



Arts Midwest
2908 Hennepin Avenue, Ste 200
Minneapolis, MN 55408

April 8, 2008

Dear Friends:

As Arts Midwest looks towards warmer days, we realize how busy we've been over the past few months and how much wonderful programming we have to look forward to! Please allow me to update you on our progress so far in 2008.

Arts Midwest World Fest

The first half of the 2007-2009 cycle is almost complete, ending with a fascinating glimpse into the Inner Mongolia region of China with musical ensemble An Da Union. The group's music is created by twelve young and dynamic musicians who perform using traditional instruments as well as a traditional type of Mongolian singing commonly referred to as "throat singing." This landmark tour, supported in part by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, will be the group's first in the U.S. and brings this distinctive culture to students and audiences across the Midwest.



Student workshop with Los Utrera as part of Arts Midwest World Fest

"The school activities were off the charts in audience response...I have been presenting artists in residence since 1990; I have never seen high school students so thrilled."
– Terri DeDecker, Elgin School District

In February, Israeli ensemble Esta concluded its first tour in the 2007-2009 cycle with audience members dancing in the aisles in Traverse City, Michigan. It was a wonderful – and not unusual – ending to Esta's tour. Mauvais Sort of Quebec, Canada, and Los Utrera of Mexico provided great energy to the opening of the tour in our eastern states.

As the first reports from our partners start coming in, a picture of the impact of our program begins to develop: *in this Fall alone*, over 21,000 individuals (including over 16,400 students) in eleven communities across the Midwest have attended performances and educational activities of Arts Midwest World Fest!

Find out more about the program, the ensembles, and the cultures at www.artsmidwestworldfest.org.

Russel Wright: Living With Good Design

After a successful exhibition at the Bellevue Arts Museum in Bellevue, Washington, *Living With Good Design* opened at the Goldstein Museum of Design at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul on February 8. Board members, staff, and students welcomed the exhibition to the Goldstein, where it will be on view until April 20. Learn more about the exhibition and listen to a podcast at www.livingwithgooddesign.org.

2008 Midwest Arts Conference

Mark your calendars – the 2008 Midwest Arts Conference will be held in Kansas City, Missouri from September 17 - 20, 2008! Planning has been well underway for many months, with Conference staff arranging the event's logistics, convening committees to review submissions for our Spotlight Showcases, and securing

sponsorships for this unique gathering. As one of the largest booking and educational conferences for the performing arts in the U.S., the annual Midwest Arts Conference attracts top performers and presenters from across the country and around the world. View photos and listen to a podcast from last year's Conference at www.artsmidwest.org/programs/mac.

ArtsLab

Arts Midwest is proud to introduce the new ArtsLab program. ArtsLab is a three year program designed to build the capacity of sixteen smaller nonprofit arts organizations across Minnesota – eight from the Twin Cities metro area and eight from northwestern Minnesota. The program will guide selected organizations through peer groups, allowing them to learn together, share best practices, and strengthen organizational infrastructure. More than a traditional grant program, ArtsLab is a tool for strengthening organizations as well as their individual leadership, offering an in-depth organizational assessment process, peer learning gatherings, one-on-one consultative support, distance learning, and modest operational support grants. The program is funded through a unique collaboration of five major Minnesota-based arts and humanities funders: Bush, F. R. Bigelow, Mardag, McKnight, and Saint Paul foundations. Through ArtsLab the funders seek to increase the leadership pool for tomorrow's arts sector, strengthen the presence of visionary small arts organizations in both urban and rural communities, and encourage the power of the arts to enhance community vitality and engagement. Because of its depth of experience in project and grant management, Arts Midwest was selected to provide administrative support for the program, guided by ArtsLab Program Director Sharon Rodning Bash.

The Big Read

A nation-wide initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, The Big Read seeks to restore reading to the center of American culture by providing citizens the opportunity to read and discuss classic books through innovative reading programs in their communities. Arts Midwest has successfully implemented the program for the NEA since 2006, and the last few months have seen a stir of activity. In December 2007, 117 communities finished their Big Read programming followed in January 2008 by new activities in 126 communities across the country. Meanwhile, Arts Midwest received 206 proposals from forty-six states for Big Read activities scheduled to begin in September 2008! This dynamic program continues to engage a

Arts Midwest World Fest 2007-2009
Preliminary attendance numbers

	Students	Adults	Educational Activities	Public Performances
Ames, IA	1125	744	13	1
Elgin, IL	1671	1445	12	1
Jasper, IN	3667	602	11	2
Allendale, MI	5	200	1	1
Grand Rapids, MI	1300	0	2	0
Traverse City, MI	687	202	7	1
Hutchinson, MN	1910	320	11	1
Bismarck, ND	2942	655	6	1
Nelsonville, OH	1275	244	5	2
Nelsonville, OH	750	145	5	2
Spearfish, SD	1111	10	10	1
	16,443	4,567	83	13

Big Read communities
January - June 2008



wide swathe of the American public with celebrated literature. For more information, including a calendar of events across the U.S., visit www.neabigread.org.

The Big Read Films

As an additional component to The Big Read program, Arts Midwest is now working with the NEA to film interviews with many of the living authors whose seminal works are featured in The Big Read. Production is well underway on films featuring Ray Bradbury, author of *Fahrenheit 451*, and Amy Tan, author of *The Joy Luck Club*, with work beginning on the next film featuring Rudolfo Anaya, author of *Bless*

Me, Ultima. These films deepen The Big Read experience by presenting the authors, their lives, and their thoughts on the renowned stories they have written.

The Big Read Egypt/U.S.

Building upon the success of The Big Read, Arts Midwest has partnered with the U.S. Department of State to create The Big Read Egypt/U.S., a unique program designed to encourage dialogue between citizens of the United States and Egypt through the power of literature. In March, Arts Midwest hosted representatives from the three Egyptian partner organizations for a week of site visits to Big Read communities in Washington, DC, Boston, MA and Hartford, CT. Arts Midwest staff will next travel to Egypt with leaders from the four U.S. partner organizations to conduct program planning and learn about Egyptian history, literature and culture in the spirit of cultural exchange.

NEA Jazz Masters

Arts Midwest is currently working with the National Endowment for the Arts to launch NEA Jazz Masters Live, a follow-up effort to NEA Jazz Masters on Tour. Celebrating the living legends who have made exceptional contributions to the advancement of jazz, NEA Jazz Masters Live will support meaningful, in-depth, extended engagements featuring NEA Jazz Masters that honor their body of work, history, or style; provide understanding of their significance to jazz through thematically-designed or retrospective programming; and broaden audiences' awareness of their unique contributions to this original American art form. Approximately 12 venues, such as jazz festivals or university presenters, across the country will be selected and funded through NEA Jazz Masters Live. Announcement of the selected venues and NEA Jazz Masters performing will be made in April.

As always, our programs would not be possible without your ongoing support of Arts Midwest and its mission. I hope you are enjoying your summer and I look forward to seeing you soon. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at 612-341-0755, ext. 24 with questions or comments about Arts Midwest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Fraher'.

David Fraher
Executive Director