

**Performing Arts Community Emphasizes International Cultural Exchange
in response to the NEA's Call for Public Comment on its Strategic Plan (FY 2022-2026)**

Tamizdat, March 24, 2021

We, the below-signed U.S. arts organizations, submit the following in response to the *Call for Public Comment on the National Endowment for the Arts Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026*:

In redrafting its mission and vision statements, we strongly recommend that the NEA use its resources to ensure that all Americans have access to the depth and breadth of our world's culture. Our nation's already profound struggle with racism and xenophobia has been compounded over the last few years by the physical isolation of the United States due to the prior administration's policies and the COVID-19 crisis. As the live arts sector rebuilds and increasingly turns its focus to address issues of inequity in our society, we encourage the NEA to incorporate core values related to international cultural exchange. We recommend the following strategic goals and objectives:

- (1) **Prioritize interagency cooperation and public engagement in support of initiatives to improve artist mobility to the U.S.:** U.S. Department of State, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the National Endowment for the Arts all play critical roles in policies that impact foreign artists coming to the U.S. We recommend that the NEA create a platform for an ongoing interagency conversation supporting international artist mobility between the relevant government agencies and the performing arts community.
- (2) **Prioritize funding for programs that promote or support international cultural exchange:** As post-pandemic rebuilding of the live arts sector begins, issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and social justice are paramount, particularly in view of recent racist and isolationist policies and events. International cultural exchange plays a crucial role at the community level in building empathy and appreciation of diversity, and contributes to increased awareness regarding antiracism and xenophobia. We recommend that the NEA prioritize grants to presenters and programs supporting artists from abroad.
- (3) **Support efforts to make the U.S. artist visa process more equitable, transparent, affordable, and reliable, without negatively impacting the interests of U.S. security or labor.** Tamizdat's [*White Paper on Artist Mobility to the United States*](#) and proposals for artist visa reform provide detailed, pragmatic measures that, if enacted, would substantially improve the U.S. artist visa process. We recommend that the NEA support these measures to make the U.S. more welcoming and hospitable to international artists.
- (4) **Reinstate NEA grants to support individual artists' projects, and prioritize those that feature collaboration with international artists.** When the NEA ended its direct patronage to American artists, our nation stopped supporting and valuing its most visionary practitioners and advocates for visionary art. It is high time that the NEA reclaim this critical role, and when it does it should recognize that collaboration between individual U.S. artists and international artists is necessary in order to reestablish a culture of diversity and inclusion in the U.S. and to rebuild a

healthy and progressive society that values empathy and the equal importance of everyone's stories. We recommend that the NEA prioritize supporting individual artists whose work builds connections between American culture and cultures around the world.

Signed:

APAP/Association of Performing Arts Professionals, Washington, DC
Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, MI
Arts Midwest, Minneapolis, MN
CEC ArtsLink, Brooklyn, NY
Center for Music Ecosystems, Huntsville, AL
China Residencies, Brooklyn, NY
Dan McDaniel Management, Lyons, IL
Dance Managers Collective, New York, NY
Elsie Management, Brooklyn, NY
Folk Alliance International, Kansas City, MO
Illinois Presenters Network, Glen Ellyn, IL
KMP Artists, Houston, TX
Kristopher McDowell Productions, Chicago, IL
Lisa Booth Management, Inc., New York, NY
Martinez Arts Consulting, ALC, Pleasant Hill, CA
McKnight Fellowship Program for Dancers and Choreographers, Minneapolis, MN
NAPAMA/Association of North American Performing Agents and Managers, New York, NY
New England Foundation for the Arts, Boston, MA
New Music USA, New York, NY
New York City Center, New York, NY
NHWWC, LLC, Houston, TX
PEN America - Artists at Risk Connection, New York, NY
Portland Institute for Contemporary Art/PICA, Portland, OR
Rhizome Arts Consulting, Tacoma, WA
Sound Diplomacy, Inc., New Orleans, LA
The Society for the Preservation and Advancement of the Harmonica/SPAH, Dallas, TX
Tamizdat, Brooklyn, New York
Union of Musicians and Allied Workers, Chicago, IL
Wisconsin Union Theater, Madison, WI