

Americans for the Arts presents
The 30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture
on Arts and Public Policy



Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts & Public Policy

An evening with

Darren Walker

March 20, 2017

Concert Hall

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

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Sponsored By:
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OPENING REMARKS BY ROBERT L. LYNCH



Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch

Good evening everyone. Welcome to the Americans for the Arts 30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy. I'm Bob Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts, and on behalf of our Board of Directors and our staff team I want to thank you for joining us tonight, here at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

We are joined tonight by many special guests, including members of Congress, state and local elected officials, CEOs of corporations, heads of major foundations (including our speaker tonight), as well as the nation's most important arts leader, Jane Chu, the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. I guess if we want to get that kind of applause we just say the words "Jane Chu"! Great job that you're doing, Jane, and I thank you very much.

Jane, I want to tell you that we are all assembled here this evening because we believe in the power of the arts to transform people's lives and to transform communities. Along with the 2,000 people that we have here this evening, there are millions more who stand committed to ensuring the federal government remains invested in the future of that vision through the National Endowment for the Arts. And that this vision is also ensured with the entire cultural investment in the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. After all, what would our world be like without art and artists? Our lecturer last year, John Maeda, stated "the goal in life for artists is to be curious and go wonder how to do new things." There lies the beauty of creativity: the power of artists to create something new, be innovative, and to manifest something with a unique perspective that has never been seen before. So, I'm really pleased that we have several

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artists with us tonight representing the Americans for the Arts Artists Committee. They'll be joining us tomorrow morning at the crack of dawn on Capitol Hill for Arts Advocacy Day. Welcome legendary artist and Tony Award-winning performer Ben Vereen. Also with us is another Tony Award-winning actor, singer, and dancer Brian Stokes Mitchell, who—lucky us—has recently joined the Americans for the Arts Board of Directors. We're also so pleased to have with us stage and screen actress Gabrielle Ruiz, who is part of the hit shows *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and *Orange Is the New Black*. Thank you for being here!

We know that when it comes to making change happen at the federal level, it takes bipartisan congressional arts leadership and evidence-based data to make our case. Thankfully, we have both. As you can see in this full-page ad that Americans for the Arts will be placing in tomorrow's edition of *Politico*, *Roll Call*, and *The Hill* newspapers, the decision-makers are not going to be able to get away from you and our message. In these ads, we bring a spotlight to



Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch urges the audience to speak out and #SavetheNEA.

research that is measured and documented by not us, but the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis. And it's because of this research that we know that the NEA's grantmaking and matching dollars are part of a large \$730 billion economic arts and culture industry that represents 4.2 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product and supports 4.8 million jobs. Bigger than tourism itself!

As our Board of Directors talked about today, we need to make the case and tell the stories that are locally based. Not just the big numbers, but about the artist next door and the arts organization that is changing your community. And I can tell you that these arts jobs that we're talking about here are not the kinds of jobs that can be easily outsourced to another country. They're right here. These are homegrown jobs and products that are made "and hired" in America. Additional ads like this will be placed in the coming weeks in strategic media markets throughout the country to bolster grassroots outreach and to go where the decision-makers live. Because we know that in order to reverse these kinds of misguided budget recommendations, we need a successful national advocacy campaign that will lift the voices of grassroots arts advocates everywhere.

This year, we are proud to partner with 89 of the most influential national arts and civic advocacy organizations in the

country—representing more than 100,000 nonprofit cultural organizations, of every discipline, throughout every region—as national partners of Arts Advocacy Day. We are also joined by 700 state and local arts leaders, including more than 150 future leaders enrolled in college arts administration programs, representing every single state in America—every state is here for this National Arts Advocacy Day. I'd love to ask these Arts Advocacy Day national partners, state arts advocacy captains, and individual registrants to stand and be recognized and be thanked for what you are doing for America.

We cannot let up—or give up—until we #SAVEtheNEA.

We also know that advocacy doesn't begin and end on just one day. We need to keep a steady drumbeat of pressure on those who we elected to represent us and our communities. We cannot let up—or give up—until we #SAVEtheNEA and say "yes" to cultural investment by our government in the United States of America. So please, help us expand our reach and spread our message by sharing the hashtag SAVE the

NEA. You can also post this image on your social media pages from our Facebook or Twitter accounts. Or visit our online Arts Mobilization Center, which captures not only everything that we're doing but that all those 89 organizations do and that you do as well, so that in one place we can see what is actually taking place to make this happen. Don't delay. Now is the time to get involved and to keep those messages coming. And it's not just the economic argument that we have in our arsenal to talk about. We have the obvious inherent value of the arts argument, the real reason that we're in this business.

We know the arts can transform communities in America: 89 percent of Americans think that's important. That's why the nation's mayors passed a unanimous policy resolution at the U.S. Conference of Mayors Annual Meeting—Tom Cochran, their CEO, is here tonight—to increase federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. They also called for a cabinet-level position for arts and culture to be created within the White House, as so many mayors already do at the local level.

The NEA also has the support of the military. Thanks to its collaborative and groundbreaking work with Walter Reed Hospital, the NEA has created Creative Forces, a program that we also help administer. With dedicated funding secured last year from Congress, the NEA is now supporting the placement of arts therapists in every discipline in 12 military rehabilitation hospitals across the country. These arts therapists are doing phenomenal and measurable impact work in helping wounded military personnel with physical wounds and with post-traumatic brain injuries. I encourage all of us to share personal stories of how the NEA has supported programs near and dear to your heart. Whether directly or through state and local arts agencies. Share them on social media, share them with elected officials, share them in Op Eds.

And now, before we hear from tonight's Nancy Hanks lecturer, please help me to thank the sponsors that make this evening possible: First, a wonderful and longtime supporter and Americans for the Arts Board Member Nancy Stephens with the Rosenthal Family Foundation. We'd like to also thank Jessica Yas-Barker with Ovation, the nation's only television arts network. They've been with us for many years. And our newest sponsor, The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Family Foundation. Thank you all!

INTRODUCTION OF ANNA DEAVERE SMITH



Performance artist Anna Deavere Smith dedicated her performance from her most recent one-person play, *Notes from the Field*, to Darren Walker.

To begin tonight's program, we kick things off with an exciting artistic performance by the incomparable Anna Deavere Smith. Simply put, Anna is a Citizen Artist. Her talent, intellect, and compassion have no bounds. When Anna was awarded the MacArthur Fellowship, or genius award, her work was described as "a blend of theatrical art, social commentary, journalism, and intimate reverie." She has served as artist-in-residence at both the Ford Foundation and the Center for American Progress. She is a professor at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts Department of Arts and Public Policy, as well as NYU's School of Law. Her versatility as an actress is apparent

in her well-known television and film roles in *The West Wing*, *Nurse Jackie*, *The American President*, and *Rent*, as well as her award-winning playwriting and performance stage roles in her one-person shows *Twilight: Los Angeles* and *Fires in the Mirror*.

In Anna's latest one-person play, *Notes from the Field*, she plays 19 characters depicting students, parents, and teachers all caught in the school-to-prison pipeline. Tonight, she will perform some excerpts for you. Ladies and gentlemen, I now present you Anna Deavere Smith.

Amazing. That was truly a moving performance. Thank you again to Anna Deavere Smith for performing in honor of our lecturer tonight, Darren Walker.

INTRODUCTION OF THELMA GOLDEN

And now I'd like to introduce another of Darren's friends to formally introduce him to you in her own words. It's my pleasure to introduce Thelma Golden, the dynamic director and chief curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem. Thelma is a recognized authority in contemporary art by artists of African descent. Her 2009 TED Talk, "How Art Gives Shape to Cultural Change," examined how contemporary artists continue to shape dialogue about race, culture, and community.

I also want to thank Thelma for agreeing to host a short conversation on stage with Darren immediately after his lecture remarks this evening, and engage in a Q&A with questions collected in advance from audience members.

Please now give a warm welcome to Thelma Golden.



Anna Deavere Smith performs from *Notes from the Field*.

INTRODUCTION OF DARREN WALKER BY THELMA GOLDEN



Director and Chief Curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem
Thelma Golden introduces Darren Walker as the lecturer of the
30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy.

Good evening, Americans for the Arts. I am truly honored to be here tonight to introduce the incredible Darren Walker. It is only fitting that Darren is delivering the 30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy as this evening celebrates a woman's incredible legacy that speaks to a passionate belief in the power of art and culture to transform our communities and our society. These are values that also inform Darren's work and will define his unique and long-lasting impact on the arts and culture sector.

I first met Darren Walker in the mid '90s when he was working at an urban development corporation in Harlem and I was a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. At that moment when I met Darren, I was feeling very much the power of art and artists, but had yet to fully understand how to connect culture to community. When invited uptown—just 40 blocks, but a world away from the Whitney to Harlem—to hear Darren speak, I was truly, truly, truly inspired. He spoke with force and focus about the issues facing the incredible community of Harlem.

I remember listening to Darren speak that day about Harlem not simply as it was, but as it could be. His vision,

passion, and enthusiasm spoke to the possibility and potential for a community where everyone could have affordable and secure housing, inspiring education, and accessible healthcare, and of course could live to celebrate their culture. Darren changed the way I saw Harlem: instead of seeing what was there, I saw what could be. And perhaps, most importantly, I saw how I could have a role in that change. Almost 25 years later I am very proud to be the director of the Studio Museum in Harlem. We are grateful, every day, to be in a community that Darren's vision helped make possible and where we are actively continuing to dream about the future.

And now Darren's vision and impact exists on a global scale. As the president of the Ford Foundation, the nation's second-largest philanthropic institution, with over \$500 million annually invested in the pursuit of justice and equality worldwide, he is impacting people who, while they may never meet him, are being empowered to dream their own futures into existence.

Darren embodies the power of love and compassion. He lives with a deep belief in the arts. He lives a life that overflows with generosity and support, a life that stands as a shining example of engaged stewardship. Last week, I had the occasion to hear Darren speak about philanthropy. And among the many, many important things he said, he related that day that he felt that each act of generosity needs to bend towards justice. And in that statement, yet again, I saw how Darren is able to encapsulate his incredible worldview, his personal values, and his public persona, into a vision that benefits and inspires us all. We all know that we want to build a better world. Darren, through the vision that he enacts every day, creates the sense of confidence and drive to turn that desire into meaningful action.

To be with him, even for a moment, is to be energized and inspired to be an active citizen, a participant in the global community, a brother or a sister in this vast and diverse human family. Darren's elegance, his intellectual rigor, enthusiasm, and dedication are infectious. They are the incredible super powers with which he moves about this world and creates impact for everyone he encounters. I often say that Darren doesn't just have a smile that lights up the room. His entire being energizes full city blocks.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming my colleague, my friend, my mentor, who inspires and instigates for truth and justice and beauty for all, with joy, grace, and humility. Ladies and gentlemen, Darren Walker.

DARREN WALKER



The 30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecturer on Arts and Public Policy

THE ART OF DEMOCRACY: CREATIVE EXPRESSION AND AMERICAN GREATNESS

Good evening. Thank you, Thelma Golden, my great friend, for your gracious introduction—and, more importantly, Thelma, for your visionary leadership at the Studio Museum in Harlem. And what can I say about my friend Anna Deavere Smith? Thank you, Anna, for that bold, visionary, remarkable, and electrifying performance. And thank you to Americans for the Arts—Bob and Abel and the wonderful board and staff. I'm so grateful for this special, special honor.

Before I make my remarks, I'd like to take a moment. A moment to honor a great person who left this earth today. His name was David Rockefeller Sr. and he was an exemplary arts patron and philanthropist. We learned so much about American generosity from David Rockefeller and his family. So please, let's take a moment in his memory. Thank you.

It is indeed a privilege to be with you on this occasion—this very special occasion—to deliver this 30th annual lecture in tribute to the incomparable, inimitable Nancy Hanks.

Unfortunately, I never met Nancy in life. I was a senior at the University of Texas the year of her death. But it was then that I was exposed to Nancy's remarkable legacy. It was then that I first experienced the Dance Theater of Harlem; when the company stopped in Austin, Texas on a national tour, a tour funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

The beauty of their performance astonished me. To see people who looked like me, dancing and expressing themselves in a way that was so dynamic, so kinetic. I was deeply moved by that experience. And from that time on, I became a life-long lover of dance.

From Dance Theater of Harlem to Alvin Ailey to the New York City Ballet, where I'm honored today to be vice chairman

of the board. And this performance was just one of the many times in my life when an experience of the arts broadened my perspective and expanded my world.

When I was growing up in rural Texas—in the era before Nancy—our democracy had yet to make a public commitment to the arts. There were no state art councils. No broad commitments to funding the arts in rural communities like mine. So, I was exposed to the arts as a matter of circumstance—a happy accident.

As a boy, I lived with my mother and sister in a little shotgun house—in rural Liberty County, Texas. My grandmother worked as a maid in the home of a wealthy Houston family. And every month, she would bring me old art magazines and programs from arts events the family attended.

Art is not a privilege. Art is the soul of our civilization; the beating heart of our humanity; a miracle to which we all should bear witness, over and over again, in every home—from the most modest and humble to the grandest and most fashionable.

I remember, vividly, feeling transfixed by the magic I saw on those pages—the images of worlds so far away from my own. I remember flipping through those magazines and programs, and falling in love, deeply and swiftly. Those pages unlocked my capacity to imagine a world beyond my own—and to imagine my place in that world.

Simply put, the arts changed my life. They imbued me with the power to imagine, the power to dream, and the power to know I could express myself with dignity, and beauty, and grace.

But here's the thing: I was lucky.

I was lucky to have the right grandmother. Lucky that she worked as a maid in the right house. Lucky that house was inhabited by the right wealthy family, who subscribed to the right magazines, and had diverse interests in the arts. Lucky that family showed their love by giving me their discarded magazines, and books, and programs.

When I think about it now, the chances of my exposure to the arts were so improbable that I really should not be here

with you tonight. I imagine each of *you* can name a time when the arts changed *your* life, or changed *your* perspective—a moment when the arts moved you to empathy or to action; a moment when art made it possible for you to be the person you are today. And I encourage you to reflect on those moments tonight and in the days and weeks ahead.

You see, all of us here tonight: We are all the lucky ones. Because there are children across the country growing up in circumstances not unlike those of mine—children who, day after day, experience in their lives the most terrible manifestations of inequality.

For them, exposure to the arts, to imagination and ambition, remains a matter of chance or circumstance. It can't be. Not in a democracy like ours.

Everyone deserves to experience the arts. No child should need a permission slip to dream in America.

Art is not a privilege. Art is the soul of our civilization; the beating heart of our humanity; a miracle to which we all should bear witness, over and over again, in every home—from the most modest and humble to the grandest and most fashionable.

And tonight—in this place, our national cathedral to the arts, and in this moment, these perilous and challenging times in our nation's history—I would argue that we need the arts and humanities more than ever before.

A Poverty of Imagination

My friend Judge Albie Sachs—the great South African freedom fighter and one of Nelson Mandela's first appointees to that country's Constitutional Court—was asked the question: *Is it right for the government to fund art when there is still so much hunger and homelessness?*

His answer was, "It's not only right, but necessary."¹

Albie's contention was simple: Of course, the poor should be fed and clothed and housed; we all have these essential needs.

But all people also yearn for beauty, also long for grace, also have hearts as well as stomachs that need to be fed and filled and nourished. And people inevitably create beauty and grace when they lift their voices in song, move their bodies to music, shape color and form on canvas or in sculpture, or use language to tell stories in ways that delight and surprise.

The notion that low-income people, working-class Americans, or people with backgrounds different from our own do not derive meaning from the arts, or do not value full and free expression—this notion is equal parts insulting and ignorant.



Darren Walker describes the unique role of the arts and humanities in addressing a kind of poverty that goes beyond money, but rather is a hunger in our souls for dignity and transcendence.

In fact, the arts and humanities are necessary to address a kind of poverty that goes beyond money—a hunger that lives not in our bodies but in our souls, a uniquely human hunger for dignity and for transcendence.

The arts lift us toward this dignity, and open us to this transcendence.

Now, this grand monument—the Kennedy Center—is a temple to this idea. It's one such place where dreams are born and beauty made—where all Americans are welcomed. Tonight, as we gather here, I am reminded of the words of President Kennedy, who said, "This country cannot afford to be materially rich and spiritually poor."

Today we may well be the wealthiest nation on the planet—but I believe there is a spiritual poverty that plagues America.

It's a poverty of imagination that corrodes our capacity for generosity and empathy. It's a poverty of imagination that diminishes our discourse, curtails curiosity, and makes our interactions petty and small. A poverty of imagination that breeds distrust for institutions and, increasingly, for information.

A poverty of imagination that breeds distrust of other people who do not look or think like us. A poverty of imagination that shrinks our sense of self and our sense of a lofty and inspiring common purpose, luring us to the extremes rather than leading us towards the extraordinary.

And I believe this poverty—of heart and mind, of spirit and soul, of civic imagination—has brought us to our current moment of crisis.

The Challenge of Our Moment

Across this country, we see inequality of every kind and category.

We see it in the growing income of the very wealthy versus the static income of the rest. We see it in who holds power in our government, and who does not. We see it in who our culture respects, and who it diminishes or renders invisible. We see it in the imbalances of our criminal justice system, and in whose lives matter. We see it in the rise of hate crimes, and in who we choose to vilify.

Ultimately, we see it in our unpreparedness to *compromise* (instead of polarize), our unwillingness to *empathize* (instead of ostracize), and in our unreadiness to *humanize* (instead of demonize).

All of this reflects a poverty of imagination—a poverty of imagination that has metastasized into a paucity of hope.

As I have said on many occasions, that the greatest threat to democracy—that one of the most dangerous consequences of growing inequality—is hopelessness. And hopelessness is a dangerous consequence of growing inequality. Democracy cannot breathe without hope.

Too many people in this country feel hopeless today. And yet, at a moment when art could be the light—when art's potential could bring us hope—we who support the arts find ourselves with our backs against the wall.

Hopelessness breeds discouragement and despair, disillusionment with our government and other institutions that bring order and meaning to our lives, and desperate actions that threaten our collective self-interest. Hopelessness hardens our hearts, and makes it harder to hear difficult truths. When hopeless, we can't see beyond our own struggles, or

imagine that there may be light at the end of the tunnel.

Too many people in this country feel hopeless today. And yet, at a moment when art could be the light—when art’s potential could bring us hope—we who support the arts find ourselves with our backs against the wall.

Those who discredit art’s value and power surround us, parroting the canards and memes we have heard for decades. They claim the arts are for the “elite.” They claim “government can’t afford to fund the art.” They tell us that art has no place in an economy in need of jobs, in a nation that is struggling to make itself great.

Let me be abundantly clear: They are wrong.

One Common Argument and Its Limits

Those who seek the elimination of the Endowments and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting see themselves as cutting waste. But we know, as Nancy Hanks herself knew in 1968, that compared to all our other national challenges—be they poverty or inequality, civil rights or criminal justice reform—the expense is relatively small.

To use Nancy’s phrase, “the requirements for the arts are miniscule.”² The resources of the NEA, NEH, and CPB combined amount to *less than* one tenth of one percent of the federal budget.³

We all know the benefits of the arts far outweigh their funding. These dollars achieve tremendous bang for the buck. And for every measure that concerns the opponents, we have the numbers to prove the value of our investment—an arts-multiplier effect, if you will.

Don’t take my word for it. Here’s what the Bureau of Economic Analysis has to say. If the issue is jobs, the arts and culture sector employed 4.8 million people in 2014. If the issue is trade, our arts and culture sector produces a trade surplus for this country. And if the issue is the economy, just remember that the arts contributed more than \$729 billion to our economy in a single year.⁴

And yet, even as I recite these numbers, it pains me to make this argument. It pains me to reduce the importance of the arts and humanities to their instrumentality—to express their enormity in solely economic terms.

Now, I’m not naïve. I know numbers matter. I know that for some people they need to hear these numbers before they cast their vote—or at least to defend their vote. But these numbers are not why we support the arts. They can’t be why we support the arts.

Because while we know these numbers matter, we also know that conventional metrics will always fall short.

To me, numbers will never explain what happens the moment the curtain rises. They don’t measure the quickening of our hearts in time with music, the widening of our eyes, or the suspension of our disbelief. They don’t capture the changes of heart, the new questions sparked, the sense of possibility that is opened. They don’t capture the impact on a life trajectory that the arts can have. Like the impact they had on a small boy in rural Texas in the 1960s.

...Numbers will never explain what happens the moment the curtain rises. They don’t measure the quickening of our hearts in time with music, the widening of our eyes, or the suspension of our disbelief.

There is too much emotional value that cannot be measured. Beyond employment, there is enjoyment. A trade surplus does not capture the overflowing surplus of inspiration, or express the importance of cultural and aesthetic exchange. And GDP is not—is not—a measure of what makes America great.

The Necessity of Government Investment

Of course, these days, we also hear another argument that will rear its head with increasing frequency in the coming weeks, days, and months—and it’s something that I often hear as a foundation president.

Some say things like, “Well of course the arts are important, but why does the government need to support the arts?”

Or, “Darren, there are a lot of rich people in the country. Why can’t Ford Foundation and private philanthropy and these new billionaires take care of this?” And then a millennial says to me, “Doesn’t Kickstarter contribute more to the arts than the NEA?”

Well, here are the facts: For the past 30 years, American charitable giving to the arts has rarely exceeded a meager five percent of giving.⁵ Which means the arts already live on a shoestring budget and can’t afford yet another pay cut.

And as for the suggestion that we replace the Endowments with Kickstarter, that’s like saying we don’t need the National Institutes of Health or publicly funded medical research because the internet has given us WebMD.com.

Folks, we can’t “kickstarter” our way out of this problem. And private philanthropy won’t solve the challenge. Because while



Darren Walker makes a powerful call to action for arts advocates to persist in their efforts: "This is *not the time* for a poverty of imagination in our country."

We must invest in our ambition, in our aspiration, in that American spirit of ingenuity and sense of imagination that has always propelled this great nation forward. This is not the time for a poverty of imagination in our country.

private donors support elite and mostly urban institutions—and while crowdfunding favors those projects that can be marketed online—government investment in the arts has a much broader reach, a deeper and more profound impact. Because it is the people's way of saying, "we value our collective humanity, our culture, our history, indeed, our civilization."

This is an essential component of our democracy.

It is "we, the people" who make our nation great. It is "we, the people" who choose through our government, who

choose to invest in ourselves and our culture. Government is not some faceless, evil entity. It is us. It is "we, the people" who believe in supporting the small rural museums, and local theater groups, and the book festivals that bring people together across this country.

So, if we see ourselves as great, we must invest in that which makes us great. We must invest in the things that the GDP has never been able to measure: investments that make "we, the people" richer, better, more complete human beings.

We must invest in our ambition, in our aspiration, in that American spirit of ingenuity and sense of *imagination* that has always propelled this great nation forward. This is *not the time* for a poverty of imagination in our country.

Right now, this is the argument we should be making. This is the argument for our times. As we watch the spreading disease of cynicism, and widening divides, and coarsening of our discourse, the arts may be the very thing to save us from hopelessness and selfishness, and the ugliness it permits and promotes.

An Argument for Our Current Moment

In this hall, it is too tempting to quote President Kennedy—so please indulge me—but it was he who wrote so eloquently, “There is a connection, hard to explain logically but easy to feel, between achievement in public life and progress in the arts.”

He wrote, beautifully: “The age of Pericles was also the age of Phidias. The age of Lorenzo de Medici... [was] also the age of Leonardo da Vinci.” And “the age of Elizabeth [was] also the age of Shakespeare.”

Without art, there is no empathy. Without empathy, there is no justice.

His insights have never been more true. For the age of John F. Kennedy was also the age of Robert Frost. The age of Martin Luther King was also the age of James Baldwin. And the age of Gloria Steinem, the age of Judy Chicago. What would the gay rights movement be without Larry Kramer, Keith Haring, or Tony Kushner? The fight for immigrants without Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*, or Black Lives Matter without Ta-Nehesi Coates’ *Between the World and Me*?

My point is this: Without art, there is no empathy. Without empathy, there is no justice.

The arts have the power to lead us forward, to heal us, to bring us together and help us bridge real divides. The arts are the key to building and rebuilding bridges in our society—between cities and rural counties; between the poor and the prosperous; between the past, the present, and the possible.

And in this way, investment in the arts is an investment in moral imagination, in our capacity for empathy—an investment in the kind of greatness that comes with a deeper, richer understanding of one another and ourselves.

On American Greatness

Yes, friends, there has been a lot of debate during this last year about what makes America great. Some believe it is the size of our economy, or the might of our military. Some believe it lives in the power of Congress, or the prose of the Constitution. This may all be true.

I believe what makes us great is the size of our hearts. It is our capacity for generosity, and the grandness of our imagination.

And if this is true, then the connection between American art and American greatness is easy to see *and* easy to feel. It is easy to nurture, and spread, and grow.

So, let us here tonight talk about what makes America great.

Our greatness manifests in an enduring, storied, and honorable vision that welcomes those who come to America seeking refuge from hatred, persecution, and injustice.

Our greatness stretches to every state in the union, to local communities far and wide.

Our greatness fills the air, every summer, at the Magic City Smooth Jazz festival in beautiful Birmingham, Alabama. It fills the streets with warmth—and performances, and art installations—as part of FREEZE in Anchorage, Alaska.

Our greatness is seen on the faces of Navajo and Hopi students who fill the Grand Canyon with their original compositions. It helps students in Puerto Rico to dream of college—to build “El Puente: A Bridge to the University and the World.”

Our greatness is giving ballet dancers in Des Moines, Iowa, a leg up—and it lifts the voices of poets like Hope Wabuke, whose family fled Ugandan genocide to find safety and opportunity in America.



Thelma Golden and Robert L. Lynch welcome Darren Walker to the stage of the Concert Hall at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.



Darren Walker's lecture concluded with an effusive standing ovation of more than 2,000 people in the Concert Hall of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Our greatness connects people from different walks of life. It brings the Harlem Quartet to Maize, Kansas. It helps a professor from Utah State University translate *Wild Mustard: New Voices from Vietnam*.

This is what makes America great. It is everyone and every program I've just told you about. And all of this astonishing and ennobling work is made possible because of support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In my home state of Texas, greatness is seen on a stage in a barn in the historic town of Round Top, where thousands of Texans converge every spring to bear witness to extraordinary music and poetry.

Greatness resides in the papers of George Washington and movements of Martha Graham. It is the Hudson River School and the Harlem Renaissance. It is the poetry of Walt Whitman and Maya Angelou. Yes, we contain multitudes. Yes, we still rise.

Greatness is the work performed tonight by Anna Deavere Smith in *Notes from the Field*—the work of transforming

ourselves and inhabiting the lives of others.

Greatness is Langston Hughes in his iconic *Let America Be America Again*:

*I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.*

When we do the work of the arts, when we hold the mirror up to ourselves and our society, we not only experience our shared humanity, we arrive at our shared obligation to humanity: our connection with and obligation to all people who suffer, and struggle, and seek to be heard.

Keeping America Great

This greatness—of our culture and our character—is worth fighting for. And nobody—*nobody*—knew American greatness better than Nancy Hanks.

A final story. Once there was a recalcitrant congresswoman from Washington State who Nancy Hanks needed to convince to support the NEA. Nancy charmed and pushed and cajoled—as she famously did—but the congresswoman said, “Nancy, no one is sending me letters.”

As the story goes, Nancy said, “Letters? You want letters?” And soon there were fliers on the seats of concert halls and theaters across America. The letters to the congresswoman’s office started pouring in—by the mail bag, by the thousands.

The letters didn’t materialize only because of Nancy. These letters were written by people—people who sat in theaters and auditoriums, people who read those fliers, and people who decided to take action.

There is a lesson in this story, my friends, because at the end of the day, it will always be the people who love the arts who will spread the love of the arts. It will always be the people who love the humanities who make the strongest case for our shared humanity.

And it will be us, *all of us*, who will be the best advocates

for the work that changes lives, and the artistic greatness that makes us greater still.

So, on this special occasion, on this special evening, let us resolve that each of us will do our very best to be like Nancy Hanks.

Let us resolve to make our voices heard. To bridge the seats in the theaters to those seats in Congress. And to explain the value on the walls of museums to those in the halls of power.

Let us resolve as we leave this Kennedy Center, this great national treasure, to not despair or be despondent by efforts of those who seek to rob us of our public commitment to the arts. Let us channel our energy into a positive narrative about American imagination, American generosity, and American greatness.

My friends, the coming days will be difficult and our resolve will be tested. But this battle, a battle for the very soul of America, is worth fighting for. And our beloved patron saint, Nancy, is counting on us to win.

Thank you for this wonderful, unforgettable honor.

NOTES:

- 1 The Art of Change, Ford Foundation. (2015, August 12). Why Support the Arts When There is Still So Much Poverty in the World? Retrieved from <http://artofchange.is/why-support-the-arts-when-there-is-still-so-much-poverty-in-the-world/>
- 2 Bauerlein, Mark, & Grantham, Ellen (Eds.). National Endowment for the Arts: A History 1965–2008. [Electronic Version]. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts. Retrieved from <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/nea-history-1965-2008.pdf>
- 3 Bowley, Graham. (2017, March 16). What if Trump Really Does End Money for the Arts. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/30/arts/design/donald-trump-arts-humanities-public-television.html>
- 4 Iyengar, Sunil. (2017, February 2). Taking Note: Trending Now—an Arts Imperative in Economic Policy. *Art Works Blog*. National Endowment for the Arts. Retrieved from <https://www.arts.gov/art-works/2017/taking-note-trending-now%E2%80%94arts-imperative-economic-policy>
- 5 The Giving Institute. Giving USA 2016: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2015. <https://store.givingusa.org/collections/giving-usa/products/giving-usa-2016-the-annual-report-on-philanthropy-for-the-year-2015-digital-package?variant=34373342281>

Q & A DISCUSSION BETWEEN **DARREN WALKER & THELMA GOLDEN**



Darren Walker and Thelma Golden sit for a Q&A session, a first for the Nancy Hanks Lecture series.

Thelma Golden: As I said in my introduction, we can always count on Darren to tell the truth. Thank you, thank you. So, in this moment of question and answer, we have the real possibility here to hear some more from you as we all look for a way to understand the moment and all the issues that are speaking to us. We have some questions from the audience, and thank you to those who submitted them.

So, our first question is from Ann Marie Miller with ArtPRIDE New Jersey. She asks, "Since a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts requires a minimum of a one-to-one match with private or other contributions, and the Ford Foundation has served many times as grantees' private match, what does it signal to the Ford Foundation when one of your grantees demonstrates that they have successfully won an NEA grant already, and why is it important for nonprofit arts organizations to have a mix of public and private funds?"

Darren Walker: Well, I think that's a great question, and it does signal something very important to us when we have an applicant who's already received an NEA grant and is seeking a

match because the process through which the NEA and NEH review is a very rigorous process. There are usually a series of panels, there are usually double and triple tiers of vetting, so by the time it reaches us, we have some assurance of credibility, of effectiveness as an organization. So, it matters a lot to us when we see an applicant who has received an NEA or NEH grant.

TG: Great, thank you. Next, we have a question from Brad Erickson of Theatre Bay Area and Californians for the Arts. He asks, "Knowing that the Ford Foundation is an international foundation that has a presence in many countries, including some with national ministries of culture, what are the pros and cons of a cultural ministry system compared to the U.S., and would you advise that we at least have a cabinet-level advisor within the White House?"

DW: I would absolutely advise that. I find it really curious that those who oppose this idea use an argument of pluralism that in some way American art is so heterogenous that it's difficult to imagine what a perspective would be. So, for example, when you look at the French who do have a Minister

of Culture, and a huge Ministry as you know, quite frankly the French culture is far more homogenous than our culture. I mean, I love French culture, but it's rather one-dimensional. If I compare other parts of the world where things are so unique and something we should be amplifying through that level of government service, it is the uniqueness of our culture and therefore the kind of pride that should come from projecting that out to other parts of the world and across the country. I find it really odd.

TG: And now we have a question from George Tzougros from the Wisconsin Arts Board who asks, "What response could you share with us when elected officials claim the amount of federal or state investment in the arts is so small that private sector foundations can make up the difference?" You spoke to this, but go further.

DW: I spoke to it a little bit, but that's another thing I find interesting from opponents. What's interesting is that the very people who will be harmed the most are not those of us who live in places like New York or Washington. We rely on the NEA and NEH for support at New York institutions, but there are many places where private philanthropy really doesn't even exist in this country. And the role of support from the two Endowments is essential to the livelihoods of some of these institutions. So, when people say, "Oh, it's a small amount. Can't we just zero it out?" It really is almost counterintuitive and it's illogical. Because what we hear often is "leverage," and that government dollar should be leveraged. There is no better example in the entire federal budget of private dollars being leveraged more than the Endowments. And so, when people who are private sector-oriented make that argument, I find it really illogical and unprincipled. I could understand it if the logic flowed, but the logic doesn't even flow!

TG: Now let's talk a little bit about your work at this moment. How is art essential to the Ford Foundation's mission to promote social justice here in America and throughout the world?

DW: Well, I think it's critical because part of the arts and the humanities is storytelling, for example. We know the power of storytelling. We know—we really know—that stories often matter more than facts, and that narratives are very powerful to the American psyche. We have narratives about who we are as a people. From a social justice perspective, we need storytelling. We need the arts. So, when you see something like we just witnessed with Anna [Deavere Smith], who was giving us the story of this incarcerated woman who was there because of her association with a man that landed her in

prison for 25 years. Those stories are powerful. When you have artists, who use their art form to challenge us. When you see the photographs of Carrie Mae Weems. Or you see the work of Shirin Neshat and you think about the Middle East. There are ways in which we desperately need the arts, because artists have always been the canaries in the coal mine. Artists have always been willing to take risks and be courageous. When you think about all the social progress in America in the 20th century, artists were always on the front lines of each and every one of those social changes. So, it's hard to imagine American progress and social justice without artists.

TG: I'm going to combine my last two questions because in many ways you've already spoken to this incredible role artists have and to the role of how art can transform us. We all can speak to many ways in our lives that the arts have transformed us. So, speak in the moment we are in now and talk about why art is important to our democracy at this very moment, and by extension, how art can change the world.

DW: Well that's a big question, Thelma! I really do believe that we need the arts because in this time it is really true that we need healing in this country. We need bridges. We need bridge builders. And we need our leaders to exemplify these qualities. And often what happens is we can't always rely on our leaders. We have to rely on those things that give meaning in our lives. And for many of us, the arts and humanities gives us that meaning. It gives us a way of being purposeful and being hopeful even in the wake of things that make us dejected and despondent. All you've got to do is spend an evening at New York City Ballet. Or spend an evening watching a great performance. Or when you're in one of those really funky moods, just walk through the galleries of a really great museum. So, for me, I think we need the kinds of healing in our souls, our hearts, and our spirits that the arts can give us to help sustain us. And the institutions that we need to be resilient and fortified are those institutions of art and culture. So, we all need to be doing everything that we can to support institutions like yours. Because our democracy relies on resilient, durable institutions, because no matter the circumstance or the political flavor of the month, those institutions endure. And so, if you haven't done it already, make a contribution to your local arts institution.

TG: Thank you. Friends, will you join me in saluting my favorite truth teller, bridge builder, visionary, and advocate for all of us in the arts!

CLOSING REMARKS BY AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS BOARD CHAIR ABEL LOPEZ



Thank you, Darren Walker, for your inspiring and thought-provoking lecture and for indulging us with a Q&A follow-up with Thelma. Thank you both.

My name is Abel Lopez and I am the chairman of the Americans for the Arts Board of Directors. And I want to thank all of you for joining us for the 30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts & Public Policy. I would like to thank Bob Lynch for his opening remarks, Thelma Golden for her earlier introduction of Darren Walker, and of course special thanks to the incomparable Anna Deavere Smith for her impactful performance. What a special opportunity to have her here with us tonight.

I want to acknowledge and thank the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for once again hosting us in its magnificent Concert Hall. And finally, I know that there are hundreds of arts advocates with us tonight, who have travelled long distances from across the country to participate in Arts Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill tomorrow. Thank you for your passion, thank you for your commitment, and the nation is in gratitude to you for standing up for the arts! Thank you again for joining us tonight.

ABOUT THE LECTURER



Darren Walker is president of the Ford Foundation, the nation's second largest philanthropy, and for two decades has been a leader in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. He led the philanthropy committee that helped bring a resolution to the city of Detroit's historic bankruptcy and chairs the Advisory Board of the U.S. Impact Investing Alliance.

Prior to joining Ford, he was vice president at the Rockefeller Foundation, where he managed the Rebuilding New Orleans initiative after Hurricane Katrina. In the 1990s, as COO of Harlem's largest community development organization, the Abyssinian Development Corporation, Darren oversaw a comprehensive revitalization program of central Harlem, including over 1,000 new units of housing. He had a decade-long career in international law and finance at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton and UBS. He is a member of the Commission on the Future of Rikers Island and serves on the boards of Carnegie Hall, New York City Ballet, the High Line, the Arcus Foundation, and PepsiCo.

Educated exclusively in public schools, Darren received the "Distinguished Alumnus Award," the highest honor given by his alma mater, the University of Texas at Austin. In 2016, *TIME* magazine named him to its annual list of the "100 Most Influential People in the World." He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the recipient of 13 honorary degrees and university awards.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

With more than 50 years of service, Americans for the Arts is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. From offices in Washington, DC, and New York City, the organization provides programs designed to:

1. Help build environments in which the arts and arts education can thrive and contribute to more vibrant and creative communities.
2. Support the generation of meaningful public and private sector policies and increased resources for the arts and arts education.
3. Build individual awareness and appreciation of the value of the arts and arts education.

To achieve its goals, Americans for the Arts partners with local, state, and national arts organizations; government agencies; business leaders; individual philanthropists; educators; and funders. While local arts agencies comprise Americans for the Arts' core constituency, the organization also supports a variety of partner networks with particular interests in public art, united arts fundraising, arts education, local and state advocacy networks, and leadership development.

Through national visibility campaigns and local outreach, Americans for the Arts strives to motivate and mobilize opinion leaders and decision-makers. Americans for the Arts produces annual events that heighten national visibility for the arts, including the National Arts Awards; the BCA 10; and the Public Leadership in the Arts Awards (in cooperation with The United States Conference of Mayors) which honors elected officials in local, state, and federal government. Americans for the Arts also hosts Arts Advocacy Day annually on Capitol Hill, convening arts advocates from across the country to advance federal support of the arts and arts education. For more information, please visit AmericansForTheArts.org.



ABOUT OUR PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

The **Rosenthal Family Foundation** (Jamie Rosenthal Wolf, David Wolf, Rick Rosenthal, and Nancy Stephens) are proud to support the Americans for the Arts 30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy. Established by Richard and Hinda Rosenthal, the Foundation embodies the belief that individuals fortunate enough to receive unusual benefits from a society have the distinct obligation to return meaningful, tangible support to that society—in the form of creative energy as well as funding. The Foundation encourages activity and commentary concerned with constructive social change and recognizes and rewards excellence in individuals and organizations nationwide. Americans for the Arts is particularly grateful to Hinda Rosenthal, who approached the organization about her foundation becoming a sponsor of the Nancy Hanks Lecture 17 years ago, and whose extraordinary support helped the program to flourish and grow into a pre-eminent national forum for dialogue about arts policy.

Ovation is America's only arts network, whose mission is to inspire the world through all forms of art and artistic expression. Ovation programming is a one-of-a-kind mix of original and selectively curated art-centric series, documentaries, films and specials. Ovation's signature programming includes The Art Of, A Young Doctor's Notebook, and The Fashion Fund. Ovation reaches a national audience of over 50 million homes and is available on cable, satellite, and telco systems, such as Time Warner Cable, Bright House Networks, Comcast Cable/Xfinity, RCN, DIRECTV, DISH, Verizon FIOS, AT&T U-Verse, Charter, and Hawaiian Telcom. Ovation is also available on VOD (in both standard and high definition). Ovation's diversified viewer experiences extend across its linear network, the popular ovationtv.com, and active social presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and more. Ovation is a cause based-media company and is deeply engaged with the arts both nationally and locally, providing more than \$15 million in contributions and in-kind support to community organizations, cultural institutions, and arts education programs. See the Ovation Facebook page for the latest information and conversations happening across the Ovation brand and the arts: www.facebook.com/OvationTV.

THE AFTER PARTY



(L-R) 2017 Hanks Lecturer and Ford Foundation President Darren Walker, actress Gabrielle Ruiz, Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch, Americans for the Arts Board Chair Abel Lopez, and Americans for the Arts Board Member and actor Brian Stokes Mitchell



(L-R) Washington Post Editorial Board Member and journalist Jonathan Capehart, Darren Walker, and Thurgood Marshall Jr.



(L-R) Robert L. Lynch, performance artist Anna Deavere Smith, and Studio Museum in Harlem Director Thelma Golden



(L-R) Brian Stokes Mitchell, Darren Walker, Anna Deavere Smith, Americans for the Arts Artist Committee Member and actor Ben Vereen, Gabrielle Ruiz, and Americans for the Arts Board Member Edgar L. Smith Jr.



(L-R) Brian Stokes Mitchell, Anna Deavere Smith, Kennedy Center Trustee Adrienne Arsht, Darren Walker, and arts philanthropists Vicki and Roger Sant



(L-R) Attorney Robert Raben, Americans for the Arts Board Member Ann Stock, Co-founder of The Kennedy Center Honors George Stevens Jr., and Thurgood Marshall Jr.

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ABOUT THE NANCY HANKS LECTURE

Nancy Hanks was president of Americans for the Arts from 1968–1969, when she was appointed chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, a position she held for eight years. Until her death in 1983, she worked tirelessly to bring the arts to prominent national consciousness. During her tenure at the National Endowment for the Arts, the agency's budget grew 1,400 percent. This year marks the 30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy, established to honor her memory and to provide an opportunity for public discourse at the highest levels on the importance of the arts and culture to our nation's well-being.

PAST NANCY HANKS LECTURERS

- 2017 Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation
- 2016 John Maeda, American designer and technologist
- 2015 Norman Lear, groundbreaking television producer, author, and social activist
- 2014 Maureen Dowd, op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*
- 2013 Yo-Yo Ma, acclaimed musician and arts educator
- 2012 Alec Baldwin, actor and arts advocate
- 2011 Kevin Spacey, actor and Artistic Director of the Old Vic Theatre
- 2010 Joseph P. Riley Jr., Mayor of Charleston, SC
- 2009 Wynton Marsalis, Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln Center
- 2008 Daniel Pink, best-selling author and innovator
- 2007 Robert MacNeil, broadcast journalist and author
- 2006 William Safire, columnist and author
- 2005 Ken Burns, documentary filmmaker
- 2004 Doris Kearns Goodwin, journalist and author
- 2003 Robert Redford, artist and activist
- 2002 Zelda Fichandler, Founding Director of Arena Stage in Washington, DC, and Chair of the Graduate Acting Program at New York University
- 2001 Frank Rich, op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*
- 2000 Terry Semel, past Chairman and Co-CEO of Warner Bros. and Warner Music Group
- 1999 Wendy Wasserstein, playwright
- 1998 Dr. Billy Taylor, jazz musician and educator
- 1997 Alan K. Simpson, former U.S. Senator
- 1996 Carlos Fuentes, author
- 1995 Winton Malcolm Blount, Chairman of Blount, Inc., philanthropist, and former U.S. Postmaster General
- 1994 David McCullough, historian
- 1993 Barbara Jordan, former U.S. Congresswoman
- 1992 Franklin D. Murphy, former CEO of the Times Mirror Company
- 1991 John Brademas, former U.S. Congressman and President Emeritus of New York University
- 1990 Maya Angelou, poet
- 1989 Leonard Garment, Special Counsel to Presidents Nixon and Ford
- 1988 Arthur Schlesinger Jr., historian and special assistant to President Kennedy



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