



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
City of Los Angeles

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**MEDIA ALERT**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs  
and  
Zócalo "Public Square" Lecture Series  
Announce a Conversation with  
Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts**

The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) and the Zócalo "Public Square" Lecture Series are pleased to host a conversation with Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, on February 13 at 7:30 p.m. at DCA's Barnsdall Gallery Theatre. The Zócalo series features leading thinkers who cover some of today's most pressing topics ([zocalola.org](http://zocalola.org)).

Mr. Gioia will address "Why the Arts Matter" at this Zócalo visit to discuss the impoverishment of American popular culture and "the need to reopen the conversation between our best minds and the broader public." He argues that the real purpose of arts education is not to produce more artists but to "create complete human beings capable of leading successful and productive lives in a free society." Something happens, he says, when an individual actively engages in the arts - be it reading a novel at home, attending a concert at a local church, or seeing a dance company perform at a college campus - that awakens both a heightened sense of identity and civic awareness. He warns that America's cultural decline has "huge and alarming economic consequences."

Olga Garay, DCA's Executive Director said, "We are pleased Mr. Gioia accepted our invitation to come to Los Angeles and participate with the Zócalo series. He will actively engage participants with his insights about the necessity of growing our cultural ecosystem."

Dana Gioia is an internationally acclaimed and award-winning poet. A native Californian of Italian and Mexican descent, Gioia received a B.A. and a M.B.A. from Stanford University and an M.A. in Comparative Literature from Harvard University.

His poetry has been set to music by many composers in genres from classical to rock, including a full-length dance theater piece, *Counting the Children*. He has written two opera libretti, including *Nosferatu* (2001), with composer Alva Henderson, published by Graywolf Press. A recording of *Nosferatu* was released by Albany Records in 2005.



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Gioia is an active translator of poetry from Latin, Italian, German, and Romanian. He has published a translation of Italian Nobel Prize-winning poet Eugenio Montale's *Mottetti* (1990) as well as two large anthologies of Italian poetry. His translation of Seneca's *The Madness of Hercules* (1995) was performed by Verse Theater Manhattan.

In 2001, Gioia founded "Teaching Poetry," a conference dedicated to improving high school teaching of poetry. He is also the founder and co-director of the West Chester University Poetry Conference, the nation's largest annual all-poetry writing conference.

Dana Gioia has taught as a visiting writer at Johns Hopkins University, Sarah Lawrence College, Colorado College, and Wesleyan University. He is the former Vice President of the Poetry Society of America and has served on the boards of numerous arts organizations. He has been awarded five honorary doctorates. Renominated by President George W. Bush in November 2006 for a second term and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Dana Gioia is the ninth Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Barnsdall Gallery Theatre is a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and is located at 4800 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, 90027. Admission for this Zócalo event is free, but reservations are recommended (email zocalola.org or call 213.403.0416).

### **About the NEA**

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

### **About Zócalo "Public Square" Lecture Series**

**Zócalo** is a vibrant series of programs that feature thinkers and doers speaking on some of the most pressing topics of the day. Bringing together an extraordinarily diverse group of Angelenos, Zócalo - "Public Square" in Spanish – seeks to create a non-partisan and multiethnic forum where participants can enjoy a rare opportunity for intellectual fellowship.



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## About DCA

The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) serves as a leader to generate and support high quality arts and cultural experiences for Los Angeles residents and visitors. DCA advances the social and economic impact of the arts and assures access to arts and cultural experiences through grant making, marketing, public and community arts programming, arts education, and creating partnerships with artists and arts and cultural organizations in every community in the City of Los Angeles.

DCA grants \$3.4 million annually to over 300 artists and nonprofit arts organizations and awards the Artist-in-Residence (A.I.R.) and City of Los Angeles (C.O.L.A.) Individual Artist Fellowships. It provides arts and cultural programming in numerous Neighborhood Arts and Cultural Centers, theaters, and creates several arts and education programs for young people. The Department directs public art projects and manages the City's Arts Development Fee, Art Collection, and Murals Program. DCA markets the City's cultural events through development and collaboration with strategic partners, design and production of creative promotional materials, and management of the [culturela.org](http://culturela.org) website.

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