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MANASSAS BALLET THEATRE THOUGHTS ON FUNDING FOR THE ARTS

MANASSAS, VA...At Manassas Ballet Theatre (MBT), we are all about the arts. Not only do we create and teach dance through choreography, class and performance, but we acknowledge that the support of all forms of art is integral to a healthy, thriving community, society and world. Art inspires imagination and provides a common thread between people and their experiences, and we can't imagine a world without it.

As you may know, our new administration is looking hard at cutting many programs, and the National Endowment for the Arts may very well be on the chopping block. In an email we received this week from Americans for the Arts, we read the following: "According to the New York Times, The White House budget office has drafted a hit list of programs that President Trump could eliminate to trim domestic spending, including longstanding conservative targets like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Legal Services Corporation, AmeriCorps and the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities." Read the New York Times article here: [New York Times: Popular Domestic Programs Face Ax Under First Trump Budget](#)

A quick online search reveals that many are writing about this very subject. To us, the largest takeaway is this: If you are pro jobs and pro economy, you need to be pro arts. The arts are not frivolous and expendable, purely from an economic viewpoint (and not to mention the benefit of arts in education, which we'll write about soon). In all of its forms, the arts are a massive employer – from performing arts centers, theaters and all types of venues (staff including management, marketing, event, technical, and more), performing arts organizations (ballet, symphony, chorale, theater groups and more), and neighborhoods that support theatre patrons with parking, restaurants, and transportation. Employees of universities and other educational groups and schools teach the arts to millions, every day, in every corner of our country. The arts equals commerce – and there is no way around that. Read some interesting facts and figures in this Huffington Post piece: [Will Donald Trump and the US Congress Defund The NEA?](#)

To that point, here is a statement from the Americans for the Arts website: "Research by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) shows that the nonprofit and for-profit arts is a \$730 billion industry that directly employs 4.8 million arts workers. This represents 4.2 percent of the nation's GDP—a larger share of the economy than transportation,

tourism, and agriculture. Arts organizations are resilient and entrepreneurial businesses. They employ people locally, purchase goods and services from within their communities, and market and promote their regions. Arts businesses are rooted locally. These are jobs that cannot be shipped overseas.” Read the entire statement here: [Americans for the Arts Statement on Arts, Jobs and the Economy](#)

The National Endowment for the Arts, whose 2016 appropriation was 147.9 million (approximately .004 of the federal budget), distributed 80% of that money as grants and awards to individuals and organizations nationwide. Of that, approximately 30% goes to arts organizations with operating budgets of less than \$350,000. Without the grants, the struggle to sustain is immense. Read more about what the NEA does on the NEA Quick Facts sheet, found here: <https://www.arts.gov/news/facts-and-figures>

“The arts are who we are, who we want to be and what we leave behind,” said Mark Wolfe, Executive Director of MBT. “In 2013 and 2014, Manassas Ballet Theater was privileged to be the first arts organization in Prince William County to receive a grant from the NEA. The \$10,000 grant helped support our educational outreach programming, providing thousands of PWC and Manassas Public School students with free exposure to professional level cultural arts, often a students’ first experience with ballet or live orchestra.”

MBT Artistic Director Amy Grant Wolfe shares this thought: “This is why I love art: throughout the centuries, our struggles remain the same, and we know that, in the end, our own lives will pass, as surely as the moon. Yet, it is the description of that human struggle through our art forms that ties us together, both now, and throughout time, and that gives us the strength to continue the fight, knowing we are not alone.”

A final thought from Winston Churchill, who said: “The arts are essential to any complete national life. The State owes it to itself to sustain and encourage them.... Ill fares the race which fails to salute the arts with the reverence and delight which are their due.”

We ask that you think about the importance of the arts in our communities, and celebrate the fiscal and educational contributions they make. Buy a ticket – to see MBT, to see a play, a concert – anything. Support the arts and we promise, you’ll see your return on investment.

ABOUT MANASSAS BALLET THEATRE

Manassas Ballet Theatre is a 501c(3) nonprofit corporation founded in 1983. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life in Northern Virginia by providing accessible, affordable professional ballet performances, educational outreach to the community, and the highest caliber of training to students of all levels at the affiliated school, Manassas Ballet Academy. MBT is funded in part by the National Endowment For the Arts, the Virginia Commission of the Arts, Prince William County and the City of Manassas, and is the resident ballet company at the Hylton Performing Arts Center on the Manassas campus of George Mason University. For tickets to our upcoming performances CARMINA BURANA & MORE! and ROMEO and JULIET, please visit <http://www.manassasballet.org>