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Friday Foundation

Seattle Arts Organizations Receive \$9 Million Infusion at Critical Time

The gifts, made by the Friday Foundation, honor the legacy of philanthropists Jane Lang Davis and Richard E. Lang and aim to inspire others

SEATTLE – October 20, 2020 – Nine leading Seattle arts organizations have received welcome news at a critical time. The Friday Foundation today announced philanthropic gifts totaling more than \$9 million to honor the lives and legacies of late art enthusiasts Jane Lang Davis and Richard E. Lang.

The gifts are intended to inspire others to discover and engage with Seattle’s many cultural communities and opportunities in the visual and performing arts, and find lifelong engagements as the Langs did themselves. Whether it is attending a concert or performance, volunteering with an organization, supporting an institution or discovering art, the hope is to remind the Seattle community that there are so many places and organizations for everyone of all ages to find inspiration.

With lights dimmed in most theatres and museums this year due to COVID-19, these gifts enable five major Seattle arts organizations – Seattle Art Museum, Seattle Symphony, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Opera and Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington – to acquire or present new works for audiences to enjoy from home or together in person when it is safe to do so. Additionally, four organizations are receiving unrestricted gifts.

The Langs, who lived in Medina, will perhaps always be best known for their superlative, internationally recognized art collection with a focus on Abstract Expressionism. Richard joined the Seattle Art Museum board in 1972 and served until his death in 1982. Jane, who died in 2017, joined the SAM board in 1985 and in 2000 became a lifetime trustee, and served for a time as the chair of the Honorary Trustees. Always true to her devotion to abstraction, emerging artists and the newest work, Jane was an early and active member of the Contemporary Art Council (CAC), advocating for and supporting Seattle Art Museum’s early initiatives in its contemporary collections and exhibitions. She served on the CAC and all its subsequent forms for four decades and was an active participant in all major Seattle Art Museum fundraising campaigns.

To enrich the continual evolution of the Seattle Art Museum’s contemporary collection, the Friday Foundation, which was established to continue the Langs’ legacy, is funding The Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Acquisition Fund for Global Contemporary Art with a \$2 million gift. Amid the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Friday Foundation also gifted the Seattle Art Museum an additional \$2 million in emergency funds to help offset economic losses when the museum closed to visitors in March.

Ultimately, the Langs believed in the power of all the arts to embrace new ideas, foster quiet reflection, and promote community. Besides their leadership roles at the Seattle Art Museum, both Richard and

Jane were also active on the boards of many of the organizations receiving these gifts. They were also generous donors to these organizations.

In addition to the \$2 million SAM acquisition fund, the new endowments include \$1.5 million to support the development of the Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Living Music Program at the Seattle Symphony, \$1 million for the creation of the Jane Lang Davis New Works Fund at Pacific Northwest Ballet, \$1 million to support the launch of the Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab at the Seattle Opera, and \$1 million to support the creation of the Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis New Works Fund at the Henry Art Gallery.

“My mother and stepfather were dedicated to the arts, to Seattle, to the stability of these critical civic gems, and to the inherent promotion of human connection. They were bright and smart, and took great pleasure in their participation as well as in the knowledge that they would be able to pay forward for all of us who would follow,” said Lyn Grinstein, daughter of Jane Lang Davis and president of the Friday Foundation. “Through the Friday Foundation, these gifts will help fulfill these wishes, by funding new activities and initiatives, as well as provide stability through financial assistance to operations hard hit by the pandemic shutdown. It was always their intention to invite others to connect in whatever ways they find rewarding – to join up and join in, like Dick and Jane, for the pure joy of it.”

Amada Cruz, SAM’s Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO, said, “These gifts are a shining example of what community support for art and art institutions looks like, and it reflects and furthers the incredible legacy of the Langs. The gift to our Closure Relief Fund was the single largest gift to that fund, and it arrived at a crucial moment in April as we faced the crisis directly, enabling us to support all museum operations. And this endowment will help shape the future of SAM’s collection, as we continue our focus on emerging artists from all over the world. We are extremely grateful for the generosity of the Friday Foundation.”

“The Seattle Symphony is honored to receive this grant from the Friday Foundation recognizing the legacy of Richard and Jane,” said Seattle Symphony president and CEO Krishna Thiagarajan. “The Symphony is known for its imaginative programming, from our [untitled] series to our just-launched The Essential Series. The Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Living Music Program allows us to expand this transformative work by creating a pathway for sustained success within our bold programming choices, while also giving us the possibility of re-envisioning the concert experience for audiences within and beyond Benaroya Hall.”

Peter Boal, artistic director of Pacific Northwest Ballet, said, “Through the gift of the Friday Foundation, Jane and Richard Lang’s legacy continues by helping the creation of new choreography. Because of this generosity, Pacific Northwest Ballet will be able to fund an original new work every season. When I choose the commission every season, I will recall Jane’s willingness to embrace risk and innovation in order to bring inspired art and dance into our lives.”

Christina Scheppelmann, general director of the Seattle Opera, said, “This extraordinary gift from the Friday Foundation allows us to create the Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab, which cultivates the next generation of storytellers in opera. This new multi-year initiative will contribute to the operatic repertoire at large — and bring new stories to our community — by supporting the talents of a diverse group of composers and librettists (ages 18-30). Opera needs new and varied perspectives to thrive into the future—and to complement great works of the past. The impacts of this gift will reverberate in Washington State, and far beyond. We are humbled by this investment in the future of opera.”

“The Langs transformed the arts landscape throughout our region with their stewardship, advocacy, and extraordinary support,” said Sylvia Wolf, John S. Behnke Director of the Henry Art Gallery. “With these gifts, their impact will live on, in perpetuity. The Henry has a long tradition of inviting artists to consider the museum as a laboratory for new ideas. This extraordinary gift will allow us to expand this practice and to deepen our service to artists, audiences, and the field at large. It will also connect our UW community and students of all ages with living artists and their creative processes. We are deeply grateful to the Friday Foundation for establishing the Henry’s first endowed fund specifically geared towards supporting newly commissioned work.”

In addition to the new works, other Friday Foundation gifts announced today include \$270,000 to ArtsFund’s COVID-19 Arts Emergency Relief Fund, and \$100,000 each to ACT – A Contemporary Theatre, Seattle Rep, and the Seattle Chamber Music Society.

“The Langs understood the transformational power of the arts – a power we need today more than ever,” said Michael Greer, president and CEO of ArtsFund. “Their vision and legacy, honored by these gifts from the Friday Foundation, will have an immediate impact on arts and culture in our region and will resonate for years to come. These gifts serve as a significant reminder of the impact of philanthropy, and how we can and must all work together to secure the future of cultural organizations that help our community thrive. These generous gifts are inspiring and set a profound example for us all.”

Pablo Schugurensky, adviser to the Friday Foundation, said, “As well as sustaining and strengthening these nine institutions, we hope these gifts spur others to join the arts community, inspired by the examples of Jane Lang Davis and Richard E. Lang and their deep commitment to the arts and their love for Seattle. Whether it is creating art, enjoying a performance, attending exhibitions, or supporting artists and art organizations in their city, we all have an important role to play.”

Today’s gift announcement honoring the Langs’ legacy is the first of several. Additional announcements will be made in 2021.

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About the Friday Foundation

The Friday Foundation is dedicated to supporting arts organizations following the passion and philanthropy of Jane Lang Davis and Richard E. Lang during their lifetimes. Visit www.fridayfoundationarts.org for more information.