

*The Leonore Annenberg Scholarship,
Fellowship, and School Funds*

THE ANNENBERG
PUBLIC POLICY CENTER
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

**For immediate release
April 8, 2014**

Seven emerging artists, eight schools awarded Leonore Annenberg Fund grants

PHILADELPHIA – A bass-baritone opera singer raised amid rough surroundings in a trailer park in Virginia; a violinist from a family of Philadelphia Orchestra string players; a first-generation Serbian-American actor who won acclaim in an offbeat Off Broadway musical.

These are among the seven arts fellows who will receive 2014 grants from the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund for the Performing and Visual Arts, which provides \$50,000 a year for up to two years to young artists of exceptional promise. In addition, the Leonore Annenberg School Fund for Children announced that eight underserved public elementary schools each will receive a grant of \$50,000 or more for technology and other educational resources.

The seven arts fellows and eight schools will receive a total of \$984,000 from **the Leonore Annenberg Scholarship, Fellowship, and School Funds**. The 2014 arts fellows and schools will join a list of honorees that includes 10 high school students whose \$2.5 million in college scholarships were announced in 2013. Now in its seventh year, the 10-year Leonore Annenberg Funds initiative has awarded a total of \$13.2 million to arts fellows, students, and schools. The funds are administered by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

Past recipients of the arts fellowship include Misty Copeland, the first African-American female soloist in two decades with American Ballet Theatre and author of the recent autobiography “Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina”; actor Bryce Pinkham, who is starring on Broadway in the musical comedy “A Gentleman’s Guide to Love & Murder”; and photographer Richard Mosse, selected to represent his home country, Ireland, at the 2013 Venice Biennale.

“The Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund provides support to artists during a vibrant period of transition in their professional life, enabling them to develop artistically as they realize their career goals,” said program director Gail Levin, Ph.D. Partnering with organizations such as American Ballet Theatre, the Yale School of Drama, and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the fund identifies and nurtures emerging artists of great potential with career development grants and the support of mentors.

The 2014 recipients of the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund for the Performing and Visual Arts are:

- **Ryan Speedo Green**, a bass-baritone raised in troubled surroundings in a trailer park in Suffolk, Va., is a national winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. He got his start when a middle-school chorus teacher pushed him to audition for a magnet-school voice program. Green, who has “an extraordinarily beautiful, versatile, and powerful bass voice,” in the words of Wolf Trap Opera’s Kim Pensinger Witman, appeared at the Kennedy Center in December 2013 in a tribute to soprano Martina Arroyo. After completing his training this spring at the Met’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program and singing with Wolf Trap Opera this summer, he will join the Vienna Staatsoper as a member of the company.
- **Francesca dePasquale** is a violinist from Philadelphia who comes from a family of distinguished string players with the Philadelphia Orchestra, including her mother (cellist), her late father (first violinist and co-concertmaster) and three uncles. A master’s degree student at the Juilliard School, she is concertmaster for the Juilliard Orchestra and assists Itzhak Perlman in teaching his classes. She was nominated for the fellowship by the Perlman Music Program. Perlman says: “An absolutely beautiful violinist, her originality of style is unusual; never glitzy, pretentious, or superficial.” In 2010, she won first prize in the Irving M. Klein International String Competition.
- **Sarah Sokolovic**, a graduate of the Yale School of Drama, received a Drama Desk nomination for her performance in “The Shaggs” (2011) at Playwrights Horizons in New York. The following year her work in the comedy “Detroit” prompted New York magazine to ask: “Is Sarah Sokolovic theater’s next great actress?” She has guest-starred on the TV series “The Good Wife” and “Unforgettable.” Raised in a working-class town outside Milwaukee by her father and his father, both of whom emigrated from Yugoslavia after World War II, Sokolovic also is a writer who has completed a screenplay and is at work on two more.
- **Mia Rosenthal**, a Philadelphia artist, graduated from Parsons the New School for Design (B.F.A.) and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (M.F.A.). Rosenthal specializes in works on paper, fusing her interests in science and art through a multitude of tiny sketches. She has had two solo exhibitions at Gallery Joe in Philadelphia: “American Landscapes” (2012) and “every day” (2014). The latter title reflects the spirit of her response to the often-asked question “How long did this take to make?” It is done, she says, “a little bit every day.” Her works are in the collections of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- **Tessa Lark**, a violinist from Boston, was born and raised in rural Kentucky, and her classical training is complemented by the Appalachian folk music of her youth. Lark, who doubles as a bluegrass fiddler, won first prize at the 2012 Naumburg International Violin Competition – the first American to do so since 1960 – and a silver medal at the 2012 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. Trained at the New England Conservatory of Music, she has performed in solo recitals, chamber music festivals, and concerti from Boston to Beijing. For this grant, she has proposed to record Telemann’s “Twelve Fantasias for Solo Violin.”

- **Calvin Royal III** is a corps de ballet dancer with American Ballet Theatre. “The moment I step on stage, the weight of the world diminishes,” says Royal, raised in St. Petersburg, Fla., where he auditioned at 14 on a whim for a performing-arts high school. He joined ABT’s pre-professional school after being discovered at the Youth America Grand Prix competition in New York in 2006 and was promoted to the main company in 2010. A 2014 Clive Barnes Award nominee, Royal has the potential “to be a breakthrough artist of color in a classical forum,” says ABT artistic director Kevin McKenzie.
- **Molly Bernard**, who grew up in Las Vegas, “is a highly skilled, highly versatile actress,” says André Bishop, producing artistic director of Lincoln Center Theater. Bernard trained with her grandfather at the Joseph Bernard Acting Studio, and at the Yale School of Drama in addition to the Moscow Art Theater School and SITI Company. She can be seen in the Amazon Prime series “Alpha House” and made her Yale Repertory Theatre debut in 2013 in Dario Fo’s farce “Accidental Death of an Anarchist,” a co-production with Berkeley Repertory Theatre.

The elementary school grants, from the Leonore Annenberg School Fund for Children, have “provided support to help meet a broad range of children’s learning needs,” said Dr. Levin. “Those include curricular and other materials for an environmental science program, a new playground and fitness station, an updated media center and art studio, musical instruments for a school orchestra, and technology tools for English language learners.”

The schools receiving grants and the resources they plan to acquire are:

- **Skyway Elementary School**, Miami Gardens, Fla.; computers and interactive white boards for school-wide access to a digital reading and mathematics series;
- **Sandy Lane Elementary School**, Clearwater, Fla.; interactive white boards and laptops for classrooms, and books for the media center;
- **Hartsfield Elementary School**, Houston, Texas; classroom technology to support struggling learners in math;
- **Bess T. Shepherd Elementary School**, Chattanooga, Tenn.; skill-building program in leadership;
- **East Lake Elementary School**, Chattanooga, Tenn.; Chromebooks for all students in grades three through five;
- **Greenville Elementary School**, Greenville, Fla.; technology to integrate music and the visual arts in the curriculum;
- **Stewart Street Elementary School**, Quincy, Fla.; library books and media center upgrades;

- **PS 185: Early Childhood Discovery and Design Magnet School**, New York, N.Y.; a visual arts, theater arts, and arts integration program.

About Leonore Annenberg: Leonore Annenberg (1918-2009) was U.S. Chief of Protocol for President Ronald Reagan and wife of the late Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg. Mrs. Annenberg established the grants to support her lifelong commitment to public service, education, and the arts. All grants are made on an invitation-only basis, in consultation with a partner organization. Visit www.leonoreannenbergsscholarships.org for more information.

For more information contact:

Michael Rozansky, Director of Communications, Annenberg Public Policy Center, 215-746-0202 | mrozansky@annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org

Gail Levin, Director, The Leonore Annenberg Funds, 215-746-5461 | glevin@asc.upenn.edu