

## NEWS RELEASE

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Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences

# Fred Johnson Appointed Inaugural Performing Artist-in-Residence at the National Academy of Sciences



WASHINGTON – The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is pleased to announce the appointment of singer, composer, and storyteller Fred Johnson as the inaugural performing artist-in-residence within the Cultural Programs of the NAS and LabX programs. This groundbreaking initiative aims to bridge the worlds of science and the performing arts, fostering collaboration, creativity, and community engagement. In a letter of support for the creation of the position, NAS member and oceanographer Jody Deming wrote, “Establishing a performing artist-in-residence program at the NAS [is] a powerful statement, not only to scientists and artists but also to the wider world, of the belief that sharing knowledge and experiences across boundaries is essential to progress and enlightenment.”

### Objectives of the Performing Artist-in-Residence Position:

- 1. Expanding Performing Arts Programming:** Building on successful collaborations with the Black Hole Symphony, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Theater of War, and the DC Environmental Film Festival, the NAS seeks to explore further opportunities at the intersection of science and the performing arts.
- 2. Enhancing Report Dissemination:** Johnson will work closely with the Academies’ program officers to develop innovative ways of disseminating National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine reports using performing arts, including poetry and storytelling.
- 3. Broadening Audience Reach:** Leveraging the rich cultural traditions of performing arts and storytelling, Johnson’s residency aims to attract a more diverse audience, aligning with the NAS strategic plan’s emphasis on reaching broader communities.
- 4. Facilitating Research Collaboration:** Johnson will have access to scientists and experts, enabling him to create content and conduct research. This reciprocal exchange will benefit the scientific community and Johnson’s artistic practice.

**Background:** In February 2024, during the Gulf Research Program’s workshop on “Art and Science to Advance Creative Engagement in the Gulf of Mexico Region,” Johnson captivated participants with his improvisational storytelling and singing. Summarizing panel discussions through his artistry, he sparked an exciting exchange and opened doors for broader audience engagement.

**Biography of Fred Johnson:** Fred Johnson, a community engagement specialist at the David A. Straz Center for the Performing Arts in Tampa, Florida, has 45 years of experience empowering less privileged communities through creative expression. Mentored by masters of West African oral and healing traditions, Johnson reexamines the healing power of artistic expression in contemporary contexts. His work with the National Endowment for the Arts’ Creative Forces initiative, supporting military personnel suffering from PTSD, exemplifies his commitment to social justice and transformation.

**Cultural Programs of the NAS** sponsors exhibitions, salons, theatrical readings, and other events that explore relationships among the arts and sciences. The NAS is a private, nonprofit institution that recognizes achievement in science by election to membership, and — with the National Academy of Engineering and the National

Academy of Medicine — provides science, technology, and health policy advice to the federal government and other organizations.

**LabX** is a public engagement testbed at the NAS that experiments with creative approaches to communicating science to broad audiences. LabX hosts in-person programming at comedy clubs in Los Angeles and New York and at pop-up events in Washington, DC, ranging from speakeasies to sound bathing. LabX can also be found on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram.

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