

# TRUMP ENDANGERS NEA FUNDS FOR LOCAL ARTS

**W**hat, we wondered, will happen around here exactly if the Trump regime manages — as he promised in January — to abolish the 62-year-old National Endowment for the Arts? Oregon — and Lane County — will lose a bunch of money.

In 2016, the NEA got \$148 million — a whopping 0.003 percent of the federal budget. That same year, the NEA handed out \$1.53 million of the money to Oregon arts organizations. Nearly half of it — \$727,700 — went to the Oregon Arts Commission, which then handed out smaller grants, including \$81,000 to groups in Lane County.

Among the statewide recipients is the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, which typically receives \$100,000 to \$125,000 a year from the NEA. That's a small amount compared to the festival's \$35 million budget, says Deb Small, OSF's director of institutional giving, but she says the grant money helps bring new and challenging work to the festival's three stages.

"NEA has supported numerous world premieres and second productions at OSF," Small says. "Brand new work that needs extra support to get to the stage [and] artistically risky work that is not always attractive to corporate funders."

NEA money has gone to support diversity in the festival's productions. In 2016, OSF got \$70,000 for two 2016 productions directed by Asian women: *Vietgone*, directed by May Adrales, and *The Winter's Tale*, directed by Desdemona Chiang.

In 2012, the festival received \$80,000 to help with the world premiere production of *All the Way*, the Robert Schenkkan play that went from Ashland to Broadway and won the Tony Award for Best Play in 2014.

Locally, Oregon Contemporary Theatre has part-

nered in the past with the Eugene Public Library on three Big Read projects that each drew about \$16,000. OCT also received a \$25,000 stimulus grant in 2009 that was critical for the theater's future, says artistic director Craig Willis.

The Eugene Symphony, the Eugene Ballet and the University of Oregon received grants totaling \$140,000 from the NEA in 2016. The symphony got \$15,000 to support "Ode to the Future," which resulted — in part — in an orchestra performance at the Hult Center, during a regular season concert, of compositions by five high school age students.

"The National Endowment for the Arts has been a critical source of funding for the Eugene Symphony's community engagement and music education programs for decades," the symphony's executive director Scott Freck says. "The NEA is an important pillar of funding for communities everywhere and its loss would have a tremendously negative impact on the symphony's programs locally."

The UO got \$105,000 for its Oregon Folklife Network, which documents and preserves cultural traditions across the state.

And the Eugene Ballet, which has received NEA money for 18 years, got \$20,000 to pay for taking its dance performances on the road to small towns.

Josh Neckels, the ballet's executive director, worries most about the arts in rural areas. That's where that \$727,700 that went to the Oregon Arts Commission comes in; the money goes out to small arts groups around the state.

"Should the NEA be defunded, the ability for those agencies to continue to provide granting opportunities throughout the region will be significantly reduced, with the greatest impact hitting the rural communities first," Neckels says. ■

*In 2016 the NEA handed out \$1.53 million to Oregon arts organizations.*

## HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL



### SARAH J. SWOFFORD

The daughter of a pair of Methodist missionaries, Sarah Swofford grew up from age three to eight in Montevideo, Uruguay. "I was old enough to keep my Spanish," she notes. Back in the U.S., the family settled in the suburbs of St. Louis, Missouri. "After high school, I lived in Bolivia for a year," she says. "I volunteered with a women and children's social project in a rented garage. The director and I helped them find medical and legal resources. We helped with housing, clothing and food." She also met her Bolivian future husband Kialing Perez, at the time a med school student in La Paz. They got married two years later in 2001, while she was studying international relations at American University in Washington, D.C. During his two medical residencies, they spent three years in New York, where she worked on an HIV/AIDS project, and after the birth of their son Sebastian in 2006, three years in Columbia, Missouri, where she earned a master's in public health. They arrived in Eugene in 2009, when he took a job with PeaceHealth Medical Group. A year later, she gave birth to second son, Sam. "Then I wrote a book," says Swofford, who interviewed women from around the country by phone for her self-published 2014 volume, *From Duch! To Ahhh ... The New Mom's Guide To Sex After Baby*. "That has become the work I do. I write articles, give workshops and do individual coaching." For the past year, she has also been working on a second book, a romance novel about a young American woman who travels to South America. Learn about books, workshops and coaching on her website: sarahjswofford.com.

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