

National Initiatives

Now in their second year, NEA National Initiatives continue to grow in number and in individual scope. These are programs that, unlike our direct grants, have a national focus. Like our direct grant programs, however, they are done in partnership with local communities, arts organizations, and presenters. These programs frequently target communities and constituencies that otherwise would not be accessible to them. In FY 2004, four National Initiatives were underway: Shakespeare in American Communities, NEA Jazz Masters, Operation Homecoming, and NEA Arts Journalism Institutes.

SHAKESPEARE IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

The National Endowment for the Arts created **Shakespeare in American Communities** to introduce a new generation of audiences to the greatest playwright in the English language. In partnership with regional arts organization Arts Midwest, which administered the

initiative, the NEA helped create new audiences and a new appreciation for live theater and Shakespeare.

The first phase of touring, supported by The Sallie Mae Fund, involved seven professional theater companies, which provided more than 270 performances to audiences in all 50 states. Touring concluded in November 2004, having brought live Shakespeare to more than 190,000 Americans, primarily in small and mid-sized communities. These activities included an unprecedented tour to military bases in September and October 2004 in partnership with the Department of Defense, which provided \$1 million for this part of the initiative.

Alabama Shakespeare Festival conducted the major part of the military base tour, bringing *Macbeth* to 13 military bases in 11 states. Their performance of the Scottish play, which included garbing the actors in kilts, was met with widespread enthusiasm at every performance. In addition, five military bases in three

states were served by other theater companies as part of the first phase of the initiative.

Beginning in September 2004, the second phase of the initiative was launched, **Shakespeare for a New Generation**, focusing primarily on reaching middle and high school students. By May 2005, the 21 selected companies will have provided as many as 930 performances of more than 15 Shakespeare plays.

Companies such as the Utah Shakespearean Festival exemplify the ambitious reach of the initiative. This company alone will tour to four states and provide almost 50 school performances under the banner of Shakespeare for a New Generation. Funding from the Arts Endowment has allowed Utah Shakespearean Festival to expand its regular touring activities to include additional small, rural communities in Idaho, Arizona, the Navajo Nation, and Nevada. In addition, students at each school have the opportunity to participate in workshops on text, voice, movement, and improvisation.

In Alaska, performances by Perseverance Theatre are an exceptional example of the universality of Shakespeare's work. Perseverance's production of *Macbeth* was set in the context of southeast Alaska's indigenous Tlingit culture and performed by an all-Native Alaskan cast. This unique production reached nearly 4,000 middle and high school students in remote areas of Alaska.

As an additional educational component of the initiative, the Arts Endowment has developed and distributed 25,000 multimedia educational toolkits to teachers across the United States, enhancing the educational experience of Shakespeare for millions of students with films, recitation contests, and teacher lesson plans.

NEA JAZZ MASTERS

Established in 1982, the **NEA Jazz Masters** awards annually elevates a select number of living jazz artists to its ranks, conferring on them the nation's highest honor for this uniquely American art form. In 2004, Chairman Gioia launched a major expansion of the program, celebrating the NEA Jazz Masters and the art of jazz through an awards ceremony and television broadcast, recordings, radio programs, and NEA Jazz Masters performances.

For the first time, the NEA Jazz Masters awards ceremony and concert was broadcast nationally. BET and BET Jazz aired the 2004 ceremony and concert five times in April 2004 as part of Jazz Appreciation Month. In addition, the Verve Music Group issued a commemorative two-CD set of recordings with selections from the NEA Jazz Masters (1982 to 2004) in January 2004.

As part of the new National Initiative portion of the NEA Jazz Masters program, in 2004 the Endowment inaugurated NEA Jazz Masters on Tour. This touring component of the NEA Jazz Masters program is intended to bring NEA Jazz Masters to all 50 states. Each engagement includes educational activities, ranging from master classes and lecture-demonstrations to meet-the-artist sessions. The first phase of the tour, co-sponsored with the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, began in spring 2004 and included events in 13 states and the District of Columbia. The second phase, through a partnership with Arts Midwest and with support from Verizon, will bring jazz to the remaining states over the next two years.

In 2005, two innovative parts of the initiative will be added: a radio show, *Jazz Profiles*, in partnership with



Jazz singer Dee Dee Bridgewater performs at the NEA Jazz Masters ceremony and concert in Long Beach, California.
Photo by Vance Jacobs

National Public Radio, and an episode of a new television series, *Legends of Jazz*. Both programs are being supported by Verizon. *Jazz Profiles* is a series of 14 hour-long documentaries on NEA Jazz Masters that will air in spring 2005 on more than 100 NPR member stations. NEA Jazz Master Nancy Wilson hosts the program. *Legends of Jazz* is 13 weekly 30-minute episodes on jazz, combining live performance, intimate conversation, and archival material on the memorable people and events in jazz. Hosted by noted jazz pianist and radio personality Ramsey Lewis (and based on his radio series of the same name), the program will have a special one-hour feature in June 2005 on NEA Jazz Masters.

A new arts education program will be added to the NEA Jazz Masters initiative as well: **NEA Jazz in the Schools**. This educational resource for high school teachers of social studies, U.S. history, and music is a five-unit, Web-based curriculum and DVD toolkit that explores jazz as an indigenous American art form and as a means to understand American history. The curriculum is produced by Jazz at Lincoln Center and supported by a \$100,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation. The complete kit and curriculum will be available in fall 2005.

OPERATION HOMECOMING

Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience, a program for U.S. military personnel and their families, documents the thoughts and reflections of our troops—in their own words—during the time of their service. Through an unprecedented partnership with the Department of Defense and with support from The Boeing Company, the initiative provides writing workshops by nationally known writers—novelists, poets, historians, and journalists—at domestic and overseas military bases representing all four branches of the U.S. armed services. The workshops will occur at 20 bases located in ten states and territories, as well as four foreign countries, in 2004-2005.

The Web site established for the program, www.OperationHomecoming.org, contains educational articles and literary video and audio clips to help the troops develop their writing skills. In addition, the Arts Endowment has produced an accompanying audio CD

that explores the variety of literary responses by previous generations of American troops. More than 13,000 copies have been distributed to military bases, Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals, Armed Forces YMCAs, public libraries, troops across the world, and the American public.

The best writing emerging from this initiative will be published in a nationally promoted anthology that will be sold in bookstores and distributed free by the Arts Endowment to military installations, schools, and libraries. The anthology is scheduled to be published in 2006; those works not chosen for the anthology will be housed in an existing permanent government archive for use by future generations of historians and citizens. The program has received more than 1,500 submissions containing 10,000 pages of writing.

The response to the program has been overwhelming. Here are a few examples of the letters received:



Author Richard Bausch at a Operation Homecoming workshop at Fort Drum, New York in June 2004.

Photo by Betty Doherty, US Army MWR

From an Army Reservist in Iraq:

"I am an Army Reservist, called to duty for one year. Without the reserves, this war could not be pulled off. I think my essay reflects the hardships that many citizen soldiers endure when they leave their lives behind to serve. It's an important story that should be told and I hope you will use my piece to tell it."

From a recently retired Army veteran in Texas:

"Writing about those things that we combat veterans keep locked up inside is tremendously cathartic. I lost my creative voice after Mogadishu; putting things into perspective took a long time, especially without any encouragement or understanding. Thank you again for this project."

The NEA is extending its Operation Homecoming initiative with **Operation Homecoming: Beyond Glory**, a tour of the one-man play *Beyond Glory*, adapted and performed by Stephen Lang, to more than 25 overseas and domestic military installations beginning in May 2005. Adapted by Lang from Larry Smith's book, *Beyond Glory: Medal of Honor Heroes in Their Own Words*, this acclaimed production features the stories of eight veterans from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, including Admiral James Stockdale and Senator Daniel Inouye. By presenting the military audiences of today with the recollections of decorated veterans, the Operation Homecoming tour of *Beyond Glory* encourages service men and women to preserve the stories of their own wartime experiences.

NEA ARTS JOURNALISM INSTITUTES

In June 2004, the NEA established three **NEA Arts Journalism Institutes** to address a chronic problem throughout the country: the lack of quality arts criticism in the press. The institutes' focus is on improving arts criticism in classical music, opera,

theater, and dance. The institutes are designed for journalists who cover the arts for print and broadcast outlets located mostly outside the country's largest media markets, where professional development opportunities are limited. Institutes for dance critics will be hosted by the American Dance Festival (ADF) at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina; for classical music and opera critics at Columbia University in New York City; and for theater and musical theater critics at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

A pilot program for the Institutes was held in 2003 for dance critics at the American Dance Festival. The success of that program encouraged Chairman Gioia to expand the program into a National Initiative that addressed additional disciplines in additional locations.



Fellows of the NEA Arts Journalism Institute at Columbia University in October 2004.

Photo by Matt Peiken

The NEA provided \$1 million to fund the first two years of the program. Each Institute will offer a two- or three-week program each year for up to 30 attendees and cover the participants' expenses.

The first Institute was held June 18 to July 13, 2004, for dance critics at the American Dance Festival. Nine

critics from six states and Dublin, Ireland spent three weeks at ADF in North Carolina attending performances, classes, seminars, and panel discussions focusing on the history of dance and dance criticism, as well as the function and responsibility of the dance critic today. Participants heightened their awareness and sharpened their observation skills through movement sessions, and gained practical knowledge by writing reviews and participating in analytical discussions. "It not only gives critics the opportunity to exchange ideas about dance writing," said Suzanne Carbonneau, project director, "but also, by virtue of its setting at the American Dance Festival, to take a crash course in the contemporary dance world itself."

Columbia University's Institute took place October 18 to 28, 2004, drawing 25 critics from 20 states. Sessions included history, concepts, and current practices in classical music and opera, as well as classical music journalism. Evenings were spent attending performances, and then writing reviews for discussion in next day sessions. One participant, Erin Auerbach of *The Press-Enterprise* in Riverside, California, said, "I was a participant in the program, and I learned more about classical music and opera in two weeks than I did in my formal education. (I hold a master's degree in Theater Arts and I trained classically as a singer for many years.)"

The third Institute took place at USC in Los Angeles February 21 to March 4, 2005 for 25 critics from 21 states. The sessions were broken into four modules: basic elements of dramatic production; instruction in the basic skills of producing thoughtful, intelligent theater reviews; informal discussions with leading professionals and faculty members; and attendance at theater performances. "Better informed and trained theater critics will offer audiences beyond our largest urban centers more exciting choices for cultural participation and appreciation," said Michael Parks, director of USC Annenberg's School of Journalism.

In just 18 months since the first pilot program in 2003 to the March 2005 Institute in theater and musical theater, 71 writers from 58 cities, 38 states, and two foreign countries have participated in the Institutes. Three papers were so enthused by the Institutes that they had two different staff writers attend two Institutes. This initiative will help communities across the country benefit from substantially enhanced writing about the arts.