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LASM Receives \$100,000 from the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Art & Science Museum has been awarded a \$100,000 operations grant from the **Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation**. This grant was awarded on December 11, 2019, and will aid the Museum in expanding its organizational capacity-building initiatives in 2020.

“We are most grateful to the **Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation** for awarding LASM this generous grant,” said Serena Pandos, President & Executive Director of LASM. “Last year, during our leadership transition, individual giving for general operations had dropped below a sustainable level. Thanks to the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation, we can continue to implement our sustainability plan, which focuses on leveraging our existing resources and expanding our capabilities wherever possible. The support of the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation will make way for continuous improvement and progress. We cannot thank the Foundation enough for this show of support for our mission and service to the community.”

The Foundation was the principal donor for the construction of the Irene W. Pennington Planetarium, which opened in 2003. The Planetarium has remained one of the largest and most technologically-advanced planetariums in the southeastern region of the United States and welcomed its one-millionth visitor in 2019.

“Part of expanding our capabilities calls for us to think about innovative uses for the Irene W. Pennington Planetarium, and we’re off to a great start in presenting ***Exploring the Hidden Music: Louisiana*** on January 31 and February 1,” said Pandos. “This conceptual performance is produced in collaboration with Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital. The performance connects art and science and coincides with American Heart Month. The performance includes internationally-renowned artist, musician, and architect Christopher Janney, whose work is currently on view at LASM, as well as the incredibly talented George Bell and Quiana Lynell, who are native to Baton Rouge.

“Since we are a 501c3 nonprofit organization, we require sponsorship support or underwriting to make our programs possible,” Pandos continued. “Thanks to our amazing sponsors **Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, Kathy and Steve Nathanson, Winifred Reilly, and Louisiana Cardiology Associates**, we can make this highly innovative program available to our community. But part of the reason we were able to bring this performance to our community is that we have the amazing, immersive space afforded to us in the Irene W. Pennington Planetarium. Proceeds of this event will help fund the budding Arts & Wellness program at LASM and the Arts & Medicine program at the OLOL

Children’s Hospital. This is a perfect example of just one of the many collaborative and innovative uses we have planned for 2020 — again, this is all thanks to the investments made to build the Irene W. Pennington Planetarium, along with our new and steadfast partners, funders, board, advisory council, and staff. As for this generous grant, a portion of the funding support provided by the Irene W. & C.B. Pennington Foundation will help with operations by providing emergency funding for updated admissions equipment, which we need to function.”

Pandos’ first year at LASM is the latest in a 25-year career span of transformational leadership in museums, nine years of which include serving as an art and science museum director. During that time, she has developed a successful track record of developing and implementing strategies for best practices in the areas of sustainability, community engagement, cultural arts, science education, service offerings, economic development, and the responsible stewardship of public and private funds.

“The Louisiana Art & Science Museum is a community asset for education, culture, and economic development,” she said. “This past year, we have doubled our efforts in every department toward constant improvement, expanded capabilities, and sustainability. Feedback from our visitors and stakeholders indicate that the fruits of our efforts are beginning to show. It is palpable that we live in a community that values what museums bring to communities, and that makes our work all the more worthwhile. This Museum is making a difference in so many people’s lives, either by exposing youth to experiences that set a trajectory for lifelong success or by enhancing our region’s educational, cultural, and economic development for the benefit of all people, regardless of age and socioeconomic status.”

For more information on the Louisiana Art & Science Museum and its programs, visit lasm.org. Support the Art & Science Museum’s mission and programs at lasm.org/give. For more information on *Exploring the Hidden Music* and to purchase tickets, visit lasm.org/events.

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Images: The Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation was the principal investor for the construction of the Irene W. Pennington Planetarium in 2003. Again in 2020, the Foundation’s investment in the Art & Science Museum will help LASM expand its operations and programming.

About the Louisiana Art & Science Museum

A nonprofit organization housed on the banks of the Mississippi River in downtown Baton Rouge, the Louisiana Art & Science Museum enhances the understanding and appreciation of art and science for general audiences and students by presenting unique, educational, and entertaining experiences that encourage discovery, inspire creativity, and foster the pursuit of knowledge. More information about the Art & Science Museum is available at lasm.org.

The Louisiana Art & Science Museum is supported in part by a grant from the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, in cooperation with the Louisiana State Arts Council. Funding is also provided by generous corporations, foundations, and individual donors, as well as the National Endowment for the Arts, Art Works, the City of Baton Rouge, and the Parish of East Baton Rouge.