



Cleveland Signstage Theatre's performance of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* as part of the Deaf Way II International Arts Festival in Washington, DC. Photo courtesy of Deaf Way II International Arts Festival

**In FY 2002, funding for Leadership Initiatives totaled \$9,054,380.**

# Leadership Initiatives

Through its Leadership Initiatives, the National Endowment for the Arts develops and implements projects that address special needs to advance the arts in American life. These initiatives are frequently undertaken in collaboration with nonprofit organizations or other federal agencies. Some of the many excellent projects under this category are highlighted in the pages that follow.

## AccessAbility

The AccessAbility Office serves as the advocacy and technical assistance arm of the NEA for older Americans, individuals with disabilities, and people living in institutions and long-term care settings. The Office assists staff, grantees, and applicants in achieving the NEA's goal of increased access to the arts for all Americans. The Office's efforts include providing technical assistance, such as convening panels, workshops, and symposia for arts service groups and organizations, and working through interagency agreements with other federal agencies.

The Office received two national awards from the private sector in 2002: the Telecommunication and Disability Corporation's "Arts and Culture Award" for its work to make the arts fully accessible and the National Business & Disability Council's annual award for NEA's Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities program.

### NEA Supports Deaf Way II Arts Festival in Washington, DC

In 1989, the first-ever international Deaf Way Festival was convened in Washington, DC, where deaf and hearing-impaired people from around the world gathered to celebrate their culture and the

arts. More than 10 years later, in July 2002, the second Deaf Way Festival was hosted by Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, attracting more than 10,000 people from 121 countries. Deaf Way II included a week-long arts festival—supported by NEA AccessAbility Office funds through a Careers in the Arts Leadership Initiative—that brought more than 400 artists from places as far away as India, China, and Ethiopia to perform and exhibit art of the highest aesthetic level, which offered many insights into the human experience.

People who are deaf or hearing-impaired represent the largest disability group in the country, more than 28 million Americans. The arts festival helped bring more prominence and attention to the deaf community's culture by reaching out to the general population through their art. It took place at venues throughout DC, including performances and exhibitions at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Zoo, and Gallaudet University, a university designed for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

From visual artists such as Chinese watercolor artists Ko Nam, Shu Xiaoming, Gao Xiaodi, and Ma Yuxiang to the Cleveland Signstage Theatre to the master of contemporary Indian dance Astad Deboo, deaf performers showcased their art to large, enthusiastic crowds during the festival.

## Folk & Traditional Arts Infrastructure Initiative

For more than 20 years, the NEA has helped to create and support a network of folk and traditional arts programs, many of which are run by state arts agencies and regional arts organizations. The Folk & Traditional Arts Infrastructure Initiative, now in its fourth year, addresses the need to strengthen the infrastructure for these programs. Arts Endowment funds go toward technical assistance, research, programming, and documentation in the folk and traditional arts. In FY 2002, 32 grants were awarded to organizations in 29 states as well as Guam and the District of Columbia for a total of \$840,000. An additional ten organizations were awarded grants in this category for a total of \$300,000 under Challenge America Leadership Initiatives.

### Louisiana Division of the Arts Offers Education Program on State's Folk Arts

The Louisiana Voices Folklife in Education Project provides teachers and other K-12 education programmers with tools for teaching Louisiana folklife—including teaching materials, research strategies, concepts, and content—via the Louisiana Voices Educator's Guide at [www.louisianavoices.org](http://www.louisianavoices.org). Louisiana Voices supports educators with instruction and assistance on the use of these tools and provides forums through which individuals may share information and offer evaluative feedback. In FY 2002, the Louisiana Division of the Arts received a \$35,000 NEA Folk & Traditional Arts Infrastructure Initiative grant to support the continuation of the project.

Louisiana has a unique array of cultures and traditions that not many states in America share: African-American, Caribbean, Cajun, Native-American, and European, just to name a few. Educators in Louisiana have the unique opportunity to augment their curricula with these traditions to help students discover the diverse cultures and arts around them. The goal of the online education guide is to provide an academically sound basis for the study of culture and art using the students' own community traditions.

The study units of the guide include extensive Internet links to videos, music, and stories related to the rich Louisianan culture, marrying the traditional and the technological.

Students have responded enthusiastically to the folklife content—such as stories, music, dance, beliefs, and artifacts—facilitating the integration of the material into Social Studies, English, Art, Foreign Language, and Science content standards. The education guide also allows students to interact with the culture around them, through interviewing folk artists, analyzing the folk arts' impact on their community, and other similar assignments. Classroom instruction is further augmented by folk artists visiting classes and sharing their experiences and talents with the students. With such a wealth of culture right in their own community, students can learn about the importance of artistic traditions, experience the diversity of culture around them, and be better connected to the folk customs that shape their lives.



Gladys Leblanc Clark, 1997 NEA National Heritage Fellow, of Duson, Louisiana, is a master spinner and weaver in the Acadian style, one of the important local traditions presented in the Folklife in Education project. *Photo by Nicholas R. Spitzer*

## Interagency Partnerships

The NEA works with more than 20 other federal agencies on projects that provide opportunities for thousands of Americans to experience quality arts programming throughout the country. These joint projects help to expand the reach and impact of federal arts dollars, and provide a national model for the types of partnerships the NEA encourages at the state and local levels. Federal partnership programs range from after-school arts education for youth, recognized annually by the Coming Up Taller Awards, to arts initiatives in rural communities under the NEA-USDA Forest Service Arts and Rural Community Assistance Initiative.

### Conference on Building Creative Economies Held in Asheville, North Carolina

Appalachia is a large, mountainous region, following the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi and including parts of ten other states (and all of West Virginia). Many of the counties of this area are economically distressed, remote, rural areas in need of new strategies to revitalize their communities. It was with this in mind that the NEA partnered with the Appalachian Regional Commission and Kenan Institute for the Arts at the North Carolina School of the Arts to hold the conference “Building Creative Economies: The Arts, Entrepreneurship, and Sustainable Development” in Asheville, North Carolina in April 2002.

More than 300 artists and representatives from nonprofit organizations, state and local arts agencies, and federal, state, and local government agencies came to the conference to discuss how the arts can factor into economic development, encourage more entrepreneurial activities by artists and arts organizations, and determine how to increase access to economic development funds. Specifically, participants shared information about the successful use of arts and heritage in revitalizing Appalachian communities. This provided an opportunity for those community leaders in Appalachia and other rural areas, who are still attempting to develop their economies through the arts, to see the strategies and options available to them, and learn about those that were successful in other communities.



Bill Strickland Jr., founder and president of Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, addresses the Building Creative Economies conference.  
*Photo by Anna Vogler*

U.S. Representatives Charles H. Taylor and Cass Ballenger (a member of the National Council on the Arts), both from North Carolina, spoke about the importance of the arts in boosting local economies. Success stories, such as HandMade in America establishing Western North Carolina as a major leader for handmade craft objects and the Southern Highland Craft Guild's operation of the Blue Ridge Parkway's Folk Art Center, were shared in various sessions during the three-day conference. Also discussed were ways other communities could create similar projects and organizations, such as identifying their cultural assets and determining how to integrate those into community economic development plans. The example of Asheville was eye-opening: more than \$60 million of economic activity in FY 2000 related to arts events, supporting 2,100 full-time jobs and generating \$1.7 million in local government revenue and \$3.9 million in state revenue.

A publication of the results of the conference, including successful case studies and staples for developing a local creative economy, was published in March 2003 by Americans for the Arts through a partnership with NEA.

## International Exchanges

To share the excellence and diversity of American arts, the NEA supports international activities that showcase our nation's arts abroad and also enrich the artists' work through new experiences with different cultures. The NEA works with CEC International Partners on ArtsLink, an exchange program with Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, the Newly Independent States, and the Baltics. Another program, the Fund for U.S. Artists at International Festivals and Exhibitions, administered by Arts International, supports the participation of American artists in international festivals and exhibitions across the globe. The NEA's partners in the Fund are the U.S. Department of State, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts. The NEA also works with the Japan/U.S. Friendship Commission on the U.S./Japan Creative Artists' Program, which provides six-month residencies in Japan for artists in any discipline to explore aspects of Japanese culture that are relevant to their creative work.

### U.S./Mexico Regional Arts Organizations Alliance Nurtures Artistic Exchange Between Countries

In 2002, the NEA launched a special initiative in collaboration with Mexico's National Fund for Culture and the Arts and the U.S.-Mexico Fund for Culture to create a network of U.S. and Mexican regional arts organizations; out of this initiative, the U.S.-Mexico Binational Alliance of Regional Arts Organizations was created. The Binational Alliance operates on the premise that the regional arts organization structures in the two countries have certain similarities that are well suited to act as catalysts to bring about sustained arts exchange across the border.

The Binational Alliance held its landmark meeting to identify potential projects in May 2002 with six participating U.S. regional arts organizations and five from Mexico. Twenty-eight potential projects were proposed in arts education, dance, folk arts, music, and visual arts exhibitions. The NEA provided modest seed money of \$25,000 to each of the six U.S. regional arts organizations'

Partnership Agreements to support the projects. The Mexican organizations also received \$25,000 each from a variety of sources.

One project initiated by the May meeting was a conference in Mexico of U.S. and Mexican puppetry artists and organizations in April 2003. With support from the New England Foundation for the Arts and Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, 20 New England and Mid-Atlantic puppetry artists and presenters met with a large contingency of Mexican puppeteers in Mexico City for three days. During the conference, 17 Mexican puppet companies put on performances for their American guests. Early outcomes from the trip included a better understanding of the puppetry form in the two countries and possibilities for artist collaborations, identification of Mexican puppetry companies that may be engaged to tour in the Mid Atlantic, and collaboration on articles in *Puppetry Journal*, the national publication for puppeteers in America, and *Inside Arts*, the publication of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters.

The puppets of Teatro Tinglado, one of the Mexican puppet companies who participated in a conference of U.S. and Mexican puppetry artists and organizations supported by the U.S.-Mexico Binational Alliance of Regional Arts Organizations. *Photo by Rebecca Blunk*



## Mayors' Institute on City Design

In 1986, the NEA Design Arts Program established the Mayors' Institute on City Design to help mayors throughout the country develop an appreciation for the importance of their roles as designers of their cities. The Institute involves sessions in which small groups of mayors and design professionals discuss civic design issues related to their respective cities. The design professionals often include not only architects and planners, but also developers, preservationists, bankers, and community activists—all important participants in a successful civic design.

The Institute now sponsors six annual three-day sessions and is administered in partnership with the American Architectural Foundation and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Since its inception, the Mayors' Institute has provided design resources for more than 600 mayors of American cities.

### Mayors Discuss Urban Design Issues at Annual Sessions and Publish Books on Urban Strategies and Excellence in City Design

The first sessions in FY 2002 of the Mayors' Institute on City Design was held in October 2001 in La Jolla, California and New Orleans, Louisiana. Fourteen mayors participated in these two sessions to discuss development projects in their cities. The mayors were from larger cities such as Kansas City, Missouri and Sacramento, California and from smaller ones such as Brownsville, Texas and Augusta, Georgia.

Issues discussed included a riverfront park in Sacramento; a 23-acre waterfront landfill site in Bradenton, Florida; rehabilitation of historic train stations and the surrounding area in Hattiesburg, Mississippi and Macon, Georgia; revitalization of a historic neighborhood in Columbus, Missouri; and creation of a heritage trail linking downtown Brownsville with a historic battlefield. Additional sessions during FY 2002 were held at University of

Texas in Austin and the National Institute in Charleston, South Carolina in April 2002 and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in June 2002.

In addition to holding the annual conferences, the Mayors' Institute—in collaboration with the NEA—printed two publications in 2002 through the Princeton Architectural Press on topics particularly important to mayors. *The Mayors' Institute: Excellence in City Design* provides an overview of the Mayors' Institute, describing the various sub-disciplines involved in city design, detailing successful case studies, and offering tools and methods for achieving excellence in city design. The publication is an important resource in understanding and successfully using city design to improve the way cities and communities are conceived and built.

The other publication, *Schools for Cities: Urban Strategies*, focuses on identifying ways in which schools can operate as catalysts for community redevelopment. A result of a Mayors' Institute conference in March 2000, the publication provides essays on the importance of schools, enhancing the urban community not just providing a building for pedagogical routines, as well as case studies involving historical schools in downtown centers, school reuse in suburban settings, and the design of new school buildings.



The approach to Los Angeles International Airport, one of the examples of improved street design presented in the Mayors' Institute on City Design publication, *Excellence in City Design*. Photo courtesy of Selbert Perkins Design

## Chamber Music Rural Residencies Program

The Chamber Music Rural Residencies program was created in 1992 through a partnership between the Arts Endowment and Chamber Music America to provide access to classical chamber music to underserved communities. The program is also supported by the Helen F. Whitaker Fund and JPMorgan Chase. Chamber ensembles are placed in selected rural communities for several months, performing, teaching, and providing a range of community-based activities.

Communities wishing to enhance the musical lives of their citizens participate in and support the residencies while the chamber music artists involved develop their repertoire as well as performing and teaching experiences. Through the program, more than 35,000 students were introduced to chamber music through classroom assemblies and workshops in FY 2002. In addition, more than 200 community concerts took place, reaching an estimated audience of more than 25,000 individuals, many of whom were not regular concert attendees or previously familiar with chamber music.

### Fry Street Quartet Takes Up Residency in Hickory, North Carolina

The Western Piedmont Symphony in Hickory, North Carolina hosted the Fry Street Quartet during their three-year residency in the community as part of the NEA's Chamber Music Rural Residencies program. Founded in 1997, the Fry Street Quartet took their name from a street in Chicago where they lived at the time.

The residency clearly paid off for the Quartet. Over the three-year period, the Quartet developed and honed their sound, winning first prize in two national competitions. Following the completion of their three-year residency in May 2002, the Quartet was sponsored by Carnegie Hall and the U.S. Department of State to participate in a concert tour of the Balkan States as ambassadors of the Carnegie Fellows Program. They toured composer J. Mark Scearce's first quartet, *Y2K*, written specifically for them. In September 2002, they became the Faculty String Quartet in Residence at Utah State University. Their debut

recording of works by Janáček and Beethoven was issued in December 2001.

The residency paid off for the community as well. The Quartet conducted several types of outreach in addition to their performances. They held master classes both to ensembles and individual string players, enhancing the skills of the next generation



Violinist Rebecca McFaul of the Fry Street Quartet conducting a lecture demonstration during their Rural Residency in Hickory, North Carolina. *Photo by Kingmond Young*

of musicians. Their work with elementary schools, targeting grades 1-6, involved identification of instruments, discussing how melodies are passed between the instruments and how the string quartet functions as a group, and providing musical examples of string quartet masterpieces to illustrate the discussions. The Quartet also performed what they called "informances," in which they would engage audiences by discussing the background of the music in addition to playing it.

Support from the community was strong: the transformation from few attendees at the Symphony's Classical Chamber Music Series before the Quartet's residency to sold out concerts in the spring of 2002 demonstrated the overwhelming desire for this music in Hickory and its surroundings. Perhaps the most satisfying legacy for the Fry Street Quartet is that the community is working toward creating a permanent string quartet through the Symphony—one of the few towns of 35,000 people who could boast of having their own string quartet.