



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 11, 2015

CONTACTS:
Dafina McMillan, dcmillan@tcg.org
212-609-5955
Brittany Catton Kirk, bkirk@bluestarfam.org
858-344-4709

TCG Launches Blue Star Theatres Grant Program to Support Projects Connecting Theatre and Military Communities

New York, NY – Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for theatre, and **Blue Star Families**, the country’s largest chapter-based military families non-profit organization, are pleased to announce the inaugural round of the **Blue Star Theatres Grant Program**. Through support from **MetLife Foundation**, the Grant Program will fund efforts that deepen the relationship between participating Blue Star Theatres and their local military community: veterans, children of active duty military, military spouses and/or active duty military. Each theatre will receive \$5,000 to support activities that can include talkbacks, outreach programs, sponsored tickets, performances, playwriting workshops, readings or workshops that focus on military themes and service.

“TCG has been proud to partner with MetLife Foundation and Blue Star Families to support the groundswell of activity between theatres and their local military communities,” said **Teresa Eyring**, executive director, TCG. “The recipients of the inaugural Blue Star Theatres Grant Program are engaging in deeply meaningful ways: with homeless veterans and children of active duty military, and through special Veterans Nights at the theatre and performances on military bases.”

“Blue Star Families is thrilled to partner with Theatre Communications Group on a new grant program designed to provide military families with greater access to theatrical performances,” said **Noeleen Tillman**, executive director of Blue Star Families. “The participating theatre companies are set to offer an array of lively and entertaining productions, as well as serve as engaging Blue Star Families’ partners helping to strengthen community bonds and foster a greater understanding of the military lifestyle.”

“MetLife Foundation is pleased with the continued growth and success of the Blue Star Arts program,” said **Dennis White**, president and CEO, MetLife Foundation. “Programs such as Blue Star Theatres play an important part in building bridges between military families and their local communities and we are proud to provide support.”

The inaugural recipients of the Blue Star Theatres Grant Program are:

California Shakespeare Theater: Through the Triangle Lab, California Shakespeare Theater’s research and development wing, theatres, artists, and communities are brought together to ignite change. Central to this goal is experimenting with the form—finding new ways of taking theater outside the rehearsal room and into a more active relationship with its communities. The 2015 Artist-Investigator program creates partnerships between artists and non-profits, investigating how the skills of theatre artists can help address community issues. Berkeley Food and Housing Project (BFHP) is a long-term partner of Cal Shakes and was the first non-profit to join this experimental program. Artist-Investigator Krista DeNio is in residence at the BFHP working with homeless veterans who have beds at the BFHP facility. Designed in collaboration with staff Chaplain Marianna Sempari, DeNio’s project focuses on how performance-based work can heal the moral injury suffered by these veterans.

San Diego Repertory Theatre: San Diego REP will produce the local premiere of the one-woman play *Grounded* by George Brant. The play chronicles the story of a female ace fighter pilot whose unexpected pregnancy grounds her. She finds herself piloting drones from a cubicle in

Las Vegas that fly kill missions in the Middle East. The project will partner with the local Blue Star Families organization to reach out to military families and present three to four performances on local military bases or sites adjacent to these bases. Attendees will be offered free tickets to future productions at San Diego REP, with performances taking place on several local military bases. With the aim of building an ongoing relationship with military families, the military personnel and families who attend the performances of *Grounded* will be invited to attend two designated performances of mainstage productions at San Diego REP. Following these performances at the REP's home, the director and actor of *Grounded* will host post show conversations with the audience about the work onstage.

Steppenwolf Theatre Company: Steppenwolf's Veterans' Night Preview Series has become an integral part of the theatre's outreach programming, and one of special significance to the theatre's founders and artists. Steppenwolf is honored to recognize our local heroes and bring the vitality of live theatre to underserved members of the Chicago community through this longstanding program. For each Veterans' Night performance, Steppenwolf will provide 200 tickets free of charge to the final dress rehearsal of each of our five subscription series season plays as well as a seated dinner prior to the performance served by Steppenwolf staff and community volunteers.

Young Playwrights' Theater: Young Playwrights' Theater will engage in a partnership with Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), providing their nationally-recognized after-school arts education programming for students at one school served by MCEC's Student-2-Student Program. Students will participate in eight arts-integrated workshops led by a professional artist, learning the fundamentals of playwriting and working individually and collaboratively to create original dramatic pieces on personally significant topics, culminating in a final public performance. The project will empower students to create theatre that speaks to growing up in transient military environments, and will deepen YPT's connections with military families by sharing students' work in this community.

The panelists for the inaugural Blue Star Theatres Grant Program were:

Maurice Decaul, a former Marine, is a poet, essayist, and playwright, whose writing has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Daily Beast*, *Sierra Magazine*, *Epiphany*, *Callaloo*, *Narrative* and others. His collaborations with Vijay Iyer and Mike Ladd: *Holding it Down* and *Sleep Song*, have been produced in New York City's Harlem Stage, Washington DC's ATLAS INTERSECTIONS FESTIVAL, in Paris and Antwerp. His new play *Between the Tigris and the Euphrates* is being produced by Poetic Theater Productions in spring, 2015. Maurice is a graduate of Columbia University and is currently finishing his MFA at New York University.

Peter Meineck, PhD, is an associate professor of Classics at NYU and the Founder of Aquila Theatre. His is also the director of the National Endowment for the Humanities funded YouStories.com veteran's public program. He has directed and/or produced over sixty professional theatre productions in the US and Europe and has published widely on ancient drama and culture. His most recent book (with David Konstan) is "Combat Trauma and the Ancient Greeks" (Palgrave 2014). He served as a Royal Marine Reservist in the UK and is currently a volunteer firefighter and EMT in Bedford, New York.

Steve Scuba is a playwright and active duty cavalry officer in the United States Army. He is currently a Captain assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team out of Fort Hood, Texas. Steve served combat tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He is the recipient of the Bronze Star and Purple Heart Medals and the U.S. Army's Combat Action Badge.

Paula Vogel's play, *How I Learned to Drive*, received the Pulitzer Prize, Lortel Prize, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and New York Drama Critics Awards for Best Play, and her second OBIE. Other plays include *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, *The Mineola Twins*, *The Baltimore Waltz*, *Hot 'N' Throbbing*, *Desdemona*, *And Baby Makes Seven*, and *The Oldest Profession*, A

Civil War Christmas and *Don Juan Comes Home From Iraq*. Co-created with Rebecca Taichman, her play *INDECENT* will open at Yale Repertory Theatre and La Jolla Playhouse in the fall of 2015. TCG has published four books of her work. She has taught playwriting at Brown University, Yale School of Drama and throughout the United States and abroad.

Douglas C. Wager currently serves as the associate dean of the Division of Theater, Film and Media Arts and Artistic Director for Temple Theaters. He is best known for his work as a director, having spent over three decades in the profession prior to joining the Temple Theater faculty in 2004. Mr. Wager is the former Artistic Director of the Arena Stage in Washington, DC, where he served for twenty five seasons as resident director and producer. He is the recipient of three Helen Hayes awards and thirteen nominations for Outstanding Director and a Barrymore Award nominee as well. His work has been seen in New York, both on and off-Broadway, and at major regional theatres across the country including Center Theatre Group, The Guthrie Theater, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Pasadena Playhouse, The Kennedy Center, Washington Opera, The Shakespeare Theater in Washington, DC, The Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Yale Repertory Theatre. Internationally, he has also directed for the Chichester Festival Theater in England. For AMC Network television he directed several episodes of the AMC original series, *THE LOT*. Since coming to Temple in 2004, Mr. Wager has directed regularly for the main stage season.

Blue Star Theatres was launched on September 28, 2012, with 22 theatres participating, and now features 123 participating theatres. This initiative is intended to recognize the contributions of service families, to build stronger connections between the theatre community and military families in communities all across the country and to help in whatever small way we can to aid service people and their families as they seek to be integrated into the lives of their communities. Blue Star Theatres builds on the work already occurring at many theatres nationwide, including: playwriting classes to empower creative expression for veterans; community discussions on plays whose themes resonate with military families; free or discounted ticket programs; job postings and casting notices on military bases; and much more. TCG and Blue Star Families connect theatres with local bases and military families, and develop and disseminate best-practices for engaging with deployed personnel, veterans and service families.

One hundred and twenty-three TCG Member Theatres have already signed on to participate in Blue Star Theatres. To find the full list, visit: <http://www.tcg.org/advocacy/bluestar/map.cfm>.

For more information about Blue Star Theatres, visit: <http://www.tcg.org/advocacy/bluestar/map.cfm>.

Blue Star Families (BSF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit serving 1.5 million military family members annually through 50 chapters nationwide and overseas. BSF provides innovative programs like Blue Star Neighbors, Books on Bases, Blue Star Museums, Caregivers Empowering Caregivers, Operation Honor Corps, Blue Star Theatres, Operation Appreciation and military spouse employment initiatives like Blue Star Spouse Networks and Blue Star Jobs. Programs are designed to strengthen military families and connect communities. Become a member of Blue Star Families or Blue Star Neighbors today- membership is free. Sign up at www.BlueStarFam.org

MetLife Foundation was created in 1976 to continue MetLife's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Since its founding through the end of 2014, MetLife Foundation has provided more than \$650 million in grants and \$70 million in program-related investments to organizations addressing issues that have a positive impact in their communities. Today, the Foundation is dedicated to advancing financial inclusion, committing \$200 million to help build a secure future for individuals and communities around the world. To learn more about MetLife Foundation, visit www.metlife.org.

For over 50 years, **Theatre Communications Group** (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, has existed to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. TCG's constituency has grown from a handful of groundbreaking theatres to nearly 700 member theatres and affiliate organizations and more than 12,000 individuals nationwide. TCG offers its members networking and knowledge-building opportunities through conferences, events, research and communications; awards grants, approximately \$2 million per year, to theatre companies and individual

artists; advocates on the federal level; and serves as the U.S. Center of the International Theatre Institute, connecting its constituents to the global theatre community. TCG is North America's largest independent publisher of dramatic literature, with 13 Pulitzer Prizes for Best Play on the TCG booklist. It also publishes the award-winning AMERICAN THEATRE magazine and ARTSEARCH®, the essential source for a career in the arts. In all of its endeavors, TCG seeks to increase the organizational efficiency of its member theatres, cultivate and celebrate the artistic talent and achievements of the field and promote a larger public understanding of, and appreciation for, the theatre. www.tcg.org.

#