## USArtists International Supports U.S. Artists at Foreign Festivals

No matter how revered an American performing arts ensemble may be at home, there's a special recognition that comes with performing abroad. Appearing at major international festivals validates an ensemble or company's caliber, and allows American artists a valuable chance to network with performers from other countries. As the cost of international touring continues to climb, the NEA and its funding partners remain committed to supporting foreign festival engagements.

Since 2005, USArtists International (USAI)—administered by regional arts organization Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation and supported by the NEA, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Trust for Mutual Understanding—has awarded roughly 30 grants each year to musical ensembles and dance companies that were invited to perform at European festivals. The program replaced Arts International, a partnership sustained from 1987 to 2004 by the NEA, the U.S. Department of State, and several foundations.

Alan Cooper, executive director of Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, oversees the three-year-old USAI program. "It's become increasingly important for dance companies and musical ensembles to take advantage of performing opportunities in other parts of the world to establish credentials," Cooper said. "It's critical to their creative development."

Organizations that receive USArtists International grants tend to fit one of three categories: performing arts stalwarts; emerging, avant-garde talents; or representatives of a regional style. In 2007,



for example, Louisiana zydeco musician Terrance Simien took his band to the Stimmen Festival in Germany while the 55-year-old Merce Cunningham Dance Company performed at festivals in France and Italy. The roster of artists touring in 2008 includes the new music collective Alarm Will Sound, Alonzo King's Lines Ballet, and the Chicago-based Great Black Music Ensemble, a band that made its European debut at the 17th annual *Sons d'Hiver* (Sounds of Winter) festival, a three-week celebration of African diaspora music held in Fontainebleau, France.

For some of these groups, receiving a USArtists grant is a welcome stamp of approval; for others, it's an economic necessity. Cooper recognizes that the grants, ranging from \$1,000 to \$15,000, are small, but they make a difference.

USAI received a major funding boost

**The Merce Cunningham Dance Company performing at the 2007 *Estivales de Perpignan* in front of the Campo Santo in southern France. Photo courtesy of Merce Cunningham Dance Company.**

in July, when the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Trust for Mutual Understanding announced that they would significantly increase their support. The increased funding means that theater companies will now be eligible to apply, and festival appearances are no longer limited to Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Cooper welcomed the news. "The goal here is to try and make sure that the widest possible range of creativity in the U.S. is represented at international festivals. We are always working on expansion, and we want others to recognize the importance of this work."



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS

A great nation  
deserves great art.

1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20506

[www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov)