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Arts groups get \$1.6 million Erbs help DIA, DSO, puppets, Heidelberg

By MARK STRYKER

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Metro Detroit's recession battered arts community received a major jolt of good news today as the recently formed **Erb** Family Foundation of Birmingham announced nearly \$1.6 million in grants to more than 35 groups, ranging from \$100,000 to the Detroit Institute of Arts to \$10,000 to grassroots groups like the Rackham Symphony Choir.

The arts dollars are part of \$2.5 million in newly announced **Erb** Foundation grants that also include more than \$850,000 for environmental causes. In its first year, the **foundation**, endowed at \$100 million and founded by an Oakland County **family** that made its fortune in the lumber business, has now given away \$3.5 million to nurture what it calls environmentally healthy and culturally vibrant communities in metro Detroit.

Today's grants cast a wide net through Detroit's cultural community. Traditional stalwart the Detroit Symphony Orchestra received \$100,000, while an under-the-radar group like Puppet Art theater in Detroit got \$10,000. Other grants included \$100,000 for the Heidelberg Project and \$40,000 for the Detroit International Jazz Festival.

The money for the arts comes at an especially critical juncture, as organizations have been laying off staff and cutting key artistic programs and administrative costs in the wake of steep declines in corporate and individual giving, falling endowments, soft ticket sales and cuts in state funding. Arts leaders say the economic conditions are the worst they have ever seen.

The DIA, for example, laid off 20% of its staff in February, including 56 full-time and 7 part-time workers, as part of an effort to trim \$6 million from its \$34 million annual budget. "This helps us keep the lights on, the doors open and the staff at their desks," said Annmarie Erickson, DIA executive vice president for planning and operations.

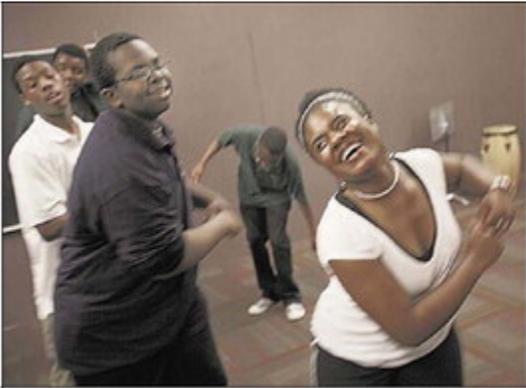
The **Erb** Foundation's investment also underscores the increasing role that foundations are playing as other sources dry up. The Troybased Kresge **Foundation** has committed nearly \$9 million to local cultural groups. Last week, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra announced a \$1million gift from the Ford **Foundation** of New York.

"Unfortunately, the needs are greater than they've ever been," said **Erb** Foundation president John **Erb**, son of Erb Lumber founder Fred **Erb** and his

wife, Barbara. "For the community to flourish, we need to have a strong arts and culture community," he said.

Of the nearly \$5 million dollars the **foundation** expects to grant for its 2010 fiscal year (which begins in July) a majority will go to environmental issues, especially water quality. But about one-third will be earmarked for the arts. Fred and Barbara **Erb** have previously given \$1 million or more to the DSO and other groups. Fred **Erb** has been particularly interested in supporting jazz, a lifelong passion.

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ROMAIN BLANQUART/Detroit Free Press

Robert Lewis and Soneca Anderson during a rehearsal last year for the Mosaic Youth Theatre, which was awarded \$100,000.

Erb Family Foundation Grants

Arts and Culture Anchor Grants for general operating support

Detroit Institute of Arts, \$100,000 Detroit Public Television, \$100,000 Detroit Symphony Orchestra, \$100,000 The Henry Ford, \$100,000 Detroit Zoo, \$100,000 Cranbrook, \$100,000 College for Creative Studies, \$25,000 Detroit Historical Society, \$25,000 Michigan Opera Theatre. \$25,000 African American History Museum, \$25,000 Arts League of Michigan, \$25,000 Cultural Alliance of Southeastern Michigan, \$25,000 Detroit Public Library, \$25,000 Pewabic Society, \$25,000 Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, \$25,000 Meadow Brook Theatre, \$25,000 Detroit Repertory Theatre, \$15,000 Motown Historical Museum, \$15,000 Hilberry Theatre, \$15,000 WDET-FM, \$15,000 Heritage Works, \$10,000 Arts & Scraps, \$10,000 Detroit Artists Market, \$10,000 Living Arts, \$10,000 Marygrove College, \$10,000 Puppet ART, \$10,000 Rackham Symphony Choir, \$10,000 Scarab Club, \$10,000 VSA Arts of Michigan, \$10,000 Wayne State Art Galleries, \$10,000 Arts and Culture — Community Arts Cranbrook Educational Community, \$100,000 for collaboration between Institute of Science and Art Museum Heidelberg Project, \$100,000 over two years for development and program directors

Arts and Culture —Arts Education

Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center, \$35,000 for low-income high school students Detroit International Jazz Festival, \$40,000 for year-round jazz education programs Detroit Symphony Orchestra, \$50,000 for jazz education Inside Out Literary Arts Project, \$50,000 for operating support Michigan State University College of Music, \$50,000 for jazz education for urban youth Mosaic Youth Theatre, \$100,000 for general operating support Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts, \$40,000 for jazz education Sphinx Organization, \$100,000 for education outreach programs Environment —Great Lakes

Clinton River Watershed Council (Rochester), \$33,000 Detroit Science Center, \$125,000 Friends of the Detroit River (Trenton), \$15,000 Friends of the Rouge (Dearborn), \$35,000 Huron River Watershed Council (Ann Arbor), \$75,000 Nature Conservancy (Arlington, Va.), \$100,000 Environment —Environmental Health Ecology Center (Ann Arbor), \$100,000 Michigan Environmental Council (Lansing), \$100,000 Environment — Environmental Justice

Detroit Hispanic Development Corp., \$75,000 Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (Detroit), \$75,000 East Michigan Environmental Action Council (Detroit), \$30,000 YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit (Detroit), \$100,000