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**Will Wickham to Work in Partnership with
The Cantata Singers as Recipients of
Creatives Rebuild New York's Artist Employment Program**

Elmira, NY Will Wickham and The Cantata Singers announced today that they received an Artist Employment Program (AEP) grant from Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY). Designed to support employment opportunities for artists, the program is funding 98 collaborations involving a dynamic group of 300 artists employed by community-based organizations, municipalities, and tribal governments across New York State. CRNY has awarded a total of \$49.9M in funding to support artists' salaries and benefits, with an additional \$11.7M in funding provided to the organizations holding employment.

"If we are to truly rebuild our amazing state, we must celebrate artists' contributions not only to the economy but to what makes us human," says Creatives Rebuild New York's Executive Director Sarah Calderon. "The incredible work being funded through CRNY's Artist Employment Program underscores the importance of direct support for both individual artists and the organizations that hold their employment."

Will Wickham and the Cantata Singers will be working together to create song-stories of the wonderful patchwork of diverse people, interests, and history of the southern Finger Lakes region of New York State. The over \$200,000, two-year AEP grant will provide a living wage and benefits supporting Wickham as a composer and musician and provide sufficient funding for the Cantata Singers to support this exciting collaboration through the creation and performance of the music he writes. Through an extensive series of interviews and outreach, Wickham will collect life stories and histories of people that make our area special in so many ways. In

addition to reaching out to the community at large, the outreach work will include time with school classes and families living with dementia to share those important stories as well. To assist Wickham in the telling of these stories, the group will hire other artists including poets, storytellers, photographers, musicians, and more. Joy Perry, the Cantata Singers' board president said "We are honored and thrilled to receive these funds from CRNY. It is a tremendous opportunity for the Cantata Singers to perform the works composed by our director, Will Wickham." Will Wickham, having spent the last several years writing song-stories (*Where Sacred Waters Divide* (2015), *Beyond Any One Life* (2018), and this year's *Surviving Agnes*) along with Corning based poet/lyricist Edward Dougherty, said, "Having the opportunity to both collect and set so many stories to choral music is truly an honor and a treat." For more information, or if you would like to be part of this ground-breaking work, go to Cantatasingers.com.

Artist Employment Program recipients were selected through a two-stage process by a group of twenty external peer reviewers alongside CRNY staff. From an initial pool of over 2,700 written applications, 167 were shortlisted for interviews with reviewers. To view the list of 98 Artist Employment Program participants, visit <https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/participants/>.

For more information about Creatives Rebuild New York's Artist Employment Program, please visit creativesrebuildny.org.