

State and Regional Partnerships

Since its beginnings in 1965, the Arts Endowment has been a partner to thousands of arts organizations, agencies, and artists. Our entire mission of supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established, and bringing the arts to all Americans is achieved through our partnerships. Among the most critical of these partnerships are those we have enjoyed with 50 state arts agencies (SAAs), six jurisdictional arts agencies, and six regional arts organizations (RAOs).

Forty percent of the Arts Endowment's funding is distributed among those agencies and organizations. Through this federal funding mechanism, we are able to support projects that are meaningful to local communities, while at the same time leveraging financial support from other sources.

An example of these partnerships is Mississippi Arts Commission's Whole Schools Initiative, which promotes quality teaching and learning by integrating arts into the curriculum at 20 public schools throughout the state. In support of this program, more than 284 artists and teachers participate in a week-long Summer Institute with intensive seminars on incorporating arts into standard curricula, hands-on arts workshops, and site visits to local arts organizations.

Another example is the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts, which used its partnership grant to fund outreach programs such as choir, art classes, and cultural dance presentations to more



Tammy Farrans of Davenport School of the Arts in Florida and D.D. Ward of Laurel High School in Mississippi present their version of *Little Red Riding Hood* during a storytelling workshop at the Mississippi Arts Commission's Whole Schools Summer Institute.

Photo by Shelley Powers

than 500 students at area schools, as well as “A Summit on St. John Musical Traditions,” at which more than 200 community members participated in performances and lectures honoring the music and cultural practices of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Regional arts organizations (RAOs) were created by state arts leaders, in partnership with the Arts Endowment and the private sector, to transcend state boundaries and give the public access to a greater and richer variety of arts experiences. A critical role of the RAOs is to make excellent dance, theater, musical theater, opera, and literature presentations available in underserved communities.

One of the ways RAOs do this is through the NEA Regional Touring program, which helps bring high-quality performing artists and companies to communities across the country with the help of federal, state, and private funds. Through a partnership of the NEA with the six regional arts organizations, the program provides assistance for interstate touring and gives priority to underserved communities.

RAOs also assist the Arts Endowment and other funders in providing programs nationally. Regional arts organizations have worked with the NEA on two of its National Initiatives: Shakespeare in American Communities (Arts Midwest) and Operation Homecoming (Southern Arts Federation). More information on these important projects can be found in the National Initiatives section of this report.

Another national project that resulted from collaboration between the NEA and an RAO is the New

England Foundation for the Arts’ National Dance Project (NDP). The NDP supports the growth of contemporary dance by encouraging the creation of new work by individual dance artists and companies and also fostering collaboration among dance presenters to mount tours of these new works. The NDP is administered by a group of 12 “hub sites,” which are key presenters around the country committed to developing dance, and six leaders from the dance field who act as advisors. The hub sites provide funding recommendations that are then reviewed and approved by the advisory board.

Each season, the NDP awards 15-20 production grants ranging from \$15,000 to \$35,000 each. The NDP also administers touring and infrastructure grants directly to presenters. As of 2004, the NDP has presented 152 new dance works by more than 100 artists and dance companies in 47 states.

This season, the NDP supported a national tour of Dayton Contemporary Dance Company’s *The Flight Project*, six individual pieces around the theme of flight and invention. The individual works, in honor of the centennial of the Wright Brothers’ first flight, were initially commissioned in 2001, with support from a NDP production grant. During the 2003-2004 season, the dance company performed *The Flight Project* in 14 states for more than 13,000 audience members. More than half of these participants were students. To meet NDP’s goal of building new audiences for contemporary dance, additional components of the tour included master classes, pre-performance talks, and school outreach.

Alvin Rangel and G.D. Harris in the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company's production of *The Flight Project*, which toured to 14 states through the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project.

Photo by Andy Snow

