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**National Endowment for the Arts Awards $10,000 Grant to Pensacola Symphony Orchestra**

PENSACOLA, Fla. – The National Endowment for the Arts has approved a $10,000 Challenge America award to support Pensacola Symphony Orchestra’s Beethoven & Blue Jeans. The concert and related events are among 168 projects across America totaling $1,680,000 that the NEA selected to receive fiscal year 2022 funding in the Challenge America grant category.

“The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support arts projects like this one from the Pensacola Symphony Orchestra that help support the community’s creative economy,” said NEA Acting Chair Ann Eilers. “PSO is among the organizations nationwide that are using the arts as a source of strength, a path to well-being, and providing access and opportunity for people to connect and find joy through the arts.”

PSO will present Beethoven & Blue Jeans this Saturday, January 15, at 7:30 p.m. at the Pensacola Saenger Theatre. Music Director Peter Rubardt and the orchestra will be joined by soprano Halley Gilbert and poets Jamey Jones and Charles McCaskill, Jr. for an exploration of the connection between music and poetry.

“We are extremely grateful to the National Endowment for the Arts for this funding that will help to extend the reach of the arts in Pensacola,” said Pensacola Symphony Orchestra Executive Director Bret Barrow. “This project combines the power of poetry and prose with extraordinary symphonic music.”

The program includes Jones and McCaskill reading their original poetry as the orchestra plays musical selections. McCaskill’s poem describes the loss of the John Sunday House, a historic Pensacola landmark, and it is paired with George Walker’s “Lyric for Strings,” a lamenting yet beautiful composition. Jones’ poem, “Nine River Ways,” vividly explores the flowing of rivers in several metaphoric and literal manifestations. The text will be paired with Tobias Picker’s hushed and hazy “Old and Lost Rivers,” inspired by the high bridge crossing the winding bayous where two rivers converge. Soprano Halley Gilbert joins us the orchestra to perform “Knoxville: Summer of 1915”with prose by James Agee set to music by Samuel Barber. These works are bookended by Ludwig van Beethoven's First Symphony and Leonard Bernstein's Symphonic Suite from “On the Waterfront*.*”

Tickets to Beethoven & Blue Jeans start at $23 and may be purchased online atPensacolaSymphony.com, by phone at 850-435-2533 or in person at the Saenger Theatre Box Office, 22 E. Intendencia St., Pensacola, Fla. 32502. Virtual tickets are $20 and may be purchased at PensacolaSymphony.com.

For more information about other projects included in the Arts Endowment grant announcement, visit arts.gov/news.

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