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# News Release

Mercury Chamber Orchestra recipient of grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

(Houston, TX) May 9, 2018: Mercury Chamber Orchestra is thrilled to announce an Art Works grant in the amount of \$10,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts in support of next season's multi-media performance of Schubert's complete song cycle "The Miller's Daughter" with distinguished tenor, Nicholas Phan, on November 17, 2018.

The National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved more than \$80 million in grants as part of the NEA's second major funding announcement for fiscal year 2018. The Art Works category is the NEA's largest funding category and supports projects that focus on the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, public engagement with diverse and excellent art, lifelong learning in the arts, and/or the strengthening of communities through the arts.

"The variety and quality of these projects speaks to the wealth of creativity and diversity in our country," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "Through the work of organizations such as Mercury in Houston, NEA funding invests in local communities, helping people celebrate the arts wherever they are."

"The National Endowment for the Arts is a vital advocate for the arts in this country and we are grateful for their support, not just of Mercury's own project, but for their continued commitment to the many and diverse cultural organizations across America in communities large and small," said Brian Ritter, Executive Director of Mercury Chamber Orchestra.

For more information on other projects included in the NEA grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](http://arts.gov/news).

## **ABOUT MERCURY**

Founded in 2000, Mercury has a mission to *serve the community by celebrating the power of music, Baroque and beyond, teaching, sharing and performing with passion, intimacy and excellence.* The orchestra offers performances of a broad repertoire of music on period instruments and has garnered critical acclaim around the world through innovative and accessible performances, domestic and international tours, and groundbreaking music education programs.

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*What makes a Mercury performance unique?*

Mercury musicians perform on period instruments similar in style and sound to those used by composers of the Baroque, Classical, and early Romantic periods. Differences between modern and period instruments can be seen in the string section where players use gut rather than steel strings and often utilize a Baroque bow that is shorter and more curved than a modern bow. Brass instruments have no valves and are more modest in shape than their modern equivalents, and the timpani drums utilize leather skins rather than synthetic heads. Perhaps the most recognizable differences can be seen in the woodwind section; these instruments have less keys and are actually crafted from wood as opposed to metal or plastic like many modern instruments. Mercury chooses to perform with period instruments to create a distinctive and exciting sound, true to the composer's intent. Mercury musicians also perform standing to better express the passion and vitality of the music. All of this provides a singular listening experience for our audience.

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