



NEWS RELEASE

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Knight Foundation invests more than \$1 million in the Charlotte arts *Funding boosts music, film projects and more*

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Jan. 9, 2015 – The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation announced more than \$1 million in funding to 13 Charlotte arts organizations today, support that will help them build on the city’s cultural legacy and engage audiences.

The recipients range from grassroots groups to established organizations, with several focused on music. Two small groups will expand their offerings: Tosco Music Party, which started as a jam session in a guitar instructor’s home and now produces sold-out shows, and the Jazz Arts Initiative, which presents top performers while training the next generation of artists. Meanwhile, Opera Carolina and the Charlotte Symphony will bring music into more people’s lives, with the symphony simulcasting outdoors select concerts from its innovative KnightSounds series, and the opera presenting in non-traditional venues such as churches and community centers.

“Music has long been a central part of Charlotte’s legacy. We hope by supporting these groups, we can help build on this important history and bring the arts into more communities and neighborhoods,” said Susan Patterson, Charlotte program director for Knight Foundation.

Meanwhile, the Charlotte Film Society will bring nationally recognized independent filmmakers and producers to the city to present lectures following screenings, continuing its mission to build a community of film enthusiasts. Other organizations are expanding offerings in theater and the visual arts. A full list of organizations and their projects is below.

“The arts inspire us and bring us together as a community like few things can,” said Dennis Scholl, vice president for arts at Knight Foundation. “The challenge for many groups is to keep audiences engaged. At Knight, we look to fund experiments that we hope will keep audiences excited about the arts.”

Knight will announce the grants at a reception tonight featuring a new documentary that captured the 2014 performance of The Abyssinian Mass by Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra at Charlotte’s Friendship Missionary Baptist Church. The screening of “Everyone Has a Place” will be followed by a Q&A session with the film’s star, conductor Damien Sneed, along with filmmakers Marlon Johnson and Knight Foundation’s Scholl.

The arts grantees include:

Actor's Theatre of Charlotte (\$80,000): To bring new works to the stage through the NuVoices for a NuGeneration Play Festival for the next two years. Each of the finalist playwrights will workshop their

plays January 11-18, 2015, and the audience/judges' favorite will be given a full production in the 2015-16 season. The same format will be in place the following year. Past winners have gone on to have their plays produced nationally.

Charlotte Film Society (\$30,000) To provide otherwise inaccessible films to enthusiastic audiences, through screenings in both indoor and outdoor venues around the city. The Charlotte Film Lab series then brings in prominent filmmakers to talk about their pieces at events following the showings, including recent discussion led by L.A.-based Charlie Siskel, director of the acclaimed documentary "Finding Vivian Maier."

Jazz Arts Initiative (\$30,000) To expand the successful Jazz Room @ Stage Door Theater, which transforms the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center's black box theater into an intimate jazz venue featuring local, regional and international performers. Funding helps to present this monthly concert series twice in one night, instead of just once. Knight support will also present two larger special edition concert events as a part of the Jazz Room Series: the April Jazz Appreciation Month Celebration, featuring Delfeayo Marsalis at the Blumenthal McGlohon Theater and the Jazz Room Holiday Edition at the Blumenthal Booth Playhouse.

McColl Center for Visual Art (\$95,000) To elevate Charlotte as a hub for artistic excellence by supporting the McColl Center for Art + Innovation's Knight Artist in Residency program. Funding will help fellows expand their community engagement efforts in Charlotte. Meanwhile, the center will also renovate and reconfigure the McColl building first floor, to transform the galleries into an open, multiuse space of 3,000 square feet for large-scale exhibitions and special events.

Opera Carolina (\$60,000) To create a series of performances taking opera out of the theater and into the streets of greater Charlotte.

Afro-American Cultural Center (\$50,000): To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, with "40 And Counting" – an exhibition and programming series that culminates this month. "40 and Counting" highlights the institution's journey and influence on the region, featuring works of sculpture, painting, textiles, photography and more from 16 previous exhibitions.

Arts & Science Council of Charlotte/Mecklenburg (\$215,000 to four initiatives): To support the council's Cultural Innovation Grant, which invests in emerging cultural organizations that show programmatic promise and innovation in serving diverse audiences; present six productions by On Q Performing Arts, Charlotte's premier African-American theatre company; and raise awareness of local theaters through a joint advertising program; and host a 2014 summit on sustainability in the arts.

Tosco Music Party (\$60,000) To support two seasons of the Tosco Music Party, which is now a sell-out series at the Knight Theater at Levine Center for the Arts. Any given concert presents professional, semiprofessional and amateur acts, ranging from acoustic rock sets and bluegrass bands to string or jazz ensembles, sitar musicians and barbershop quartets. The group adds a unique voice to the local cultural community while relying on a grassroots, musician-centered model.

Charlotte Symphony Orchestra Society (\$240,000) To support continued arts innovation through the KnightSounds concert series, now in its fourth season, while bringing select programs outdoors for simulcasts.

100 Words Film Festival (\$20,400) To launch a film festival that challenges professional directors and student filmmakers to focus on the essence of storytelling by creating films that use exactly 100 spoken

words. The first event was held Nov. 22 at the McGlohon Theater. A sold out crowd saw 30 film premieres, many by award-winning filmmakers.

The Mint Museum (\$100,000) To support Mint Museum's Enhanced Digitization Project, which is creating virtual tours of the museum and its collections and special exhibitions, plus interviews with curators and artists. Funding also commissioned "SEE to Sea," an immersive large-scale installation by renowned North Carolina artist Mel Chin celebrating the centennial of the Panama Canal.

Blumenthal Performing Arts: (\$20,000) To bring the arts to a wider audience by providing seats for the 2014 Charlotte performance of the renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra led by Wynton Marsalis.

Oneaka Dance Company (\$5,000) To engage Charlotte audiences with Dances of the Soul, a workshop series that paired professional artists and dancers with community leaders and residents to participate in the creation of dance and performance art.

About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Knight Foundation supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts. The foundation believes that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged. For more, visit KnightFoundation.org