



Christopher Gruits, Annenberg Center Executive and Artistic Director, is Named a 2020 Eisenhower Fellow

(Philadelphia – January 15, 2020) — **Annenberg Center Executive and Artistic Director Christopher Gruits** has been selected as an **Eisenhower Fellow** in the 2020 USA Fellowship Program, one of 10 highly accomplished professionals from the fields of education, finance, the arts, and technology who will travel overseas, broadening their horizons as they pursue individual projects that will generate lasting impact in their communities. The USA Fellows will meet with Eisenhower Fellows abroad, unlocking a lifelong connection to an influential global network of likeminded change agents.

Now in its 66th year and named for America's 34th president, **Eisenhower Fellowships** brings together innovative leaders from all fields from around the globe who tackle big challenges to better the world around them. Since 1953, more than 2,400 mid-career leaders from 115 countries have benefited from the unique, customized experience of an Eisenhower Fellowship.

Gruits' fellowship will revolve around travel to South Africa and Singapore to work toward developing a Global Artists Project (GAP) to be integrated into the Annenberg Center, which will provide an opportunity for a significant international artist or ensemble to work within Philadelphia communities. The GAP project would leverage the educational and programmatic resources of the Annenberg Center and the University of Pennsylvania, along with the creative work of the artists. Gruits' fellowship aims to redefine community engagement, enhance cross-cultural programming, and serve audiences not previously engaged in the performing arts. Another goal for the GAP project is to create a network of individuals to share critical artistic work across music, theatre, dance and film, as well as program structures and suggestions for developing community engagement and cross-cultural understanding.

"During a time of great polarization, both here at home in the U.S and abroad, more than ever we need outlets to understand, empathize with, and experience cultures beyond our own," said Gruits. "The arts are a universal language that can promote empathy and understanding, while addressing pressing topics of our time, and the Annenberg Center is in a unique position to help bridge these distances through the transformational power of artists and their work."

"In a time of growing nationalism and retrenchment in many countries, I am confident these outstanding leaders will use their time overseas to build new bridges of understanding and then bring back and apply what they learn to better their communities," said Eisenhower Fellowships President George de Lama.

Christopher A. Gruits became Executive and Artistic Director of the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Pennsylvania in 2016. The 2017-18 season was the Annenberg Center's first fully programmed season under his leadership. Gruits' vision returns the Annenberg Center to its roots as Philadelphia's premier curator of innovative and groundbreaking programs, presenter of sought-after debut artists, and champion of multifaceted collaborations. A signature of Gruits' leadership is the cultivation of partnerships across the community, reflecting the Annenberg Center's commitment to serving the University of Pennsylvania, the West

Philadelphia neighborhood in which the Annenberg Center resides, and the Greater Philadelphia region. Gruits is the former Vice President and Executive Producer of Presentations, the programming and arts broadcasting division of Interlochen Center for the Arts. Previously, he was Director of e-Strategy at Carnegie Hall and Commercial Director for DilettanteMusic.com, the web's first and largest social music network for classical musicians and listeners. He began his career at the Seattle Symphony. Gruits holds a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary humanities with a concentration in arts management from Michigan State University, and a master's in business administration with a focus on strategy from the University of Edinburgh.

About the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts serves as a major cultural destination and crossroads connecting Penn and the greater Philadelphia region through innovative human expression in theatre, music, dance, and film, serving an annual audience of over 80,000. The Annenberg Center also serves as a key resource for the arts at Penn, connecting master artists with Penn students in support of and as an enhancement to the arts curriculum. Student performing arts groups are also key users of the Annenberg Center's multiple performance and rehearsal spaces, while also staffing many operational roles throughout the academic year. In reflection of Penn's core values as a world-respected academic institution, the Annenberg Center emphasizes artistic and intellectual excellence, diversity, and rigor in its presentations; prioritizes broad inclusiveness in the artists, audiences, and groups it serves; manages outstanding performance, conference, and meeting facilities; and stresses comprehensive event planning, production support, and customer service. The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is a major provider of performing arts access for school children and actively engages a broad range of primary, secondary, and post-secondary student audiences and inclusive constituencies from the campus, community, and greater Philadelphia region. Visit AnnenbergCenter.org.

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CONTACTS:

Katherine Blodgett, for the Annenberg Center
Email: katherineblodgett@gmail.com
Phone: 215.431.1230

Alexander Freeman, Director of Marketing and Ticketing
Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts
Email: freemana@ac.upenn.edu
Phone: 215.898.9081

Erin Wurzel, for Eisenhower Fellowships
Email: ewurzel@efworld.org
Phone: 215.546.1738