



For Immediate Release

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**Governor Kate Brown announces 2020 Governor's Arts Awards;  
Four artists, one organization honored with awards**

(Salem, OR) — Governor Kate Brown today announced four artists and one organization as winners of the 2020 Governor's Arts Awards. The awardees are Darrell Grant, a jazz musician and educator from Portland; Roberta J. Kirk, a traditional artist and educator from Warm Springs; John Laursen, a writer, designer, editor and typographer from Portland; Toni Pimble, the founding artistic director of the Eugene Ballet; and Portland Gay Men's Chorus in Portland.

"Not only do the arts enrich our quality of life and local economies, arts education is key in fostering a spirit of creativity and innovation in our youth," Governor Brown said. "The awards are a great way to celebrate Oregon's artistic treasures and honor the impact they have had on our state."

Oregon's highest honor for exemplary service to the arts, the 2020 Governor's Arts Awards will be celebrated during a virtual ceremony at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 12, on the Oregon Arts Commission Facebook page. The ceremony is free and open to the public.

Award recipients were selected from a pool of 48 nominations received from across the state. The nominations were reviewed and scored by a diverse selection committee, which submitted its recommendations to Governor Brown for final award decisions.

"So many deserving artists and organizations were nominated," said Arts Commission Executive Director Brian Rogers. "As a result, the review process was extremely competitive and we are extremely grateful to the members of the selection committee for their time and thoughtful consideration. Each of the award recipients has made outstanding contributions to the arts in Oregon and we are excited to honor them."

Members of the 2020 review committee are: Chris Ayzoukian, general manager, Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, (Beaverton); Avantika Bawa, artist and educator, Arts Commissioner (Portland); Sue Dixon, general director, Portland Opera, 2017 Governor's Arts Award recipient (Portland); David Harrelson, cultural resource department manager, Chachalu Museum and Cultural Center (Grand Ronde); Leah Horner, regional solutions director and jobs and economy policy adviser, Office of Governor Kate Brown; Anne Taylor, chair, Oregon Arts Commission, (La Grande); Shelly Toon Lindburg, artist, executive director, Columbia Gorge Arts in Education (Hood River); and Matt Stringer, executive director, Four Rivers Cultural Center, and Arts Commissioner (Ontario).

The 2020 Governor's Arts Awards award object will be designed and produced by artist [Jim Piper](#).

About the 2020 Governor's Arts Award recipients:

### **Darrell Grant (Portland)**

A tenured professor of Jazz Studies and Associate Director of the School of Music at PSU, as well as the founding Director of the Leroy Vinnegar Jazz Institute, Darrell Grant is a highly recognized leader in the musical life of the Pacific Northwest. Since coming to Portland in 1997, Grant has directed cultural exchange programs in Russia, composed commissioned works that fuse jazz and chamber music, and served as the vice president of the Board of Chamber Music America. Dedicated to civic engagement through artistry, he has driven pianos deep into state forests to support the environment, arranged protest anthems, shared the stage with Nobel Laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu, written an opera about gentrification, and now teaches an Artist as Citizen course at PSU.

Born in 1962, Grant grew up in Denver, Colorado, in a musical family. He began classical lessons at 7, discovered jazz in school, and played professional gigs as a teenager. At 17, he won a scholarship to the Eastman School of Music where he studied classical piano and deepened his love of jazz. He earned a masters in Jazz Studies at the University of Miami in 1986. In New York City, he broke into the jazz scene. In 1989, an album by his group Current Events, featuring funk, world beat and jazz, reached the Top 20 on Billboard's contemporary jazz chart. Grant became one of New York's most in-demand players. In 1992, he joined drummer Tony Williams' quintet and soon after recorded his solo debut "Black Art." As a bandleader and solo artist, he has toured throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe as well as in Turkey and Japan, in venues from La Villa jazz club in Paris to the Havana Jazz Festival. He has performed and recorded with Branford Marsalis, David Sanborn, Esperanza Spalding, John Clayton, Nicholas Payton, Jack Dejohnette, Terence Blanchard and Art Farmer.

## **Roberta J. Kirk (Warm Springs)**

H'Klumaiyat Roberta Joy Kirk is a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs (CTWS). Tenino, Wasq'u on her mother's side and Diné on her father's side, Kirk is widely known for her traditional and award-winning beadwork.

Kirk learned to bead by observing her older sister's intricate work. "Beadwork and regalia making is very important to our people," Kirk explains. "We always show ourselves to Creator in our finest wear, and so we make beautiful clothing for our children and families." She makes beaded buckskin dresses, moccasins, beaded bags, beaded eagle fans, barrettes and buckskin burial outfits for men, women and children. Over the years, Kirk has volunteered to take on several apprentices to teach not just beadwork but the beliefs and ceremonies that make the beadwork meaningful. She has taught countless women how to do beadwork and dentalium work for regalia and everyday clothing and also has conducted several workshops on Plateau dress-making.

Kirk also serves as a traditional food gatherer for the Simnasho Longhouse. She has a degree in museology and three-dimensional arts from the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico (1985) and has worked in a variety of museum positions, including at the Museum at Warm Springs and the National Museum of the American Indian. She was a board member for the Museum at Warm Springs from 2000 to 2020 and at present is a consultant for The High Desert Museum in Bend. From 2002 to 2019, Kirk was the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act coordinator for the CTWS Cultural Resources Department and the review and compliance coordinator. She has been awarded funding three times to serve as a master artist for Oregon Folklife Network's Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program. In 2020 the national First People's Fund awarded her a Community Spirit Award.

## **John Laursen (Portland)**

John Laursen is a writer, designer, editor and typographer. For four decades he has owned and operated Press-22, a Portland studio specializing in the design and production of high-quality books and text-based public art projects. Among the institutions for which he has produced books and art catalogues are the Portland Art Museum, the Oregon Historical Society, Whitman College, Reed College, Marylhurst University, Oregon Health & Science University and the Regional Arts & Culture Council. His work in public art includes the creation of commemorative installations for the Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission and serving on the design team for the Oregon Holocaust Memorial. The Special Collections archive at the University of Oregon's Knight Library maintains a collection of works on paper from Press-22, which is updated periodically.

In 2002 Laursen, together with his close friend photographer and curator Terry Toedtemeier, formed the Northwest Photography Archive, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to publish books of artistically and historically important photographs from the region. Their first volume was “Wild Beauty: Photographs of the Columbia River Gorge, 1867–1957,” which they co-authored and Laursen designed. Their work on “Wild Beauty,” published in 2008, led to a major exhibition at the Portland Art Museum. The book was a finalist for the Oregon Book Awards in nonfiction, and was declared the best Northwest book of the year across all categories by The Oregonian. Laursen is currently working on the NWPAs second volume, “Enduring Spirit: Photographs of Northwest Indians, 1855–1934.”

Laursen was born in Tacoma, Washington; as a child he lived in Washington, Oregon, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Arizona, and California. He came to Oregon in the 1960s to attend Reed College and since then has immersed himself in the history of the Pacific Northwest. In addition to his degree from Reed, Laursen holds a master’s degree in political science from UCLA.

### **Toni Pimble (Eugene)**

Toni Pimble has been the Artistic Director of Eugene Ballet for more than 40 years. Born in England, Pimble studied at Elmhurst Ballet School. Her professional career began in Germany with notable choreographers Lothar Höfgen, Anthony Taylor, Nils Christie Michel Descombey and Miko Sparemblek. She co-founded the Eugene Ballet Company in 1978 with Riley Grannan. She has choreographed over 60 works for the Eugene Ballet Company, many of those productions involving collaborations with composers, literary and visual artists and local arts organizations including Eugene Concert Choir, Eugene Opera, Oregon Bach Festival, Oregon Mozart Players, The Shedd Institute for the Arts and the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance.

Her creative work has brought her a number of awards and fellowships, including two Oregon Arts Commission Artist Fellowship Awards and a National Endowment for the Arts Choreographer’s Fellowship Grant. Pimble’s work has been performed by Atlanta Ballet, New York City Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Washington Ballet, Nevada Dance Theatre, Oregon Ballet Theater, Ballet NY, Kansas City Ballet and Oklahoma City Ballet.

### **Portland Gay Men’s Chorus (Portland)**

The fourth-oldest gay men's chorus in the country, Portland Gay Men's Chorus (PGMC) was founded in 1980 by two local musicians seeking to fill a social and artistic void in the community. PGMC is currently celebrating its 40th Anniversary Season and remains an important contributor to Portland's cultural life, recognized nationally for helping to revive men's choral singing by commissioning new works and performing music of high quality. PGMC's mission seeks to expand, redefine and perfect the

choral art through eclectic performances that honor and uplift our community and affirm the worth of all people.

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The Oregon Arts Commission's mission is to enhance the quality of life for all Oregonians through the arts by stimulating creativity, leadership and economic vitality. The Arts Commission provides funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of the Oregon Business Development Department in 1993 in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities.

The Arts Commission is supported with general funds appropriated by the Oregon legislature, federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust.