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Princeton Symphony Orchestra To Receive \$10,000 NEA Grant

by BWV News Desk Feb. 13, 2019

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The Princeton Symphony Orchestra (PSO) is to receive a \$10,000 Art Works grant from The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to help fund a community engagement project centered on *Mango Suite*, a new work by composer Derek Bermel, and its inspiration Sandra Cisneros and her short novel *The House on Mango Street*. Ms. Cisneros' book provides a window onto what it's like growing up amid two cultures.

Upon learning of the grant, PSO Executive Director Marc Uys said, "It's terrific to receive this recognition from the NEA which allows us to demonstrate how artistic mediums can

combine to bring into focus important issues like cultural identity."

The Art Works grant enables the PSO to offer a free community event on Saturday, May 18, 2019 at Richardson Auditorium featuring author Sandra Cisneros speaking about her experience growing up amidst two cultures and its impact on her writing of *The House on Mango Street*. Composer Derek Bermel and guest vocalist Paulina Viarreal will join Ms. Cisneros onstage to perform excerpts from Derek Bermel's *Mango Suite* which emphasizes themes presented in the book's vignettes. The event is intended to foster a community-wide dialogue around challenges faced by Princeton's Latinx immigrant community today.

Additionally, Derek Bermel will lead a songwriting workshop at schools participating in the orchestra's PSO BRAVO! Education Program, and plans are underway for a second workshop focused on exploring issues of cultural identity through artistic expression.

Derek Bermel has been widely hailed for his creativity, theatricality, and virtuosity as a composer and clarinetist. Artistic Director of the American Composers Orchestra, Bermel is also curator of the Gamper Festival at the Bowdoin International Music Festival, director of Copland House's emerging composers institute Cultivate, and he recently enjoyed a four-year tenure as artist-in-residence at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton. Bermel has become recognized as a dynamic and unconventional curator of concert series that spotlight the composer as performer, including ACO's SONIC Festival. Alongside his international studies of ethnomusicology and orchestration, an ongoing engagement with other musical cultures has become part of the fabric and force of his compositional language, in which the human voice and its myriad inflections play a primary role.

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Sandra Cisneros is a poet, short story writer, novelist, essayist, performer, and artist whose work explores the lives of the working-class. Her numerous awards include NEA fellowships in both poetry and fiction, the Texas Medal of the Arts, a MacArthur Fellowship, several honorary doctorates and national and international book awards, including Chicago's Fifth Star Award, the PEN Center USA Literary Award, the Fairfax Prize, and the National Medal of the Arts awarded to her by **President Obama** in 2016. Most recently, she received the Ford Foundation's Art of

Change Fellowship, was recognized among The **Frederick Douglass** 200, and won the PEN/Nabokov Award for international literature. Her classic, coming-of-age novel, *The House on Mango Street*, has sold over six million copies, has been translated into over twenty languages, and is required reading in elementary, high school, and universities across the nation.

The NEA announced awards totaling more than \$27 million in grants as part of the Arts Endowment's first major funding round of fiscal year 2019. Art Works is the Arts Endowment's principal grantmaking program. The agency received 1,605 Art Works applications for this round of grantmaking, and will award 972 grants in this category.

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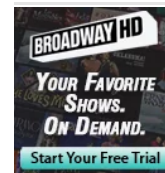
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"The arts enhance our communities and our lives, and we look forward to seeing these projects take place throughout the country, giving Americans opportunities to learn, to create, to heal, and to celebrate," said Mary Anne Carter, acting chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

For more information on this National Endowment for the Arts grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](https://www.arts.gov/news).

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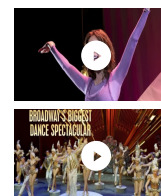
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