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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From: Connie Bonfy, Executive Director, Prairie Muses
And Susan Mayo, Artistic Director, Prairie Muses
620-441-1310

The Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission has awarded grants for fall 2019. The Marion County-based project—*Flints Hills Counterpoint* has been awarded \$7000 to launch Phase I of a new work. The grant was submitted and will be managed by the nonprofit Prairie Muses. The project concept is a creative placemaking initiative to focus on 13 acres of land owned by celebrated cellist and Prairie Muses artistic director, Susan Mayo and located northeast of Peabody in Marion County, one of 22 counties hosting a portion of the Kansas Flint Hills prairie.

The project germinated when the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Kansas Forest Service were contacted by Susan Mayo and her husband, Nasir Islam, to help restore their land. At the same time, Mayo became acquainted with Kansas City Art Institute Associate Professor of Filmmaking, Cyan Meeks during their residencies in the Matfield Green based Tallgrass Artist Residency and mutually agreed to seek a future collaboration. NRCS and Forestry Services have created a management plan for actual land reclamation and will fund a portion of the land project. The additional restoration cost will be paid by the landowners. Everything about this reclamation process inspired Mayo and Meeks to collaborate now.

Ultimately *Flints Hills Counterpoint* is a multi-year collaborative including music composed by Mayo for an audiovisual film Meeks will create to experience a chronological interpretation of sensory field recordings taken from the perspective of the land, flora and fauna—the witnesses to a prairie and forest lands reclamation process. This final performance and film will not be finished for three years and will premier in 2022.

In the meantime, artists will begin work in surrounding small communities throughout Marion County to perform and engage residents in ways to creatively celebrate the prairie wherever they may live. Community members will help develop and create activities and everyone will be invited to experience the land transition through visits and the events including unique arts-infused Marion County prairie-based tours; hands-on sound collection activities that celebrate this place and foster a personal sense of responsibility through exposure to strengthen awareness and inspire land stewardship.

Nearby rural communities of Peabody, Marion, and Hillsboro have already proven to be ideal partners. Science, art and music faculty from regional public schools and Tabor College have agreed to partner throughout all project phases, collaborating in a variety of projects, including field trips, workshops, and classroom presentations. The Marion County Commissioners have agreed to be partners with the project for Phase II grant applications.

Flint Hills Counterpoint Phase I will culminate in spring 2020 with an on-site county-wide potluck dinner and audiovisual performance comprised of several musical bands, including string quartet,

video projection and sound recordings of a previous prairie documentary by Cyan Meeks, *Phainesthai*, an aural/visual art exhibition, that is the result of working experientially within the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve as part of her Tallgrass Residency 2018. Susan, with her string quartet, will perform their prairie work, also originally composed through the Tallgrass Residency, as counterpoint to Meek's video. Informational presentations, onsite celebrations/work-parties leading up to art/music festivities will be open to all - attracting both rural/agricultural and urban/artistic audiences, bringing together the diverse population of Kansas to engage in a collective "counterpoint," a *Flint Hills Counterpoint*.