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More Than \$82 Million Awarded for Arts Projects Nationwide
Includes \$15,000 awarded to Opera for the Young

Madison, WI— National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved more than \$82 million to fund local arts projects across the country in the NEA's second major funding announcement for fiscal year 2017. Included in this announcement is an Art Works award of \$15,000 to Opera for the Young (OFTY) to support the 2017/18 tour of OFTY's original adaptation of Dvořák's *Rusalka*. The NEA received 1,728 Art Works applications and will make 1,029 grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000.

"The arts reflect the vision, energy, and talent of America's artists and arts organizations," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support organizations such as Opera for the Young in serving their communities by providing excellent and accessible arts experiences."

Opera for the Young's Managing Artistic Director Diane Garton Edie said, "*Rusalka*—Opera for the Young's dip into the coral reef – is a perennial favorite with our young audiences. The idiom of mermaids and sea creatures is always appealing to children and our 'vehicle' of romantic era opera only makes it more vividly entertaining. Our folksy adaptation of Dvořák's dramatic opera will be seen by over 75,000 Midwestern school children during our 2017-18 season. This production was created by Opera for the Young's Resident Artists, Musicians and Designers and will showcase opera's musical storytelling with our special brand of interactive performance. We are honored that the National Endowment for the Arts has honored OFTY's *Rusalka* with this prestigious award and we hope you will be able to join us at one of more than 180 performances next season."

Dvořák's ninth opera, *Rusalka*, is a highly dramatic setting of a familiar fairy tale for children, "The Little Mermaid". OFTY artistic staff selected *Rusalka* to provide elementary students exposure to varied styles of opera; in this case, a through-composed work featuring the use of leitmotifs for specific ideas, characters, and environments. This masterwork is also considered by many to be the culmination of Dvořák's varied dramatic composition techniques. OFTY moves the setting from forest glen to coral reef, where *Rusalka* yearns to become human because she's in love with the Prince. *Rusalka*'s father, the Sea King, warns her about people, but the mermaid goes to the Sea Witch for a magic spell. *Rusalka* exchanges her fish tail for legs at a price: she won't be understood by humans (except for the audience). This proves to be a challenging barrier for the Prince who, after bringing *Rusalka* to his castle, is pursued by a Foreign Princess (the Sea Witch in disguise). Complications abound, aided and untangled by Creatures of the Reef, portrayed by the elementary student chorus. Understanding and accepting difference is a

powerful subject highlighted in this tale of magical romance, loss, and the redemptive power of love.

To join the Twitter conversation about this announcement, please use **#NEASpring17**. For more information on projects included in the NEA grant announcement, go to arts.gov

About Opera for the Young

Opera for the Young, Inc. is a leading provider of arts-in education services in the Midwest, as well as a pre-eminent producer of opera for children in the United States. Each year OFY brings opera to more than 75,000 children. Opera for the Young's award winning programming focuses on arts education (educating children about the value and beauty of the arts) and also arts-in-education (using the arts as a springboard to teach other core curriculum subjects).

Founded in 1970, Opera for the Young's mission is to: Ignite a love for the arts in every child. The organization's artistic vision, in support of that mission:

- Engage and educate children about opera with professional, affordable school-based performances;
- Involve students in all aspects - from design to performance;
- Provide professional opportunities for artists;
- Foster the creation of new operatic works expressly intended for young audiences;
- Broaden access to opera for the entire community.

Since its founding Opera for the Young has performed to more than 2.5 million children throughout the Midwest.