

# 9 groups share \$700,000 in NEA grants

## *Awards span local arts spectrum*

**By Preston Turegano**  
STAFF WRITER

Nine San Diego arts organizations are sharing \$700,000 in National Endowment for the Arts grants.

The total is almost \$500,000 more than what the embattled Washington, D.C.-based agency awarded to San Diego area cultural institutions during 1995-96, but \$400,000 less than what was grant-

ed here in 1994-95.

"Obviously, the grants made in San Diego indicate the organizations and their projects are worthy of support," said Jane Alexander, chairman of the endowment, which is announcing the grants today at a news conference.

The latest awards are part of \$67 million in nationwide second-round 1996-97 arts endowment grants.

In December, the endowment

awarded first-round 1996-97 grants totaling \$18 million. At the time, the Museum of Photographic Arts in Balboa Park was the only local arts institution that received a grant — \$60,000.

"I am very proud of San Diego's thriving and diverse arts community," said Mayor Susan Golding. "A successful arts community makes San Diego an attractive destination for our visitors and most importantly is a critical quality-of-life benefit San Diegans can and do enjoy."

Institutions and projects being

supported by the \$700,000 are:

■ The city Commission for Arts and Culture; two grants of \$150,000 each. One award is for a partnership with the California Cultural Tourism Coalition to promote cultural tourism in San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco. The other grant is for aesthetic enhancement of the Point Loma Wastewater Plant. That project falls under the wing of the arts commission's Public Art Project.

■ The Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; \$100,000 for the

"PanAmerican Project" — a series of exhibitions of works by artists throughout the Americas.

■ Old Globe Theatre; \$75,000 for the development and production in 1998 of "To Glean It Around, To Show My Shine," a work by Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner based on the 1937 novel, "Their Eyes Were Watching God," by Zoraneal Hurston.

■ San Diego Opera; \$50,000 to support one of five operas in the



company's 1998 season that will be announced Thursday.

■ Centro Cultural de la Raza; \$45,000 for "Ambientaciones y Tiempo" ("Environments and Time") a series of exhibitions, theater production and films relevant to the Chicano/Latino culture.

■ San Diego Repertory Theatre; \$40,000 for the upcoming May 2 world premiere of "A Quiet Love" by Rick Najera.

■ Balboa Art Conservation Center; \$30,000 to enhance marketing of the art restoration facility in Balboa Park and its overall operations.

■ Installation Gallery; \$20,000 for inSITE97 — an exhibition of site-specific artworks and installations in San Diego and Tijuana next fall.

■ La Jolla Playhouse; \$40,000 for the commissioning, developing and production of "Dog Eaters," a world premiere tentatively scheduled for next year. The work is by Jessica Hagedorn and is based on her 1990 novel of the same name.

"We're heartened that they're willing to support the development

and production of new work, because it's a little bit of a risk, but it's the smartest way to spend your money," said La Jolla Playhouse managing director Terrence Dwyer.

The Museum of Photographic Arts' \$60,000 grant made late last year is being used to support the development and distribution of a comprehensive curriculum to train teachers to use photography in visual literacy and critical thinking. The award came under the National Endowment for the Art's Education and Access funding category, one of four new grant application areas instituted last year by the agency.

The grants announced today come under Creation and Presentation or Partnership, Planning and Stabilization. No local institutions have yet received funds under the final application category, Heritage and Preservation.

Centro Cultural de la Raza director Larry Baza said he "labored" over which category would be the Centro's best prospect.

"Creation and Presentation is what most organizations were applying under," Baza said. "I was praying because I knew we were up against such a big giant national pool."

The four application areas were created in the wake of a congressionally imposed 40 percent NEA budget cut that left the agency with

a budget of slightly more than \$99 million for 1996-97.

In 1995-96, the arts endowment gave San Diego arts groups a total of \$239,000 in grants. The previous fiscal year, 18 local groups shared in \$1.1 million in NEA funds.

San Diego Opera general director Ian Campbell said the opera, which in the past has received NEA grants as big as \$250,000 and \$86,000, is "delighted" with its latest award of \$50,000.

"This grant is not a criticism of us in any way, it's just that there's no money there," Campbell said.

Before the endowment's slashed budget and new funding categories were instituted, grant application guidelines were relatively flexible and simple for arts organizations and individual artists.

Now, creative writers, jazz master musician/composers and folk artists are the only individual artists who may receive NEA grants. Painters, sculptors and performance artists are not qualified to receive support.

Despite strict application rules and a limited amount of money, the arts endowment was able this year to fund more small arts organizations — those with budgets of less than \$1 million — than it expected. Approximately 31 percent of this week's grant recipients nationwide come under the \$1 million range. An additional 24 percent have budgets of \$250,000 or less.

Still, of the thousands of arts entities from Maine to Hawaii that applied for support this year, only 40 percent are being funded, said an arts endowment spokeswoman. During the endowment's heyday, the funding rate averaged 60 percent annually.

To increase the size of the endowment pie, President Clinton has proposed \$136 million to fund the agency during 1997-98.

"The president's request level is extremely gratifying to us," said Alexander. "Whether we will be able to have Congress meet the request level is doubtful, but I hope they will understand we took a greater cut (last year) than any other (federal) agency."

Alexander said the recent Arts Advocacy Day in Washington — in which artists and entertainers spoke with congressional leaders and appeared on news media shows about the arts — appears to have softened some hard-liners bent on eliminating the arts endowment.

"We're hearing more moderate voices, but we're not out of the woods yet," Alexander said.