



**Remarks by
National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu
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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for inviting me to join you today. I have a heartfelt affinity for schools of music; music programs in higher education institutions, since I majored in music in college. At the heart of my deciding to major in music was a realization at the age of nine that music was an avenue of expression.

My father was a college professor – not in music – but when he died when I was nine, it was the piano lessons I was taking as a kid that soothed me. It was music that helped me express myself beyond the use of linear, everyday conversation. As a nine-year-old, I didn't really have the full vocabulary to express my grief over the loss of a parent; and perhaps many nine-year-olds don't. I didn't have enough words, since my parents who were from China spoke Mandarin at home, and I, who was born in Oklahoma and grew up in Arkansas, spoke English at school. But music was there for me. It helped me navigate through those bok choy/corn dog moments. And throughout my growing up years, I participated in as many musical activities as I could find; and ultimately became intellectually interested, to the point where I majored in music in college.

But what I want to talk about today is related to thanking you for the work you're doing every day. Each of you is doing valuable work; and at the same time, we are seeing some trends and patterns taking place in the arts throughout the nation. Anytime there are shifts and transitions, it's always valuable to understand them, and see how they relate to what we're all currently doing in our own work. So, I want to share with you today an overview of some of these trends and patterns that we're seeing. Likely, many of you have experienced the same trends and patterns. I hope that this overview will set more context related to the work you're doing, as you work to ensure that your programs are as effective as they can be; that your students are being trained at very high levels; and that your faculty are continually enriched so that they can be inspiring educators.

RESEARCH PROCESS

To set some context, a couple of years ago, at the National Endowment for the Arts, we set out to get an update on whether the ways that working artists – and this means musicians, as well as visual artists, dancers, actors, writers, people who create, people who are employed as artists – whether the ways they worked had changed over the past two decades, especially since the internet had become an everyday part of our lives. If the conditions for artists had indeed changed over the past decade, we wanted to know if working artists were adapting to the change, or perhaps they were also leading the change. We wanted to know what we could do to strengthen the infrastructure, so that artists – those creative workers – could thrive even more.

We took several approaches to acquiring this information, from creating a comprehensive literature review, to commissioning essays written by various experts in the field about creativity or topics that linked to creativity. We also conducted a number of interviews: Roundtable discussions with hundreds

of participants who represented a variety of perspectives about the arts – artists, arts organization leaders, funders, designers, community development experts, and city planners, and more. We also wanted to make sure that our roundtable discussions were representative of perspectives from across the U.S., not just the east and west coasts; so we traveled to places like New Mexico and Nebraska, Georgia, Minnesota, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Montana, and Iowa as well as California and Massachusetts.

We also conducted in-depth interviews, before and after our roundtable discussions, with approximately 100 additional people who were involved in the arts. Throughout this process, we found more about who artists are today, that there has been a noticeable change in the ways that many artists work, and much of the change is tied to the ubiquitous presence of the internet.

ARTIST POPULATION

When we looked back at the 2013 data from the US Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, we found that a little over 2.3 million people in the US identified themselves as artists in any discipline. And of this 2.3 million, 2.1 million (91%) held a primary job as an artist, and 271,000 (under 10%) held secondary jobs as artists. 286,000 identified themselves as musicians. Of these 286,000 musicians, 71% (202,000) held primary jobs as musicians in the United States, and the remaining 29% (84,000) held secondary jobs as musicians. According to this accounting, musicians represented about 12% of all of the artist population. And compared with any artist occupation, musicians accounted for the greatest number of secondary jobs held. For example, you might be a math teacher by day, and a musician by night.ⁱ We also know that overall, artists as a whole are 3.4 times more likely to be self-employed than other workers. And, as demonstrated by your work, 62% of artists have bachelor degrees or higher, compared with 31% of U.S. workers overallⁱⁱ.

The occupations of working artists are wide-ranging, from those in the fine arts, as well as dancers, to producers, directors, and designers. In terms of the income level, the median income level of artists as a whole comes in at \$43,000. This hovers slightly above the median income level of all US workers, which is \$39,000ⁱⁱⁱ.

DEFINITION OF ARTIST

We also discovered that the previous definitions of an artist no longer covered the current definitions. Certainly, there are musicians who perform on stage or in recordings all of the time; and painters and sculptors who rarely venture out beyond their studios, except to see their exhibitions, and there always will be. But now we see artists whose work focuses on areas like social practice. And there are folk and traditional artists who do not sell their work, but create solely for the cultural or spiritual life of their communities. In the past, we have seen more of a division between artists who create within their sector: painters and sculptors who create solely to be able to exhibit their work; musicians who rehearse to be able to perform with an orchestra in a concert hall, vs. artists who create to enhance a product, such as an advertisement, or a television commercial.

But now, we are seeing the lines blurring, with the same artists toggling between the arts sector and other commercial sectors. Of course, there have been for hundreds of years, artists who made artistic contributions to their communities, but made their living by doing something else. Many times, those artists have been able to find other work, in order to pay the bills. But to make things messier, there's now more of a blurred line between the definitions of a "professional artist" versus an "amateur artist", even if an amateur artist produces a level of quality that many would consider professional, or if an

amateur artist is reviewed by critics. We suspect that when it comes to people self-identifying as an artist, we suspect that the count of artists is underrepresented.

HYBRID WORKING CONDITIONS

We also found some shifts in how artists do their work, and the conditions that affect the ways they do their work. In terms of how artists work, we heard repeatedly in our interviews and discussions that artists are working in hybrid ways more than ever – mixing up artistic formats and working across silos. While certainly, there are many artists working in the traditional models, there’s an explosion of opportunities to work across disciplines.

Artists are becoming proficient in multiple disciplines simultaneously: the same artist working in the visual arts can also be working in the performing arts and other media – to bring the disciplines together in a single given work or a series of projects. Other artists maintain their focus in a primary discipline, but pursue cross-discipline collaborations, such as choreographers working with filmmakers, or musicians working with visual artists; so that the final work of art is a representative of multiple disciplines.

As the National Endowment for the Arts’ chairperson, I have now traveled to all 50 states to see firsthand how the arts are taking place, and I cannot tell you the number of museum exhibitions that are incorporating music as part of an actual visual art exhibition; the kind of incorporation where music is not an accompaniment to the main presentation; rather, it is so integral that if the music portion was removed, the entire presentation would not exist. Just like a musical mashup, the multiple disciplines are equal ingredients to the presentation.

ARTISTS IN NON-ARTS SECTORS

And what about the blending between the arts and other non-arts sectors? We’re seeing increasing numbers of artists working as artists in non-arts areas: science labs, tech companies, senior centers, businesses, hospitals, mayors’ offices.

SOCIETAL ISSUES

Why is this happening? Some of this comes from artists being inspired to work on societal issues: The *Philadelphia Orchestra* works with the organization, *Broad Street Ministry* to provide a music therapy program for Philadelphia’s homeless population. *Broad Street Ministry* serves the chronically homeless in Philly, many of whom suffer from mental illness. So, orchestra musicians and music therapists collaboratively will provide weekly music therapy for the homeless, to increase self-expression, and coping skills, and hope.

In New York, when *Carnegie Hall* launched the *Lullaby Project* to connect under-resourced pregnant teens with professional musicians, to help them bond with their newborns by composing personal lullabies. They began working with mothers in homeless shelters, selected high schools, and at the *Rikers Island Correctional Facility*, to strengthen the bond between parent and child. Carnegie Hall provides the parent with the opportunity to write, record, perform and sing. To culminate, professional artists create a recording of each lullaby to share with the families at the end of the writing session. Several lullabies written by teen moms have also been sung by Joyce DiDonato in a Carnegie Hall performance. The testimonials from the new parents have been all about gaining a stronger bond with their child, and having a greater desire to be a good parent to their child.

OUTREACH ISSUES

Artists are also trying to address outreach issues: The *Cleveland Orchestra* creates neighborhood residencies, where orchestra members immerse themselves in a specific Cleveland neighborhood. They perform free concerts; they offer in-school and after-school music instruction, and engaging with residents in experiential ways that extend beyond the stage. Their spring residency was in the Broadway Slavic Village neighborhood. Orchestra members performed in churches, restaurants, art fairs, the local Boys and Girls Club, and even at the Broadway Health Center. They volunteered at a food-and-clothing distribution center, and even raced in the annual Pierogi Dash. These musicians made it clear that classical music was not the domain of some people, at the exclusion of others; or reserved for special occasions.

MUSIC WITH OTHER EDUCATIONAL SUBJECTS

Some of this phenomenon links the arts to other educational subjects in school: In New Orleans, people who walk into *Lusher School* can find all 1,600 students, kindergarten through 12th grade participating in the arts, because the school core curriculum is based upon integrating the arts into all subjects, in order to learn both art skills and engage in critical thinking. Second graders learn about place value in mathematics by analyzing Kandinsky paintings. Third graders take violin lessons. Middle schoolers learn about the solar system through dance. By the time they reach high school, Lusher School students choose an arts discipline (creative writing, dance, drama, music, media arts, visual arts). All of Lusher's teachers are practicing artists. Arts integration is proving to be valuable at the Lusher School, with graduation rates of 95%-98% being much higher than the national average^{iv}.

These are graduates that go on to become engineers, scientists, athletes, as well as artists. And many graduates are state and national winners in the performing arts, literature, and visual arts. Herbie Hancock is connecting music to math, science, and engineering. So is Andre Young – Dr. Dre – at USC in Los Angeles.

MUSIC & HEALTHCARE

And in healthcare: For a moment, you might think you're in the wrong place if you're admitted to the *University of Florida Shands Hospital* in Gainesville. There, the hospital hires musicians to stroll through the halls and in the emergency trauma unit, performing soothing music. Patients in the intensive care unit can work with artists to draw, paint, or compose songs together. This University of Florida health center believes that there's a relationship between medicine and art that can provide therapeutic qualities beyond just medicine alone.

In Wisconsin, each year, the *Madison Symphony Orchestra* sends a string quartet of their principals to healthcare facilities, retirement communities, memory-care units to perform live, classical music to more than 3,000 individuals with dementia, developmental disabilities, long-term illnesses.

MUSIC AND SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

And in connecting with specific population groups: In Seattle, at the *University of Washington*, they're working with ALS patients to create music through an encephalophone – basically, it's a musical instrument that is built as an EEG that you can control with your mind, to compose music.

And to honor our veterans for their service to the US, the *Houston Grand Opera* created a songbook project, where composers tell stories of Houston-based vets during wartime. The singers perform these songbook compositions throughout the community, in bookstores, and churches, and there was even a performance in an airport hangar. These examples represent the tip of the iceberg of what is taking place across America when it comes to the giant mashup in the arts.

ISSUES WITHIN THE MASHUP

There were also four issues that were raised repeatedly as primary concerns for working artists, during our research^v:

TECHNOLOGY has made a huge difference, probably the most significant difference in the lives of artists. Artists can create with their mobile devices, 3-D printers, and raise capital through crowd funding. They can upload their work directly to *iTunes*; they can easily collaborate with musicians from across the world; and they can perform, mix, edit, and record music on digital tools that didn't even exist a decade or two ago. But not all musicians are technologically savvy; and even if you are, it's difficult to monetize your music when the expectation is that everything online is free, or nearly free. There have also been some concerns that artists are now responsible for being their own agents, managers and marketers, since all this can be done online, and they may not have those skills. Additionally, one-in-four people in the U.S. still doesn't have the internet at home. This increases disparities for musicians who live in low-income or rural and remote communities.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS is a second issue that is also challenging for artists, and this is related to the cost of living, especially those in middle and lower income levels. Many noted that they did not have adequate business skills to build up their assets and capital. The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project conducted a survey in 2014 which revealed that 66% of recent graduates of arts schools are carrying substantial debt. If you examine the musician workforce alone, between 2006 and 2010, 42% of working musicians earned less than \$14,000 a year. This likely aligns with the earlier findings of working as a musician as secondary jobs. Artists are also affected by larger trends in the labor market, notably the rise of contracted workers and the gig economy. These types of economic conditions can also affect experimental projects in the arts.

There are those who are working intentionally to address some of these economic issues. For example, the number of artist collaboratives is increasing, to share resources: some in the creation process, but also in the back-office functions. The Center for New Music in San Francisco shares an office with ArtsPool, which is an online bookkeeping and financial management service. There are also hundreds of work studios and living spaces for musicians and visual artists across the nation, especially sparked by organizations such as the Community Arts Stabilization Trust, the Minnesota Street Project in San Francisco, Spaceworks in New York City, and ArtSpace projects. Union Bank and Trust in Omaha makes loans to artists. Northeast shores Development Corporation in Cleveland helps artists with home ownership. Surdna and Kresge Foundations have partnered to fund seven Community Development Funds throughout the nation to provide training for artists to help them develop business strategies, and connect their work to the marketplace.

The third issue raised as a concern for working artists is in the area of **INEQUITIES**, especially when it comes to funding. Overall, funding in the arts continues to place its focus upon a narrow band of artistic approaches, despite the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of our nation. These structural inequities also seem to mirror inequities in society more broadly. For example, the US population is becoming increasingly more diverse, but current artists who are able to make their full income from the arts do not represent the diversity of population groups. Only 17% of fine artists are non-White and/or Hispanic. Only 4% of foundation funding is directed to organizations whose missions are dedicated to serving communities of color. Even less foundation funding focuses on rural communities, or supports folk artists and tradition bearers in indigenous communities. Less than 5% of musicians in the US orchestras were people of color^{vi}. There are 19,000 communities in the United States, and there are artists in every

community, but the formal systems and structures of validation and support in the arts do not yet fully reflect this reality.

But there are those out there who are working intentionally to address some of these inequities. For example, there's an initiative in Chicago called the Enrich Chicago initiative, which places young artists of color in paid internships. Grantmakers in the Arts has made racial equity a major focus of its work. The Intercultural Leadership Institute^{vii} brings attention to culturally relevant and equitable practices in arts management and leadership.

The fourth issue focuses upon artists who are asking for more **TRAINING**, in order to keep up with the ever-evolving needs and opportunities. The artists note that it's no longer just about their technical artistic skills. They're asking for knowledge and skills in production, and business. They want to know how to operate online, how to leverage social media to enhance their work. They want to know how to collaborate, and improvise with whatever resources they may have, and be comfortable straddling a wide range of domains and genres. And because they are creative, they do not necessarily want to force-fit their own work into someone else's category list of musical genres. Many want to create their own categories to match with what they do, not what someone else tells them to do. So even categories that we used to take for granted, like types of music, have begun to blur. There may be other people who can work for them, who can handle these other areas; but many of them cannot afford to pay those other people, and they also want to know enough information about these other areas themselves, in order to guide the process in the way that benefits them optimally.

OPPORTUNITIES

We know that some of these issues raised today have been attended to for decades. But there is a difference between then and now. It's no longer that there are ancillary activities that might accompany core learning requirements of excellence in our performances and how we create; It's that the conditions that surround artists have broadened, deepened, diversified, and in some cases, artists have remade themselves into a different way of being. In some cases, the definition of quality and success used to be solely the ability to win an audition. Now, the definition of quality and success can include how well musicians are connected to others outside of performing on stage. Connecting to the community. I have already visited a number of your programs, and many of you are tailoring your core curricula, as well as your ancillary activities to give students more tools in their tool belts. Some of you are providing more business training, entrepreneurial projects, cross-disciplinary explorations, national collaborations, preparing students for careers in music that extend beyond playing in an ensemble or as a solo performer. In some cases, we're seeing non-arts departments such as engineering, science and business, in higher education institutions contact their campus music and art programs to create art and music requirements for non-arts majors to graduate. I want to thank you for your efforts, as well as those efforts made by schools to diversify their student bodies, as well as their own curricular and administrative staffs.

QUESTIONS RAISED

There are always questions raised when societal shifts occur. In the case of higher education music schools and music programs, these questions can range from:

Does that mean we should change our own curricula completely?

Does that mean that we have to increase the costs of our programs exponentially, to the point that more students are prohibited from attending?

Does it mean that we have to forego artistry and technical expertise in order to have students understand business?

Does that mean we have to forego quality in our performances for the sake of access?

Does it mean that we have to change our audition process?

We do not believe that the conditions have to be a zero-sum game. This is not an either/or situation, where say, courses on music theater or composition are sacrificed for new courses on business training or digital technology. The arts –and in this case – music – exists in a both/and world, where there is room for many approaches and many voices. And I’m actually not here to tell anyone what you should or should not be doing in your own programs. My objective today is to give you some context on what we have experienced in terms of the arts and artists themselves across the nation. This is a really wonderful opportunity for students to be trained at their highest levels of artistry and technical expertise, and graduate with an experiential understanding of what their environment will be, and how they will successfully participate in this environment.

AT THE NEA

At the National Endowment for the Arts, we are recognizing such challenges and opportunities presented. We have several grant programs and other initiatives, to connect musicians and music projects with people in communities large and small who do not have regular access to these arts programs. We also have grants to promote professional development; grants to support new commissions; grants for artist residencies at their schools; and grants for musical training. Since 1966, the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded nearly \$428 million through our NEA music grant program. Over the past ten years alone, the National Endowment for the Arts has made more than 1,750 grants to support concerts, festivals and tours, totaling more than \$38 million; and more than \$1.2 million has been awarded for recording projects over the last ten years.

PEER REVIEW PANELS

All of our applications are evaluated by peer review panels of experts in the field, and I suspect that some of you in this room have served on our panels. So you know that every grant we give must meet two criteria: artistic excellence and artistic merit. For artistic excellence, panelists have to weigh the quality of the project. Are all components of the highest caliber? Does the project have artistic significance? And in terms of artistic merit, panelists must determine whether the project deepens the value of a particular artistic discipline, whether it will make an impact; whether it exemplifies creativity and innovation, and whether the logistics of a project have been carefully thought through.

EXAMPLES OF NEA MUSIC GRANTS

Many of our music grants have been awarded directly to members of NASM. Alcorn State University in Lorman, Mississippi has a jazz festival that the NEA has supported for the past four years. San Diego State University in San Jose, California enabled its music majors to gain experience while serving in the community by performing at institutions such as in memory care facilities for dementia patients, children’s hospitals, drug and alcohol rehabilitation clinics, and juvenile justice centers. The NEA has awarded grants to college music schools to have their graduates work on how to develop their future audiences. We’ve given grants for programs that inspire young students to pursue music studies at the university level.

In addition to the grants, we have two main music initiatives. Our NEA Jazz Masters Fellowships rank as the nation’s highest honor for jazz musicians. So far, we have recognized 149 living legends in the field of jazz, an art form that was born in the United States. And in order to feed the future-artist pipeline,

last month, we also launched the Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge for high school students. We had a pilot test program the year before, and now this year, the challenge is nationwide. High school students across the country are invited to compose and submit an original song that could be included in a musical theater production. Six finalists will be flown to New York City, where they will spend an intensive weekend honing their song with music professionals, who will then perform the piece during the final competition. We are working with Samuel French, Inc. – one of the largest publishers of plays and musicals – to publish the songs by the national winners. The national champion will also receive a \$25,000 scholarship, with the winning scholarship generously provided by the National Music Publishers' Association SONGS Foundation. It's highly possible that some of these winners will be among your next crop of students.

And the NEA has actively worked to bring music to other places in our lives in addition to the concert stage. For example, in June, we partnered with the National Institutes of Health and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts on an event called, Sound Health: Music and the Mind. This was a two-day convening that included performances, conversations with neuroscientists, and panel discussions about music, creativity, aging, music and the brain, music therapy, music and early childhood. We're already planning a second successful Sound Health event for next year, at the Kennedy Center.

CONCLUSION

So, the shifts that we see in how music can relate to the larger society, and the questions of how to align with what's out there in the wider world demonstrate that we're in a transition time. I know that as leaders in higher education, you are thinking about how you will shape the next generations of musicians; but you're also thinking about how to empower the next generations of leaders and visionaries who still steer music in directions we might not be able to envision today.

This is an exciting time, and not one to shrink away from participating. It's a time to address the changes at hand, and solidify music's role in society. I hope this sets some context for what we're seeing nationally, when it comes to how musicians work. I want to thank you for dedicating your lives to this nation's young musicians. You did it for me. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to join you here today.

ⁱ <https://www.arts.gov/artistic-fields/research-analysis/arts-data-profiles/arts-data-profile-3/sample-findings>; and <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Creativity-Connects-Final-Report.pdf>, p. 8.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.arts.gov/artistic-fields/research-analysis/arts-data-profiles/arts-data-profile-3/sample-findings>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/105.pdf>, p. 26; and <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Creativity-Connects-Final-Report.pdf>, p. 8.

^{iv} <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/louisiana/districts/new-orleans-public-schools/lusher-charter-school-8691>

^v <https://www.arts.gov/artistic-fields/research-analysis/arts-data-profiles/arts-data-profile-3/sample-findings>, p. 1.

Later, on p. 13, it cites five issues because it breaks out funding and training as separate categories.

<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Creativity-Connects-Final-Report.pdf>

^{vi} Sphinx Organization; League of American Orchestras, 2015.

^{vii} Intercultural Leadership Institute is sponsored by the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, alternate ROOTS, and the First Peoples' Fund.