NEA head visits Utah artists; more than $1M in grants coming to local groups

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First Published May 07 2015 12:51PM  •  Last Updated May 07 2015 10:45 pm

(Scott Sommerdorf | The Salt Lake Tribune) Katie Storey's fourth-grade class at Oakridge Elementary dances in honor of National Endowment for the Arts chairwoman Jane Chu's visit, Thursday, May 7, 2015. Chu is in Salt Lake City visiting three arts groups that have received NEA funding.

Arts » Jane Chu makes keynote speech, visits NEA-funded Utah programs.
National Endowment for the Arts chairwoman Jane Chu visited Utah on Thursday, offering the keynote speech at the Mountain West Arts Conference and then visiting three grant programs.

Chu observed a Tanner Dance teaching residency program for fourth-graders at Oakridge Elementary School, stopped by Art Access to learn more about the visual and literary arts programs for veterans, then concluded her tour at the offices of the Utah Arts Festival, where she was joined by Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker.

The NEA on Wednesday announced its 2015 spring grants, which include awards of more than $1 million to 12 Utah groups:

- **The Utah Arts Council** » $700,000, for state and regional partnerships.
- **Utah Shakespeare Festival** » $35,000, for the production and educational programs of "Henry IV, Part II."
- **Epicenter** » $18,000, for an arts/design residency program based in Green River.
- **Sundance Institute** » $100,000, for #Artist Services, which creates nonprofit alternatives to commercial distribution.
- **Ballet West** » $25,000, for "Games," a ballet by choreographer Helen Pickett in collaboration with the Utah Symphony to support the orchestra's 75th-anniversary season.
- **Plan-B Theatre Company** » $10,000, for production and elementary school tour of Jenifer Ni's "Ruff!!"
- **Repertory Dance Theatre** » $30,000, for creation and preservation of dance works in the company's 50th-anniversary season, including an arts education residency in the San Juan School District.
- **Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company** » $30,000, to support a tour and residencies.
- **Utah Museum of Contemporary Art** » $15,000, to support the exhibit "The Twilight of an Ideal: Thinking and Performing Utopia in Contemporary Art," with contemporary artists drawing upon the work of 1960s conceptual artist Joseph Beuys.
- **University of Utah visual arts program** » $15,000, for workshops about book arts.
- **Tanner Dance Program** » $25,000, for side-by-side dance training residencies.
- **Utah Museum of Fine Arts** » $15,000, for assessment of the European paintings collection and reinterpretation of its European galleries.

Also Thursday, at the Mountain West Arts Conference, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert honored the 2015 Governor's Leadership in the Arts awardees:

- **Plan-B Theatre Company** » Organization leadership: The Salt Lake professional theater company's mission is to produce socially conscious shows, emphasizing new plays by Utah playwrights.
- **Carrie Trenholm** » Education leadership: Trenholm, a working artist, is an assistant professor of elementary arts education at Southern Utah University.
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Epicenter » Local arts leadership: The nonprofit Green River agency works on community development and arts projects, including Fix It First, a home repair program with low-interest revolving loan funds, and the arts residency Frontier Fellowship, which pairs artists with teens.

Kathy Cieslewicz » Individual leadership: Cieslewicz is the curator/director of the Sears Museum Gallery at Dixie State College and a coordinator of The Business of Art conference held annually in Kanab.

Over the past 35 years, Utah’s governors have honored more than 150 outstanding individuals, organizations and communities for their arts leadership, said Utah Arts & Museums director Lynnette Hickey in a statement. “It is our good fortune to live in such a vibrant and creative state.”