



For immediate release / April 12, 2016

Contacts:

Michael Rozansky, Annenberg Public Policy Center, 215-746-0202 | mrozansky@asc.upenn.edu
Gail Levin, Director, The Leonore Annenberg Funds, 215-746-5461 | glevin@asc.upenn.edu

**Nine emerging artists awarded \$450,000
in Leonore Annenberg Arts Fellowships**

PHILADELPHIA – Nine early-career artists have been named as the recipients of grants from the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund for the Performing and Visual Arts, which awards \$50,000 a year for up to two years to help promising individuals make a breakthrough in their artistry, broaden their skills, and achieve professional success.

Fellowships totaling \$450,000 were awarded in 2016 to violinist **Robyn Bollinger**; bass-baritone **Brandon Cedel**; actors **Jeremie Harris**, **Miriam Hyman** and **David Pegram**; cellist and conductor **Nico Olarte-Hayes**; visual artist **Nyugen Smith**; ballet dancer **Devon Teuscher**; and musician and musicologist **Daniel Walden**.

The Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund has paid or pledged more than \$5.5 million in career-development grants to artists, including the current group, over the last nine years. The funding has enabled promising artists with world-class talent to film a movie, record new music, experiment in performance, afford studio time or training, buy materials, pay

for living expenses and pay down student debt. The fellows, selected in consultation with partners such as The Public Theater, American Ballet Theatre, and the Perlman Music Program, work with mentors chosen by the partners and the Leonore Annenberg Fund.

“The philanthropy represented in these fellowships embodies both ideals and constructive action,” said Gail Levin, Ph.D., director of the program, administered by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. “Through her beneficence to early-career musicians, dancers, singers, actors and visual artists, Leonore Annenberg will not let us forget what is important and what is good.”

Past recipients include [Misty Copeland](#), the first African American woman to be named a principal dancer at American Ballet Theatre, as well as fellow ABT principal [Isabella Boylston](#); actor [André Holland](#), a star of Cinemax’s “The Knick”; Grammy Award-winning singer [Isabel Leonard](#), co-star of the new opera “Cold Mountain”; and pianist [Sullivan Fortner](#), winner of the 2015 Cole Porter Jazz Fellowship.

“This fellowship truly shaped the kind of artist I want to be, and changed my life,” said violinist and composer [Michelle Ross](#). Actor [Jeremy Strong](#) (“The Big Short”) said: “With one miraculous stroke, the fellowship gave me the means to devote all my time utterly to the creative work I was hungry for...” With this fellowship, said multimedia artist [Angel Otero](#), “I was able to be in a city as challenging as New York with the state of mind I wanted. I was able to wake up to make art, and sleep knowing that I could make art again the next day.”

The 2016 recipients of the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund for the Performing and Visual Arts (and their hometowns) are:

- Violinist [Robyn Bollinger](#) (Philadelphia, Pa.) made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut at age 12. A graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music, her fellowship sponsor, Bollinger has developed a concert model that blends multimedia historical presentations and personal narrative with performance. She has proposed to develop a video production and live performance of “CIACCONA: The Bass of Time,” a multimedia project that seeks to demystify Bach’s “Ciaccona” for solo violin. Her father, Blair, is bass trombonist of the Philadelphia Orchestra. She has been awarded a two-year fellowship of \$50,000-a-year.
- Bass-baritone [Brandon Cedel](#) (Charleston, S.C.) will join Oper Frankfurt in 2016 when he completes his third year of the Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, which sponsored him. A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, Cedel won a Grand Prize at the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (2013) and a Richard Tucker Career Grant (2015). The New Yorker’s music critic Alex Ross wrote of Cedel: “Capable of singing anything from Cavalli to Wagner, he may be destined for stardom.”

- Actor [Jeremie Harris](#) (New York, N.Y.) nominated by The Public Theater, was recently cast in FX's X-Men TV series "Legion." A graduate of the Juilliard School, he has appeared in TV, film and theater productions, including Suzan-Lori Parks' acclaimed "Father Comes Home from the Wars" at the Public Theater. Harris, a high school basketball player who once dreamed of playing in the NBA, fell in love with theater during a college preparatory acting program at the Harlem School of the Arts. He received a two-year award.
- Actor [Miriam A. Hyman](#) (Philadelphia, Pa.), who received an MFA at the Yale School of Drama, which sponsored her, landed her first professional acting job as a high school senior in Freedom Theater's annual holiday production of "Black Nativity," a year after she ushered at the holiday show while in the company's training program for teens. She is a graduate of University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Performing this year in "The Piano Lesson" at McCarter Theater in Princeton, Hyman brought "a quiet dignity and a rough poetic cadence" to her role, wrote New York Times critic Ken Jaworowski. Hyman, who raps under the moniker Robyn Hood, received a two-year award.
- Cellist and conductor [Nico Olarte-Hayes](#) (Plainsboro, N.J.) was nominated by the Perlman Music Program, where he studied for eight years. He graduated with honors from the Harvard/New England Conservatory Joint Program with an A.B. in physics from Harvard and a Master of Music from NEC. He performed on "Live from Lincoln Center" and "The Kennedy Center Honors" in tribute to his mentor, violinist Itzhak Perlman. Olarte-Hayes, who also won the 2015 Vincent C. LaGuardia, Jr. Conducting Competition, plans to buy instruments and equipment and record works for solo cello by American composers. His fellowship is two years.
- Actor [David Pegram](#) (Houston, Texas) graduated from the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. He spent two years in Lincoln Center Theater's production of "War Horse," alternating between two roles: one of the actor-puppeteers playing the lead horse, Joey, and Private David Taylor, best friend of Joey's original owner. In his first real professional job, Pegram "succeeded way beyond his years or experience," said André Bishop, producing artistic director of Lincoln Center Theater, which is sponsoring him. Pegram, awarded a two-year fellowship, is "an actor of immense promise – intelligent, attractive, devoted to his craft," said Bishop, who will be one of his fellowship mentors.
- Multimedia artist [Nyugen Smith](#) (Jersey City, N.J.) is sponsored by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, from which he is to graduate this year with an MFA. Smith, who has had 15 solo exhibitions, was born in Jersey City, N.J., spent his early childhood in Trinidad, and has a bachelor's degree from Seton Hall University. He is interested in the "confluence of cultures and sensibilities of the African and European experience within colonial and postcolonial contexts." His two-year fellowship will enable him to pursue field research in the Caribbean for a mixed-

media sculpture and develop mixed-media drawings highlighting mythical and historical figures from Caribbean and American literature.

- American Ballet Theatre soloist [Devon Teuscher](#) (South Burlington, Vt.), is possessed of great technical skill, and hopes to grow as an artist through acting lessons, studying choreography, working with a dance coach, and visiting prominent companies including Paris Opera Ballet, the Royal Ballet, and Bolshoi Ballet, to learn about their training styles and repertory. Before being promoted to soloist, in 2014, the New York Times named Teuscher one of six standouts in the corps de ballet. Writer Gia Kourlas noted that Teuscher has “prodigious strength,” yet still “is all upper-body eloquence.”
- Musician and musicologist [Daniel Walden](#) (Berkeley, Calif.), a candidate for a Ph.D. in music theory at Harvard University, received a bachelor’s degree at Oberlin in piano performance, and a master’s in music studies at the University of Cambridge. As a performer on harpsichord, he has been acclaimed for his “extreme virtuosity” (Alex Ross, the New Yorker). Dedicated to new music performance, Walden is a founding member of the Netherlands-based music collective Oerknal! Sponsored by Oberlin Conservatory for his two-year fellowship, Walden seeks to “explore the ways that new music interfaces with rare avant-garde works of Renaissance Italian keyboard music.”

The arts fund is part of the [Leonore Annenberg Scholarship, Fellowship, and School Funds](#), which also provide four-year college scholarships to high school students who have overcome challenging circumstances, and grants to underfunded public elementary schools that serve children in financial need. As of June 2016, the Leonore Annenberg Funds will have provided or committed more than \$19 million to arts fellows, college students and elementary schools.

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.leonoreannenberg scholarships.org for more information.