

BACKING ARTS WITH BENEFITS

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Retirement plans, health insurance and steady income may be expected in some careers, but not in the performing arts.

To address that, new funding initiatives across the genres are starting to give individual artists more than just the cash to put up the next show. New residencies for playwrights at the Signature Theater and for choreographers at New York Live Arts both include support for health care. And now, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation enters with a \$50 million plan to give 200 individual artists in jazz, theater and contemporary dance a reliable, if temporary, income and a retirement incentive—even if no work is produced.

The Doris Duke Performing Artists Initiative—the details of which will be fully announced Thursday—is a 10-year endeavor to encourage artists to take the long view of their career and flourish along the way, as opposed to repeatedly chasing project-specific grants and putting off concerns about their economic and professional futures.

"A number of years ago we had a conversation with artists who said, 'How many times do we have to prove ourselves to get support?' " said Ben Cameron, program director for the arts at the Doris Duke foundation. "So it raised the question for us, 'How do we invest in artists, rather than put them on an endless treadmill around projects?' "

The foundation's answer is in a three-part initiative that also met its trustees' desire to spend more than usual and make a more significant impact, said President and CEO Ed Henry: "This kind of funding in jazz, contemporary dance and theater just hasn't happened, and that's where our trustees saw we could push the art forms."

The first portion of the plan is for 100 artists who have received national funding for at least three projects (one of which has to have been supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation). The grantees, to be chosen by a peer-review panel, will be given \$225,000 in funds that can be used in any way and can be paid out over three to five years, as the artist determines.

An additional \$25,000 will be given if the artist designs an audience-development program. And up to \$25,000 in matching funds is available for artists who set aside retirement savings.

Within the jazz world—where longevity can have an inverse relationship to record sales—the need for retirement funds is acute. "Most jazz musicians I know do not have any pensions whatsoever," said Todd Barkan, programming director of Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, adding that the exceptions are musicians teaching in universities or in a salaried, union position, as in Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. "Even for musicians who are in their 40s or 50s, this would make a critical difference in their lives."

The second part of the initiative will fund 100 panel-selected artists who haven't received any significant national grants. They will receive \$60,000 over two to three years, plus \$10,000 for audience development and \$10,000 in matching retirement funds.

The support could allow performers to pay off debt, but also to take risks and explore ideas that they may otherwise not have had the leeway to take.

"General operating support has become the hardest to identify," said Lane Harwell, director of Dance/NYC, an advocacy group. "Any investment in the livelihood and career viability of dance artists will have a major impact in the field. I hope other funders will follow suit."

The third portion of the initiative is open to applications from artists and presenters wishing to create a residency. The program will support 50 four-month residencies—at \$150,000 or \$75,000, based on the size of the organization and the scale of the proposed project—over two to three years.

For the foundation, the new effort doesn't come at the cost of an existing program. "We are not cutting or reducing any of our other funding areas to do this," said Mr. Henry.

It will, however, push its spending from the standard 5% to between 5.25% and about 6% of its \$1.6 billion endowment. The spending, though, reflects the trustee's goal of long-term impact in the arts, said Mr. Cameron: "The interest was in responding to a systemic issue, rather than an opportunistic one, about how the system does or doesn't invest in artists."

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