A Report on Center Stage Seasons 1 – 4

by New England Foundation for the Arts with Lisa Booth Management, Inc
Center Stage welcomes important new voices into our national cultural dialogue, enlarging our world, and sharing diverse, global perspectives directly with communities in the U.S and peoples abroad.

“...a global message and a universal groove.”

Washington Post


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Key

- Center Stage: Artists from Abroad in American Communities
- Program Impacts
- Dollars & Sense
- What’s Next for Center Stage
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- Acknowledgements

Cover images, top to bottom: Dina El Wedidi, by Michael Spencer; Arabesque, Courtesy of U.S. State Department ECA; Jagwa Music, photo courtesy Moss Arts Center; Teatr Pralnia with CCA Dakh, by Adam Lee

Center Stage is an initiative of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs with funding provided by the U.S. Government. It is administered by the New England Foundation for the Arts in cooperation with the U.S. Regional Arts Organizations. General management is provided by Lisa Booth Management, Inc.

This report on the first four seasons of Center Stage includes content, data and statistics by New England Foundation for the Arts and Lisa Booth Management, Inc, and findings from RMC Research. Design by Warp & Weft © NEFA October 2019

By Heather Jones. Design by War & Weft © NEFA October 2019
DEAR FRIENDS,

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that we can affirm Center Stage is among the most successful cultural diplomacy programs to bring contemporary international performing artists into direct contact with people across a wide range of American communities, and to share these experiences globally.

The Department of State's interest in providing international artists with a broad experience of American life dovetails with the value the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) places on supporting access to the arts for everyone.

Though live performances and off-stage gatherings have been halted, the performing arts field is activating virtual strategies, and investing in models and methods to bring artists and audiences together creatively and safely once again. Center Stage is a valued resource as communities around our nation find new ways to come together in a COVID-19 world.

After four seasons and nine years, we have taken stock of the program’s accomplishments. RMC Research was commissioned as an independent evaluator to review existing materials developed by Center Stage, synthesize data collected by the program, conduct interviews with stakeholders, and identify common themes associated with Center Stage experiences, paying special attention to outcomes for artists and presenters. This report summarizes those findings with an emphasis on the impact of Center Stage and the values and core elements responsible for its success.

The artists you will see in the following pages are incredible and the impact they’ve had on American communities is remarkable. Enjoy.

Welcome

Cathy Edwards,  
Executive Director

Adrienne Petrillo,  
Program Director,  
Center Stage

“People in my town don’t routinely have access to excellent artistic experiences. We can undo cultural assumptions with high quality, professional artists. And it’s especially important for young people to have access to a range of cultures, cultural expressions — to expand their toolkit not only about art but about the world.”

Melissa Richmond, West Claremont Center for Music and the Arts, Claremont, NH

Jagwa Music, by William Farrington
A Report on Center Stage Seasons 1 – 4

Center Stage: ARTISTS FROM ABROAD IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

From 2012-2018, during four Center Stage Seasons, 29 dance, music, and theater ensembles from nine nations visited more than 135 different cultural hubs across the United States — large-scale, well-known performance halls, colleges and universities, festivals, clubs, artist spaces, and community centers — engaging hundreds of thousands of people on stage and off stage, and across the globe through traditional and social media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Ensembles</th>
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<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
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<td>Ukraine</td>
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<td>Vietnam</td>
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“Center Stage celebrates cultures that people in the U.S. might have no idea about or even negative connotations because of political differences... And, our own community members from those countries see their culture celebrated in a place that they didn’t think valued their culture.”

Lincoln Center Atrium, New York, NY

Center Stage identifies, prepares, and tours young and excellent contemporary performing arts groups, generally from countries and cultures under-represented in the U.S., to diverse communities across the nation. The program engages artists, journalists, cultural leaders in the U.S. and abroad, participating embassies and their in-country constituents, American audiences, students, professionals, and the public at large.

The U.S. Department of State established and supports Center Stage to bring people of different countries into direct contact with each other for mutual benefit. As a public diplomacy initiative, Center Stage complements traditional state-to-state diplomacy, and joins other cultural, educational, and information programs including the prestigious Fulbright Scholars and historic Jazz Ambassadors.

Center Stage is structured as a public-private partnership with the State Department providing lead funding with additional support necessary from foundations and U.S. Embassies for full implementation and growth. It is designed and implemented by the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA), a nonprofit organization, overseeing the program’s design, administration, and budget, with Lisa Booth Management, Inc. (LBMI), a performing arts management and producing firm with an extensive international portfolio.

With plans for future editions of Center Stage now confirmed, this report takes stock of the program to date. It identifies impacts, key features, and best practices as the Center Stage team of NEFA and LBMI looks to respond to the challenges and opportunities of shifting international relations, changing economic and social environments, advancing technology, and synergies in the global creative sector that lie ahead.
How It Works

Each Center Stage Season takes place over a two- and half-year cycle beginning with county identification and artist selection. Once a ‘Season’ of 5-7 performing ensembles from at least two countries is selected, each ensemble is promoted in the large and diverse American marketplace, then tour routing, residencies, and repertory are confirmed. Travel is arranged, visas secured, and other needs and logistics are finalized.

The program culminates in individual month-long tours that take place over a six-month period. The tours include multi-day residencies in four to eight communities with public performances and off-stage experiences such as classroom visits, community meals, and artist-to-artist exchanges. Professional development, communications and promotion are active throughout.

Trips to each Center Stage country are made early in the process. Organized in cooperation with U.S. Embassies, U.S. presenters, cultural practitioners, and Center Stage staff engage with arts professionals on a wide range of topics including mobility, intellectual property, and resources at workshops and roundtables, panel discussions, and performances. During these trips, the U.S. delegation meets with and sees work by candidate ensembles in context. These trips seed trust, establish relationships, increase shared knowledge, and build networks, among a wide range of stakeholders.

Center Stage activities, media, and other contextual resources are promoted and documented on the website.

The Center Stage team activates a wide range of professionals at different stages of the program, including program advisors, nomination reviewers, presenters, production staff, on-tour company managers, public relations and media professionals, cultural experts, and scholars.

“The Center Stage artists don’t just play a single concert. They get off the stage and out into the community. I still hear about how the band Khumariyaan from Pakistan went fishing with their new American fans in Minnesota. These experiences make the world smaller.”

BRIAN JOSE, College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University, St. Joseph, MN

A typical Center Stage tour...

from country selection...

What each Center Stage tour takes...

WHAT IT TAKES

Every Center Stage tour is individually and thoughtfully planned around the strengths and unique offerings of each ensemble.

TIME

28 months to produce

NETWORK

250 interactions with advisors, funders, international & U.S. artists, presenters, and diplomats

STRATEGY

100 hours to brand, contextualize, and promote

PERSISTENCE

5 steps: open call, nominations review, in-country trip, assessment, and selection

COMMUNICATION

40 emails and conversations with each host venue

OUTREACH

30 connections to industry pros, vendors, press, cultural allies, peers

IMAGINATION

80 hours to book, plan and confirm performances and activities in each community

COMPLIANCE

25 hours to finalize visas, insurance, and taxes

LOGISTICAL FINESSE

92 flight legs, hotel rooms, and ground transfers

ON TOUR CARE

24/7

PERIODS

28/7

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ON TOUR CARE

24/7

...To final flight home

A Report on Center Stage Seasons 1 – 4 • WWW.CENTERSTAGEUS.ORG
Program Impacts

1. High quality, professional artists who are committed to fostering connections lead to successful engagements, authentic experiences, and mutual understanding.

The Center Stage curatorial profile focuses on younger artists making original work who are well-connected in their home countries; most participants are under the age of 35. Of the 29 ensembles who have participated in the program, 21 made their U.S. debuts. Center Stage selects performing arts ensembles through a curatorial process that includes an open call for nominations, panel review, and planning trips in-country to meet and see work in context by candidates. The selection process seeks artists with an interest in engaging in off stage activities while on tour. A highlight described by presenters are the informal or spontaneous artist-to-artist connections which are memorable for artists and audiences alike.

“I would’ve never had such a chance to understand the real diversity of the people in the U.S. It’s a huge exposure that will change how I understand and deal with Americans forever.”

Youssra El Hawary, Egypt

2. The American public values access to information about contemporary cultures beyond our borders in a way that emphasizes human connections. Presenters value the opportunity to develop and expand partnerships and relationships in their communities.

Center Stage illustrates that excellent work is being made throughout the world. Presenters express different motivations for working with Center Stage. They endeavor to attract new audiences and nurture existing relationships, build new community and artistic partnerships, and celebrate cultural groups in the community that may be unfamiliar for others. Presenters value the unique focus of Center Stage on artists from countries that do not typically support their artists to tour abroad, and especially value the selection of young artists who are generating contemporary work.

“This was my first exposure to Ukrainian youth and performance. It was interesting to see that young people on the other side of the world have some of the same concerns and same cultural references that we have here, yet they presented a very unique performance by referencing music and customs from their country.”

audience member, Teatr-Pralnia with CCA Dakh
Performance in Portland, OR

“Center Stage celebrates cultures that people in the U.S. might have no idea about or even negative connotations because of political differences...And, our own community members from those countries see their culture celebrated in a place that they didn’t think valued their culture.”

Jordana Leigh, Lincoln Center Atrium, New York, NY
3. Direct knowledge of and increased positive visibility for the U.S. and the participating countries abroad.

Traditional and social media draw artists, host organizations, community members, fans, and audiences together to increase access, outreach, and visibility. Social media has become the currency of communication, facilitating an extension of the dialogue at the heart of Center Stage. Multiple stories are shared in real time – from standing ovations to first-time experiences at the laundromat. Increased program funds have improved documentation quality and quantity, broadening the program’s reach and accessibility.

The addition of embedded journalists, begun in 2014, increases coverage of tours in home countries in prominent media outlets such as Pakistan’s Dawn, Morocco’s 2M Television, and Egypt Today. Journalist participants also bring new understanding of the U.S. back to their home countries, including how the media operates here through connections made with U.S. peers.

“It was a life changing experience. My opinion on the world’s perception of Ukraine became way more optimistic. It all feels like a beginning of a new professional level for me.”

Sergey Cane, Journalist, Ukraine
U.S. Embassies abroad benefit from activity to advance diplomatic goals and objectives, raise visibility, and increase opportunities to engage new and existing constituents.

U.S. Embassies engage with Center Stage throughout each cycle to extend professional development opportunities and increase outreach through public events and media. Embassy staff publicize, encourage and review artistic nominations. Curatorial planning trips are organized with U.S. Embassies to include networking with cultural leaders, workshops, and media outreach. Artists who have participated in Center Stage foster Embassy partnerships with other artists and local cultural institutions. Center Stage provides the platform for a range of possible engagements and follow on is determined by individual embassies. Center Stage has produced numerous additional benefits in participating countries, including strengthening the local arts infrastructure and providing economic benefits for artists.

“The Center Stage process] lifts up the Embassy as a major player in the country’s cultural space.”

Sam Werberg, U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Officer
5. Artists gain tools, visibility, and experiences to advance their careers and the arts infrastructure at home.

Center Stage opens new markets and strengthens economic opportunities for artists in countries with limited arts infrastructure and increases professional expertise. Through collaboration with Center Stage to prepare and implement their tours, artists develop knowledge of the U.S. marketplace and touring systems. They return home validated by appearances at leading venues such as The Kennedy Center, while also building experience touring to rural communities, and garnering a range of media coverage including national outlets like PRI, The Washington Post, and Wall Street Journal as well as small, local newspapers. Artist-to-artist and professional exchanges (meetings with music labels, theater producers, booking agents, etc.) are integrated into each tour. The entrepreneurial skills gained through Center Stage, considered a best practice by the Department of State, are useful at home and abroad.

“The whole process, from the moment I have been selected until I came back to Morocco was an education for me in terms of managing a tour and a company. I discovered a very professional and efficient way of working, although it was a lot of work to make it all happen, I never took it as chore but as an opportunity to improve my skills. I tasted the ‘American’ business and artistic world, and I am trying to apply what I have learned in my relationships with people, especially during the festivals I organize.”

Hind Benali, Fleur d’Orange, Morocco

6. Venue selection, comprehensive tour management, clear communication, and responsive protocols result in well organized and intentional tours.

The right combination of venues, communities, and performing experiences — identified and secured by LBMI and NEFA through their extensive arts networks across the U.S. — are helpful for artists in their career trajectories. In addition to addressing barriers specific to international touring, presenters also recognize the professionalism of all aspects of management, especially the preparation and quality of the tour managers provided by LBMI. Presenters credit the expertise of LBMI for smoothly handling the logistical and financial hurdles that make U.S. touring challenging. Those who are experienced with international tours are especially appreciative of the contextual and promotional materials, flawless groundwork in advance of the tour, and the constant attention of the tour managers during the engagements. Those presenters who are less experienced with international touring say that they simply would not have been able to move past the logistical, legal, and financial barriers without the Center Stage program.

“The benefit in working with Center Stage is their unique ability to tour amazing international musicians & ensembles from underrepresented cultures. Without Center Stage support, we would not be able to present these artists due to the logistical and financial hurdles that are in place to tour the U.S.”

Carlos Tortolero, Chicago Dept of Cultural Affairs, Chicago, IL

Left: Papermoon Puppet Theater, by Ehsun Mirza; Right: Ammar Shareef, by Amm Ar
The public-private partnership that underpins Center Stage’s structure is mirrored in the program’s budget. Cumulatively, financial resources to produce Center Stage Seasons 1-4 totaled $7,175,000, invested by three groups of stakeholders.

- U.S. government funds are the primary source of income, made through competitive awards from the U.S Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs with additional funds from some U.S. Embassies.
- Presenters pay fees to host Center Stage ensembles as they do for other touring artists they present in their communities. Though subsidized relative to actual costs and scaled to presenter capacities, these fees are an important investment in Center Stage from a competitive marketplace.
- Private foundations provide Center Stage with resources to respond to opportunities and pilot initiatives. Grant monies have expanded program reach to underserved communities, increased the number of artists on tour and presenters on planning trips abroad, and underwritten pilot initiatives such as the inclusion of journalists from Center Stage countries, now a fully integrated program element.
- Center Stage’s artist-forward approach is backed by financial resources. Artists and journalists are paid, and all direct expenses are covered by the program, including production and repertory-specific needs. Taken together, these investments in artist selection, preparations, on tour care, and staffing account for one-third of each season’s budget.

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**Dollars & Sense**

![Asian Cultural Council](image1)

![Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art](image2)

![The Henry Luce Foundation](image3)

![Robert Sterling Clark Foundation](image4)

![Trust for Mutual Understanding](image5)
The U.S. Department of State has renewed Center Stage for additional cycles. Season 5 has begun and will feature ensembles from Colombia and Peru touring from June-November 2021. In preparation, these elements are already being implemented:

**Center Stage alumni have been invited to join the Center Stage Advisors.**

**Season 5 Artist managers from selected countries will participate in a new program component to build networks and marketplace knowledge.**

**Production funds and expertise will be provided to each ensemble to create, develop, and/or upgrade promotional and production resources to be tour ready.**

**U.S. Embassies abroad are better prepared to deepen connections with program participants before and after tours to mutual benefit.**

### FUTURE PLANS

**Build out context:** expand Center Stage website with information on participating countries drawing on knowledge of program participants, in-country partners, and U.S.-based practitioners on topics ranging from cuisine to literature, film, visual and performing arts, artists, as well as other cultural signposts. These materials are intended for host presenters, peer artists in the U.S., the general public, and members of the media whose reporting depends on clear, specific and engaging cultural insights.

**Advance cultural mobility:** connect presenters, artists, funders, and policy makers with information about U.S. and global resources to increase mobility, build networks, and maximize creative and touring opportunities through online resources.

**Strengthen documentation and visibility:** increase the number of professionally captured performances and on-tour experiences as resources for ensembles to document and heighten visibility and further their careers.

### LOOKING AHEAD

- Increase the number of participating ensembles and countries in each Center Stage Season. Center Stage has and can accommodate the strong demand from U.S. communities for tours by more ensembles each season. Ideally, the program will host seven to eight ensembles from three countries. As currently budgeted and funded, Season 5 will fully support five ensembles from two countries. Additional financial resources are required to bring the program to full capacity and maximize cost and organizational efficiencies.
- Co-host a convening with experts such as policy makers and educational institutions on the value of cultural exchange in American communities, and addressing the opportunities and challenges of mobility, diversity, and access.

### In Conclusion

Center Stage is now a proven and trusted approach to supporting international cultural engagement.

The program is curatorially progressive, structurally responsive, and fiscally responsible — and scalable. Center Stage has evolved from a program primarily focused on touring to one with expanded program elements that deeply impact artists and serve audiences at home and abroad.

Shifting international relations, changing economic and social environments, advancing technology and communications, and synergies in the global sector continue to present new opportunities for the program.

**CORE ELEMENTS ➔ Affirmed by**

- Multi-layered artist nomination/selection process
- Active involvement of U.S. Embassies
- Artist preparation (including marketing materials)
- Broad exposure to U.S. marketplace
- Presenter preparation
- Centralized tour management
- Balance of performances with offstage activities
- Support for press and media coverage
- Well-established communication channels and protocols
Center Stage connects: Portland, ME to Port au Prince, Haiti; Gainesville, FL to Kyiv, Ukraine; Los Angeles, CA to Padang, Indonesia; Lyons, NE to Cairo, Egypt; Memphis, TN to Karachi, Pakistan; Albuquerque, NM to Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania; Joshua Tree, CA to Agadir, Morocco; Red Wing, MN to Algiers, Algeria; Birmingham, AL to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
189 artists

21 U.S. debuts

visited 135 cultural hubs

11 curatorial and professional development planning trips

by 30 U.S. presenters and arts professionals

from 18 states
to 9 countries

285 performances

718 educational, creative, and artist-to-artist activities

838 days in the U.S.

141K+ U.S. audience members, activity participants, and students

114K+ cumulative tour miles

350K+ global media impressions online, broadcast, and print

35 states and Washington, DC

350K+ engagements through social media and online content

9 foreign-based journalists on tour

10M+ global media impressions online, broadcast, and print
Center Stage Ensembles

Arabesque

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Sweeping contemporary dance reveals cycles of rural Vietnamese life in The Mist

October 18 – November 16, 2014: 7 performances; 23 Activities; 4 communities; 3 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Nguyễn Tấn Lộc, Artistic Director & Choreographer; Dỗ Thái Hài Anh, Dancer; Mã Minh Anh Khoa, Dancer; Nguyễn Thụy Tố Như, Dancer; Nguyễn Hưu Thuần, Dancer; Phạm Mai Thảo, Dancer; và nhạc sĩ Vũ Ngọc Khải, Dancer; Phạm Thanh Bùi Tàn, Lighting Designer/Production Manager

Arieb Azhar

Islamabad, Pakistan

Sharp eloquence, humanist politics, and mystic poetries are given a bold voice in Arabesque.

June 14 – July 12, 2012: 9 performances; 41 activities; 10 communities; 7 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Arieb Azhar, Vocals, Guitar; Kashif Ali, Tabla; Muhammad Akmal Qadri, Flute; Zeeshan Mansoor, Guitar

BélO

Pétion-Ville, Haiti

Haiti’s groove innovator interweaves Afro-Caribbean traditions with today’s culture for social and political transformation

October 20 – November 19, 2012: 20 performances; 37 activities; 10 communities; 4 states & Washington D.C.; Members: BélO, Lead Vocalist and Acoustic Guitar; Rodney "Fumi" Dieudé, Electric Guitar; Junior Dorcolus, Electric Guitar; Emmanuel Jean-Baptist, Drums; Wesner St. Louis, Percussion; Josué Jude Nazeire, Bass

Compagnie de Danse

Jean-René Delsoin

Pétion-Ville, Haiti

Vibrant dancers and drummers capture Haiti now — raw and refined, spiritual, powerful, and precarious

October 14 – November 12, 2012: 12 performances; 46 activities; 6 communities; 5 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Jean-René Delsoin, Artistic Director; Jennifer Jessie Castil, Dancer; Hugues H. T. Dupont, Dancer; Makerson François, Dancer; Judner Rock, Dancer; Théophile Tatitianne, Dancer; Fritzney Dauphin, Percussion; Gérald Dauphin, Percussion; Rodrigue Jean-Baptiste, Percussion

Dina El Wedidi

Giza, Egypt

A sophisticated musical innovator ravelles threads of Egyptian heritage and contemporary identity

September 7 – October 13, 2016: 11 performances; 17 activities; 10 communities; 8 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Dina El Wedidi, Band Leader/Vocals; Muhammad Rafat, Drums; Azizma Barhouma, Percussion; Mounir Mahé, Bass Guitar; Sherif Alaa, Electric Guitar; Wael El Sayed, Accordion; Reda Bouzidi, Electric Guitar; Popey Guettaba, Electric Bass; Nassim Slimani, Electric Guitar, Guitar, Percussion, Backing Vocals; Amine Marfey, Bass; Nessim Slimani, Electric Guitar, Percussion, and Backing Vocals; Fares Benlechehb, Tenor Sax and Percussion

Dina El Wedidi’s performances are ornamented with political and personal threading that catalyzes into an execution of pure transcendence.”

—John Auelli, KUTX Austin, TX

Fleur d’Orange

Casablanca, Morocco

Identity/Identity explores Hind Benali’s African roots, multivalent layers of culture and religion, and the lives of her elders

September 27 – October 26, 2014: 7 performances; 23 activities; 5 communities; 3 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Hind Benali, Dancer, Choreographer; Mounir Imhrani, Mandolin, Keyboard, Vocals; Soufiane Karim, Dancer

Hoba Hoba Spirit

Casablanca, Morocco

Crowd-wowing and irreverent Morroc’n Roll from one of the Maghreb’s best bands

August 28 – September 29, 2014: 8 performances; 21 activities; 7 communities; 5 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Reda Allali, Lead Guitar, Vocals, Othmane Hmimra, Percussion, Vocals; Adil Hanine, Drums; Saad Boudi, Bar; Abdessamad Bouhoun, Guitar; Anouar Zehouani, Guitar, Vocals, Hammam Benchibi, Audio Engineer

Ifrikya Spirit

Algeria

Tranced-out diwan sounds and messages of inter-African solidarity, gathered under a big musical tent

September 27 – October 26, 2016: 9 performances; 13 activities; 8 communities; 5 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Chakib Bouzidi, Vocals, Goumbri, Gnibi, Ngomi, percussion; Raki Kettab, Soussane, Vocals, Percussion; Meziane Arriche, Vocals; Rêda Mourah, Piano, Keyboard; Nazim Boukour, Guitar; Hafid Abdelaziz, Drums; Samy Guemboua, Bass

“Innovative arrangements and detailed instrumentation capture the essence of her global sound. Dina El Wedidi’s performances are ornamented with political and personal threading that catalyzes into an execution of pure transcendence.”

—John Auelli, KUTX Austin, TX
“[Khumariyaan’s] extended tunes on rabab and guitar spill across the border between Pashtoon folk and jam-band rock. It’s a cool anews Pakistan stereotypes.”

—Siddhartha Mitter, The Boston Globe

[Image: Left: Khumariyaan, courtesy of the band; Right: Mohamed Abozekry and Karkade, by Shereif Elktasha]
A compelling mix of Minangkabau performing arts traditions, spiritual practice, and contemporary movement making

September 19 – October 17, 2012: 12 performances; 22 activities; 4 communities; 3 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Ery Mefri, Artistic Director; Angga Mefri, Performer; Ririn Mefri, Performer; Ricco Mefri, Performer; Geby Mefri, Performer; Intan Mefri, Performer; Ritin Mefri, Performer; Rico Fadhilah, Technical Director

Andaru, Lighting Designer
Ariendra, Music & Sound Designer; Banjar Tri, Puppeteer; Amanda Mita, Puppeteer; Yennu Beni Sanjaya, Puppet and Set Builder, Puppeteer; Octo Cornelius, Artistic Engineer, Puppeteer; Artistic Designer, Puppet Engineer, Puppeteer; Iwan Effendi, Artistic Director, Tour Manager

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Teatr-Pralnia with CCA Dakh in TseSho?/What’s That?
Kyiv, Ukraine
An audacious super-charged puppet cabaret from Ukraine’s top cultural center
September 28 – November 4, 2018: 13 performances; 19 activities; 7 communities; 4 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Vlad Troitskyi; Director; Igor Mytyanychkov, Performer/Drums; Kateryna Petrushova, Performer; Sax & Melodica; Marusia Ionova, Performer/ Cello; Marichka Shyryubulova, Performer/Accordion; Maksym Taran, Sound Engineer; Nataliya Perchyshena, Lighting Designer; Dlena Avramenko, VJ & Designer

Tri Minh’s Quartet
Hanoi, Vietnam
Sophisticated soundscapes bind electronica, acoustic instruments, and Vietnamese motifs in Sounds from Hanoi
September 20 – October 16, 2014: 7 performances; 8 activities; 6 communities; 5 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Tri Minh, Piano, Electronics; Pham Trà My, đàn tranh (16 string zither); Đức Minh, Mouth Harp, Hà Bình Huy, Drums, Percussion

Very Live
Karachi, Pakistan
Comedic trailblazers push boundaries in a place where stand-up was virtually unknown

Ti-Coca & Wanga-Négès
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Masters of the twobadou (troubador) tradition weave through Haiti’s African, Caribbean, and Latin sounds
September 16 – October 15, 2012: 17 performances; 35 activities; 8 communities; 4 states & Washington D.C.; Members: David Mettelus (Ti-Coca), Lead Vocalist and Tcha-Tchas; Belony Benis, Accordion & Backing Vocals; Richard Hector, Banjo & Backing Vocals; Wilfrid Bolane, Manoumba & Backing Vocals; Mathieu Chertoute, Conga & Backing Vocals

Youssra El Hawary
Cairo, Egypt
A musical bellwether of everyday life captures stories of Cairo and the alchemy of the Mediterranean basin
September 9 – October 13, 2016: 13 performances; 22 activities; 10 communities; 8 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Youssra El Hawary, Band Leader/Accordion/ Vocals; Shadi El Hosseiny, Piano/Keyboards/ Backing Vocals; Yamen ElGammal, Bass Guitar/ Backing Vocals; Sedky Sakhr, Harmonica/ Recorder/Backing Vocals; Tarek Abdelkawi, Buzuki; Loai (Luca) Samal, Percussion; Adham Zidan, Music Producer/Sound Engineer

Zeb & Haniya
Lahore, Pakistan
Original songs and newly interpreted tunes from South and Central Asia carve space for music that transcends national boundaries
September 4 – October 5, 2012: 13 performances; 52 activities; 8 communities; 7 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Zeb Bangash, Vocals; Haniya Aslam, Acoustic Guitar, Ukulele, Vocals; Hamza Jafri, Guitar; Muhammad Ahsan Pappu, Flutes; Amir Azhar, Bass; Kami Paul, Drums

Youssra El Hawary
Cairo, Egypt
A musical bellwether of everyday life captures stories of Cairo and the alchemy of the Mediterranean basin
September 9 – October 13, 2016: 13 performances; 22 activities; 10 communities; 8 states & Washington D.C.; Members: Youssra El Hawary, Band Leader/Accordion/ Vocals; Shadi El Hosseiny, Piano/Keyboards/ Backing Vocals; Yamen ElGammal, Bass Guitar/ Backing Vocals; Sedky Sakhr, Harmonica/ Recorder/Backing Vocals; Tarek Abdelkawi, Buzuki; Loai (Luca) Samal, Percussion; Adham Zidan, Music Producer/Sound Engineer

Zeb & Haniya
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“Center Stage artists are amazing ambassadors who create wide open spaces for communities to connect.”
—Ed Noonan, Helena Presents, Helena, MT
29 CENTER STAGE ENSEMBLES
From 2012-2018, 29 dance, music, and theater ensembles from 9 countries visited more than 135 different towns across the U.S. engaging thousands of people onstage and off.
Center Stage Team

NEW ENGLAND FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS
Cathy Edwards, Executive Director
Jane Preston, Deputy Director
Jug Chokshi, Director of Finance & Administration
Adrienne Petrillo, Program Director, Center Stage
Kelsey Spitalny, Program Officer, Center Stage

LISA BOOTH MANAGEMENT, INC.
Lisa Booth, President
Deirdre Valente, Vice President
Robert W. Henderson, Jr., Center Stage Production Coordinator

IN-HOUSE COMPANY MANAGERS
Alexis Ortiz
Theresa Teague

ON TOUR COMPANY MANAGERS
Stacey Boggs
George Cruze
Ariana Hellerman
Cynthia Karaha
Pat Kirby
Suzanne La
Mario La Mothe
Phung Pham
Sarah Sidman
Theresa Teague
Tucker Wiedenkeller
Denise Wilcke

PUBLICITY BY
rock paper scissors, Inc

Above: Youssra El Hawary impromptu airport jam, by Theresa Teague

Center Stage Advisors

Advisors nominate and review artists and suggest potential U.S. host institutions, promote Center Stage within their networks, and are on call for advice throughout the duration of the program.

Alicia Adams
Vice President for International Programming
The Kennedy Center | Washington, DC

Arieb Azhar
Musician, Center Stage alumnus, and Executive Director
T2F | Karachi, Pakistan

Bill Bragin
Executive Artistic Director
Abu Dhabi Arts Center at New York University | Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Co-Director, GlobalFest
New York, NY

Robert Browning
Robert Browning Associates
New York, NY

Rachel Cooper
Director, Global Performing Arts & Special Cultural Initiatives
Asia Society | New York, NY

Asad Jafri
Curator of Programs
Shangri La, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art | Honolulu, HI

Lily Kharrazzi
Program Manager
Alliance for California Traditional Arts | San Francisco, CA

Marichka Shtyrbulova
Actress, Musician, Center Stage alumna, and member
TseSho band | Kyiv, Ukraine

Maria Tri Sulistyani (Ria)
Center Stage alumna, Founder and Director
Papermoon Puppet Theatre | Yogyakarta, Indonesia

“Center Stage is a fantastic, and important program that has gone far to develop and deepen cross-cultural collaboration, cultural diplomacy and dialogue. It has huge potential to break down barriers between U.S. citizens and citizens of other countries.”

ISABEL SOFFER, Live Sounds, New York, NY
Center Stage Presenters

- Presented more than one Center Stage ensemble

Academy of Music
Northampton, MA

Akron International Friendship & University of Akron
Akron, OH

Alabama Asian Cultures Foundation & Samford University
Birmingham, AL

American Dance Festival
Durham, NC

AMP Concerts
Albuquerque, NM

Ann Arbor Summer Festival
Ann Arbor, MI

Arts Brookfield
New York, NY

Asia Society
New York, NY

Asia Society Texas Center
Houston, TX

The Back Room
Berkeley, CA

Baryshnikov Arts Center
New York, NY

Bay Chamber Concerts
Rockport, ME

Boom Arts
Portland, OR

Boothbay Opera House
Boothbay Harbor, ME

Bossa Bistro/Multiflora Productions
Washington, DC

Boston University World Music Festival
Boston, MA

Brooklyn Academy of Music
Brooklyn, NY

Buckman Performing and Fine Arts Center
Memphis, TN

Bucknell University, Weis Center for the Performing Arts
Lewisburg, PA

Bumpershoot Festival
Seattle, WA

The Capitol Theatre
Binghamton, NY

Cathedral of St. John the Divine
New York, NY

Cedar Cultural Center
Minneapolis, MN

Celebrity Series Boston/ World Music CRASHarts
Boston & Cambridge, MA

Central College
Pella, IA

City Center, Fall for Dance
New York, NY

Coker College
Hartsville, SC

College of Saint Benedict & Saint John’s University
St. Joseph, MN

Colorado Mountain College
Breckenridge, CO

Connecticut College, On Stage
New London, CT

The Dance Hall
Kittery, ME

Dance Place
Washington, DC

Dancing in the Streets & Cusita Maria Center for the Arts and Education
The Bronx, NY

Dartmouth College, Hopkins Center for the Arts
Hanover, NH

Denmark Arts Center
Denmark, ME

Duke University, Duke Performances
Durham, NC

Earshot Jazz Festival
Seattle, WA

Everett: Company, Stage, and School
Providence, RI

FirstWorks
Providence, RI

Flynn Center for the Performing Arts
Burlington, VT

Friars Club
New York, NY

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts
New York City, NY

Madison World Music Festival
Madison, WI

The Markaz/Pico Union Project
Los Angeles, CA

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
North Adams, MA

Monkeyhouse Dance
Somerville, MA

North Carolina State University, NCSU Live
Raleigh, NC

Old Town School of Folk Music
Chicago, IL

Outside the Box Festival
Boston, MA

Pinkerton Academy, Stockbridge Theatre
Derry, NH

Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, International Festival of Firsts
Pittsburgh, PA

Portland Performing Arts Festival/One Longfellow Square
Portland, ME

Portland Ovations
Portland, ME

REDCAT
Los Angeles, CA

The Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts
West Palm Beach, FL

Reggae on the River Festival
Garberville, CA

Richmond Folk Festival
Richmond, VA

¡Globalquerque!
Albuquerque, NM

The Grammy Museum
Los Angeles, CA

Great Plains Regional Puppet Festival
West Liberty, IA

Grinnell College
Grinnell, IA

Hambridge Creative Hive/Colony Square
Atlanta, GA

Helena Presents/Myrna Loy Center for the Performing and Media Arts
Helena, MT

Hibernian Hall
Boston, MA

Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital
Washington, DC

Howard University
Washington, DC

Huntington Arts Council
Huntington, NY

Indiana University
Bloomington, IN

Indo-American Association of Houston
Houston, TX

Inner-City Muslim Action Network
Chicago, IL

Intercultural Journeys
Philadelphia, PA

International Festival of Arts & Ideas
New Haven, CT

Irving Arts Center
Irving, TX

Johnson County Community College
Overland Park, KS

Joshua Tree Music Festival
Joshua Tree, CA

Juniata College, Halbritter Center for the Performing Arts
Huntington, PA

Kelly-Strayhorn Theater
Pittsburgh, PA

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Washington, DC

Lafayette College
Easton, PA

Lafayette Opera House
Richmond, VA

La MaMa ETC
New York, NY

Lebanon Opera House
Lebanon, NH

Lebanon Opera House
Lebanon, NH

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts
New York City, NY

Madison World Music Festival
Madison, WI

The Markaz/Pico Union Project
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Left: BÉL, by Laura Cianciolo; Right: Jogia Hip Hop, by Abi Maulion
Acknowledgements

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U.S. Department of State
Staff at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Julia Gómez-Nelson, Program Officer.

Land Acknowledgements
At the New England Foundation for the Arts, we believe that one of the roles of the arts is to make the invisible, visible. We also believe that it is not the responsibility of those who have been made invisible to remind us that they are still here. Therefore, as a committed ally, NEFA acknowledges that the ground on which we work is the traditional land of the Massachuset and Wampanoag people; we honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

NEFA also acknowledges that all the places that our distributed staff live and work, and where we provide support and hold events, are Indigenous lands. We offer our respect to the Elders — past, present, and future.
Lisa Booth Management, Inc. (LBMI) realizes contemporary performing arts projects for the widest possible public. A producer, curator, and manager, LBMI’s projects have taken place in more than 450 cities in 60 countries on six continents since 1984. As general manager of Center Stage, LBMI participates in program design, curation, and overall implementation. LBMI is responsible for tour scheduling, residency planning, promotion and messaging, participant care, travel, visa and insurance arrangements, production and backline coordination, on tour staffing, and 24/7 oversight.

The Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) builds relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, and professional exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships. The State Department’s cultural diplomacy programs employ the arts to advance U.S. foreign policy by sharing America’s artistic excellence, demonstrating America’s respect for other cultures, creating international networks, and deepening trust. www.eca.state.gov | #exchangeourworld

The New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) invests in artists and communities and fosters equitable access to the arts, enriching the cultural landscape in New England and the nation. NEFA accomplishes this by granting funds to artists and cultural organizations; connecting them to each other and their audiences; and analyzing their economic contributions. NEFA serves as a regional partner for the National Endowment for the Arts, New England’s state arts agencies, and private foundations. Based in Boston, NEFA is the U.S Department of State’s primary partner for Center Stage. www.nefa.org

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