

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 15, 2008

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“If at first the idea is not absurd then there is no hope for it.”

---Albert Einstein

**MetLife/TCG A-ha! Program: Think It, Do It
First Round Recipients Announced**

New York – Theatre Communications Group (TCG) announces the inaugural round of recipients for the MetLife/TCG **A-ha! Program: Think it, Do It**.

From the private sector to the public sector, from engineering to the environment, and from the arts to the sciences, the need for innovation and creativity is generally agreed upon as keys to success. Support for new ideas and experimentation, however, is not readily available. To fill that void in the professional, not-for-profit theatre field, MetLife Foundation and TCG partnered to create the **A-ha! Program** designed to foster creative thinking and action among TCG member theatres.

“As the field grapples with our country’s changing demographics and seeks new ways to create work that not only informs but strengthens bonds among diverse communities, it seems important to support research and development as well as risk-taking in the field,” said Teresa Eyring, TCG executive director. Along with MetLife Foundation, we have now created a program that will allow member theatres to dive into new ideas and experimentation with the understanding that even failure can be instructive.”

The **A-ha! Program**, has two components (and theatres can only apply to one). **Think It** grants (up to \$25,000) give theatre professionals the time and space for research and development; and **Do It** grants (up to \$50,000) support the implementation and testing of new ideas. The program supports risk-taking, reflection, experimentation and the development of creative strategies. It is hoped that the larger field will benefit from new best practices that emerge from the program.

“MetLife Foundation is proud to partner with TCG to support creative thinking and innovation in theatres,” said Sibyl Jacobson, President and CEO MetLife Foundation. “We believe the A-Ha! program will strengthen the field and promote new models and best practices.”

The **Think It** recipients are Mo’olelo Performing Arts Company in San Diego, CA and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in Washington, D.C., with alternate status awarded to Round House Theatre in Bethesda, MD and Dell’Arte International in Blue Lake, CA . The **Do It** recipients are Theater Grottesco, in Santa Fe, NM and The Playwrights’ Center (TPC), Inc in Minneapolis, MN, with alternate status awarded to American Repertory Theatre Company in Cambridge, MA .

The projects break down as follows:

Mo’olelo Performing Arts Company will research and develop a tool to measure the environmental impact of theatre, helping the industry to make choices that do not damage our communities.

Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company will send its staff on 1-2 week sabbaticals to shadow professionals working in analogous jobs or fields to help provoke new thinking about their work at the theatre.

Round House Theatre would research and develop an “e-field trip” to expand its Student Matinee Program through simulcasts and web-based workshops.

Dell’Arte International proposed researching and investigating the development of a retired theatre workers community, which would impact the field of theatre as a whole.

Theater Grottesco will create a state-of-the-art intimate performance venue for smaller, not for profit organizations by inviting partners to invest in downtown Santa Fe property through a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC).

The Playwrights’ Center (TPC) will take its cue from the film industry. TPC will create a professionally produced web trailer series, available by free download in an audio-visual gallery on its website.

American Repertory Theatre would introduce Band/A.R.T., in which local bands would be commissioned to write original pieces of music in response to five A.R.T. productions.

The process and progress of these recipients will be chronicled on the TCG website, www.tcg.org.

Panel members were Michael Johnson-Chase, Consultant, GlobalHamlet Consulting (New York); Jason Neulander, Founder Artistic Director emeritus, Salvage Vanguard Theater (Austin); Victoria Nolan, deputy Dean of Yale School of Drama and Managing Director of Yale Repertory Theatre (New Haven); Brad Stephenson, Director of Projects and Marketing, Center for Arts Management and Technology; Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburg) and Mark Valdez, National Coordinator, Network of Ensemble Theaters (New York).

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MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife to continue the company's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation supports programs that improve education, promote health, encourage parental involvement and family engagement, and help revitalize neighborhoods and stress accessibility and inclusion. In recent years, a focus on Alzheimer’s and aging issues has been added. MetLife Foundation stresses education in all its programs. Recognizing the vital role the arts play in building communities and educating young people, the Foundation contributes to arts and cultural organizations across the United States, with an emphasis on increasing opportunities for young people, reaching broad audiences through inclusive programming, and making arts more accessible for all people.

Theatre Communications Group’s (TCG) mission is to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional, not-for-profit American theatre. TCG initiatives include a variety of artistic, management, international and advocacy programs. Its many publications offer a national resource for reference, opinion and debate on theatre and the performing arts today.