

The University of Kansas - Lied Center of Kansas Creative Campus Project
Tree of Life: Creativity—Origins and Evolution
www.lied.ku.edu/creative/

The Lied Center received a Creative Campus Initiative grant to support a two-year project that brings resident and touring artists together in the creation of a new artistic work in response to an interdisciplinary research investigation, *The Tree of Life: Creativity—Origins and Evolution*. Academic partners include: the Center for Science Education, The Commons (a research partnership between the Biodiversity Institute and The Hall Center for the Humanities), the Hall Center for the Humanities, University Theatre, University Dance Company and the KU Wind Ensemble. In addition to partners' in-kind support, financial resources have been secured from the Chancellor, the Provost, KU Center for Research, the Deans of the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Fine Arts, and the Kansas Space Grant Consortium.

The Tree of Life—Creativity: Origins and Evolution

The affinities of all the beings of the same class have sometimes been represented by a great tree... As buds give rise by growth to fresh buds, and these if vigorous, branch out and overtop on all sides many a feebler branch, so by generation I believe it has been with the great Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever branching and beautiful ramifications.

Origin of Species, Charles Darwin 1859

The “Tree of Life” is a biological concept connecting all life through genetic relatedness. Scientists for the last 150 years have been trying to decipher this tree of life and it is one of the most exciting scientific challenges facing biologists. The “Tree of Life” is also a metaphor for roots, origins and extinctions. Each human culture has a creation story involving the tree of life. It explores perceived incompatibilities as well as shared similarities between the arts and the sciences. It also explores key questions basic to understanding what makes us human: “Why are we here?” “How can I be an individual of both faith and science?” and “What is truth?” The “Tree of Life” metaphor bridges the sciences and the humanities and is itself a metaphor for our project’s goal to bridge the sciences, humanities and the performing arts at KU.

Interdisciplinary Research Investigation

A primary goal of the Creative Campus project is to foster interdisciplinary research and teaching at the University of Kansas. Central to the goal will be a grant program for KU students that will support research and presentation of artistic work that mirrors the goals and structure of the Creative Campus Central Work, a commissioned performance work that will premiere at the Lied Center on April 24 and 25, 2009. The student projects (performance or visual) will be premiered on campus between April 11-18, 2009.

Central Work - Artists and Implementation of the Commissioned Work

The performing artwork will be produced by Karen Christilles, Lied Center Associate Director, and directed by John Staniunas, Department of Theatre and Film Chair. Recognized composer David Balakrishnan will be joined by resident artists: Dennis

Christilles (text), Muriel Cohan (choreographer), Matt Jacobson (film), Mark Reaney (scenographer), Delores Ringer (costume designer), Patrick Suzeau (choreographer), Delbert Unruh (lighting designer) and Scott Weiss (conductor wind ensemble) and The performance will premier on the Lied Center Series in April 2009 with the Turtle Island String Quartet joined by faculty and student ensembles from the Department of Music and Dance and Department of Theatre and Film.

Other Creative Campus Recipients

The Lied Center is one of eight grants awarded to colleges and universities for strengthening the performing arts on campus and in the academy awarded by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Other Creative Campus recipients are:

Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture, Hostos Community College – CUNY, Bronx, NY

Lied Center for the Performing Arts, University of Nebraska

Stanford Lively Arts – Stanford University

Dartmouth College – Hopkins Center, Hanover, NH

The University of Iowa – Hancher Auditorium, Iowa City, IA

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC

Wesleyan University – Center for the Arts, Middletown, CT