



*Gobey Hassan with Ilays, a multicultural group of artists from Somalia, dances with Granville High School student Elle VanWalsen from Ohio as part of Arts Midwest's Midwest World Fest.*

PHOTO BY MORGAN WONORSKI, *THE ADVOCATE*

# State and Regional Partnerships

The NEA supports the cultural life of the public at the state as well as federal level through partnerships with state arts agencies (SAAs) and regional arts organizations (RAOs). Forty percent of the NEA's funding is distributed among these agencies, thereby enabling them to be viable supporters of the cultural life of their communities.

There are 56 official state and jurisdictional arts agencies in the United States, including one in each of the fifty states and in the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Through the SAAs, the Arts Endowment supports projects that are meaningful to local communities, while at the same time enabling local arts organizations to leverage financial support from other sources.

An example of one of these state partnerships is the Iowa Arts Council's (IAC) Big Yellow School Bus grant program. Through this program, both public and private K-12 Iowa schools that lack access to arts or

cultural programs—because of geography, economic conditions, ethnic background, or other prohibitive conditions—can apply for grants of \$200 to fund arts field trips. The grants, which are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis, are most often used to defer



*The 4th-grade students at Lambert Elementary took a trip to the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art as part of the Iowa Arts Council's Big Yellow School Bus program.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE IOWA ARTS COUNCIL

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transportation expenses, thus enabling students to participate in activities such as live performing arts events and museum exhibitions. In FY 2006, IAC initially allocated \$25,000 to the Big Yellow School Bus grant program, which served more than 9,000 students in 125 Iowa schools. A second round of funding for the program, comprising public and private funds, was announced in January 2006, ultimately serving nearly 6,000 students in 75 additional schools.

The Arts Endowment also serves the public at the regional level through RAOs, which were created by state arts leaders in partnership with the Arts Endowment to transcend state boundaries and give the public access to a greater and richer variety of arts experiences. These six RAOs—Arts Midwest, Mid-America Arts Alliance, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, the New England Foundation for the Arts, Southern Arts Federation, and the Western States Arts Federation—work with the NEA on initiatives such as the NEA Regional Touring program, which helps bring quality performing artists and companies to communities across the country with the help of federal, state, and private funds. RAOs also partner with the Arts Endowment on NEA National Initiatives such as Poetry Out Loud (Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation) and Operation Homecoming (Southern Arts Federation).

Arts Midwest is a regional arts organization headquartered in Minneapolis, serving audiences, arts organizations, and artists throughout Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. In addition to partnering with the NEA on several National Initiatives—Shakespeare in American Communities, NEA Jazz Masters on Tour, and, most recently, the Big Read—Arts Midwest also provides high quality arts



*Tomoyuki Iwatsuki demonstrating a bamboo instrument in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, as part of Arts Midwest's Midwest World Fest.*

PHOTO BY SHIGEYO HENRIQUEZ

programs to the public throughout its nine-state region.

Inaugurated in 2003, one outstanding Arts Midwest project is Midwest World Fest, a two-year touring program that brings international performing artists to Midwestern communities for weeklong residencies. Residency activities include a public concert, one or two school concerts, multiple in-school workshops, and additional outreach activities, such as community dinners and master classes for local musicians. Arts Midwest also develops a comprehensive curriculum for participating schools, which is targeted to various grade levels and designed to be integrated into existing curricula.

For the 2005-2007 cycle, Midwest World Fest touring artists included Mexican *son jarocho* ensemble Chuchumbe, the multi-ethnic Israeli ensemble Esta, The Bamboo Orchestra of Japan, and Somalian artists Hibo Nuur and Kooshin, who performed with the ShegoBand. These artists traveled to 11 Midwestern communities, including Waterloo, Iowa; Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin; and Newark, Ohio. Nearly 90,000 individuals benefited from the project, including more than 70,000 youth and children.