



Written Statement of
Theatre Communications Group
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Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations | United States House of Representatives
The Importance of Increased Federal Funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the subcommittee, Theatre Communications Group – the national service organization for the American theatre – is grateful for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of our 473 not-for-profit member theatres across the country and the 32 million audience members that the theatre community serves. **We urge you to support an increased appropriation of \$180 million for the National Endowment for the Arts.**

Indeed, the entire not-for-profit arts industry stimulates the economy, creates jobs and attracts tourism dollars. The not-for-profit arts generate \$166.2 billion annually in economic activity, support 5.7 million jobs and return \$12.6 billion in federal income taxes. Art museums, exhibits and festivals combine with performances of theatre, dance, opera and music to draw tourists and their consumer dollars to communities nationwide. Federal funding for the arts creates a significant return, generating many more dollars in matching funds for each federal dollar awarded, and is clearly an investment in the economic health of America. In an uncertain economy where corporate donations and foundation grants to the arts are diminished, and increased ticket prices would undermine efforts to broaden and diversify audiences, these federal funds simply cannot be replaced. Maintaining the strength of the not-for-profit sector, along with the commercial sector, will be vital to supporting the economic health of our nation.

Our country's not-for-profit theatres develop innovative educational activities and outreach programs, providing millions of young people, including "at-risk" youth, with important skills for the future by expanding their creativity and developing problem-solving, reasoning and communication abilities – preparing today's students to become tomorrow's citizens. Our theatres present new works and serve as catalysts for economic growth in their local communities. These theatres also nurture – and provide artistic homes for the development of – the current generation of acclaimed writers, actors, directors and designers working in regional theatre, on Broadway and in the film and television industries. At the same time, theatres have become increasingly responsive to their communities, serving as healing forces in difficult times, and producing work that reflects and celebrates the strength of our nation's diversity.

Here are some examples of NEA funding impact:

From the NEA's Access to Artistic Excellence Program:

Signature Theatre located in Arlington, Virginia received a \$40,000 Access to Artistic Excellence grant from the NEA to produce *Sycamore Trees*, the second commission of Signature's American Musical Voices Project. Backed by an eight-member cast and an eight-piece orchestra, *Sycamore Trees* is an autobiographical musical about a working class Jewish family and their struggle to rely on each other through good times and bad. Renowned composer, Ricky Ian Gordon has described his inspiration for the piece: "When my father came home from World War II in 1945, my family lived in a crowded tenement in the Bronx, poor and with bed bugs. Then my parents got the idea to move to the suburbs where the dream of life flowering in a clean and spacious environment promised to be the answer. This is the story of a family and what happened to them." *Sycamore Trees* is directed by Steppenwolf Theatre member and nationally acclaimed director Tina Landau and stars Marc Kudisch, Judy Kuhn, and Diane Sutherland. It should also be noted that Signature Theatre was honored with the 2009 Regional Theatre Tony Award.

Utah Shakespearean Festival received a \$25,000 Artistic Excellence grant from the NEA for its production of *Great Expectations*, a world premier adaptation based on the novel by Charles Dickens. This support will enable the company to present a new, exciting musical, adapted by Margaret Hoorneman, of this rich classic novel. A story of class, crime, and moral obligation, Dickens' *Great Expectations* focuses on many of the most pressing questions and challenges still faced in today's world. The festival is located on the Southern Utah University campus in Cedar City, a community of approximately 28,000 people, and the company will present the exciting, accessible, and relevant story to their audience of 110,000, roughly 40% of which travels from out of state to attend the festival.

From the NEA's Challenge America Program:

Sierra Repertory Theatre in Sonora, CA received a \$10,000 Challenge America grant from the NEA that will support professional guest artist salaries for an eight-week production of the musical *Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from July 16-August 29 at the historic Fallon House theatre in Columbia State Historic Park. The project also includes a significant educational component: reduced-cost student matinees, discounts for families, a partnership with the public library's summer reading program, and assistance as teachers incorporate the play into their curriculums. This summer production is a perfect fit for the historic venue, and promises to make a significant economic impact in this rural, remote community.



Funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act:

Idaho Shakespeare Festival received funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and administered by the NEA to specifically support the work of one director, four designers, nine actors and two stage managers. This grant was the first source of new funds extended to the Festival following the onset of the recession in 2008. It enabled a production of *Othello*, which spoke to the core mission of the company, while also creating another fifteen to twenty jobs for supporting actors and technicians. In addition, it guaranteed ancillary educational opportunities provided by these artists to the Festival's summer camps, high school apprentice company, professional interns and community outreach programs. The Festival's Board has more than matched the stimulus funds through a special effort called "The Company We Keep," and is using its success to study a broader community approach to further ensuring the long-term solvency, stability and growth of Idaho's flagship theatrical and arts-educational enterprise.

These are only a few examples of the kinds of extraordinary programs supported by the National Endowment for the Arts. Indeed, the Endowment's Theater Program is able to fund only a portion of the applications it receives, so the remaining theatres are turned away because there aren't sufficient funds. Theatre Communications Group urges you to support increased funding for FY11 for the NEA, so that more not-for-profit professional arts organizations can continue to educate and entertain audiences, train the next generation of artists, and generate local revenue nationwide.

The American public favors spending federal tax dollars in support of the arts. Today, federal arts funding enjoys solid bipartisan support in the House and Senate. The NEA is funded at \$167.5 million in the current fiscal year (FY10); however, it has never recovered from a 40% budget cut in FY96 and its programs are still under-funded. It has had small incremental increases in the past years. A total appropriation of 180 million for FY11 would restore and rebuild the agency to an appropriate level.

Thank you for considering this request.