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Contact:

Chris Boneau/Susanne Tighe stighe@bbbway.com

2010 TCG National Conference: IDEAS INTO ACTION

Field pioneers meet a new generation of visionaries as TCG awards the “Spirit of Irreverence” to funders and artists alike.

The 2010 TCG Award Recipients are:

Regional Funder Award: the Joyce Foundation

Visionary Leadership Award: Bill Rauch, Artistic Director, Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Theatre Practitioner Award: Bernard Gersten, Executive Producer, Lincoln Center Theater

National Funder Award: Susan Smith Blackburn Prize

Peter Zeisler Memorial Award: Jack Reuler, Artistic Director, Mixed Blood Theatre

Alan Schneider Director Award: Anne Kauffman, Director

Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for professional not-for-profit theatre announces the winners of the 2010 TCG Awards for excellence. The TCG Awards, presented during TCG’s National Conference in Chicago this past June, exist to salute extraordinary dedication to the American theatre community, the recipients of this honor are nominated by their peers and selected by TCG’s Board of Directors. Since 2001, TCG’s member theatres have been asked each year to nominate one person or organization for each of the five prestigious awards. On stage at the Palmer House Hilton’s Red Lacquer Room, TCG recognized a Regional Funder, a National Funder and recipients of the Peter Zeisler Memorial Award, the Alan Schneider Director Award and the Visionary Leadership Award with “Spirit of Irreverence” statues designed by Ralph Lee.

“It is with great pride that TCG awards these recipients,” said TCG Executive Director Teresa Eyring. “TCG congratulates you for not only inspiring the field with your forward-thinking vision, but also for putting that vision into action and taking the steps towards the future that our field needs to survive and thrive.” Eyring continued, “Thank you so much for your work, your imagination and your dedication to the American theatre community.”

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The **2010 Regional Funder Award** recognizes a local funding organization that has evidenced leadership and has provided outstanding sustained support of theatres in the region in which the conference is being held. The 2010 award honors a funder based in the Chicago area.

The Joyce Foundation, based in Chicago, encourages cultural organizations to serve and represent Chicago's diverse populations and foster the **development of new works by artists of color** through its Culture program. Since 2003, the Joyce Awards program has been the only granting opportunity exclusively supporting artists of color in the major Midwestern cities of: Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis/St. Paul. Award recipients receive grants of \$50,000 each to support new works in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. Additionally, the foundation has long supported the hundreds of small and mid-sized arts organizations that reflect and promote the cultural life of local communities and ethnic audiences in Chicago.

The Joyce Foundation has also been a vital partner for TCG, supporting for the second year the Young Leaders of Color program, which makes it possible for TCG to enrich and embolden theatre practitioners of color while connecting them to the national dialogue at the conference.

Previous Recipients of the Regional Funder Award are: Denver Metro Scientific & Cultural Facilities District, the Metropolitan Atlanta Arts Fund; ArtsFund in Seattle; Jerome Foundation in Minneapolis; Travelers' Foundation in St. Paul and the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation in Washington, DC.

Accepting this award was **Michelle T. Boone**, the Senior Program Officer of the Joyce Foundation.

The **2010 TCG Visionary Leadership Award** is given to an individual who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to advance the theatre field as a whole, nationally and/or internationally. Recipients of this award are individuals who regularly think beyond their day-to-day work in order to implement practices, new models, advocacy efforts, etc. on behalf of the field.

Bill Rauch, co-founder and long-time artistic director of Cornerstone Theatre Company, has served as the **Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival** since 2007. Known as a risk-taker, he is moved by programming that combines **Shakespeare**, other classics, contemporary work, and plays commissioned for the company. His vision for OSF includes expanding the definition of 'classic' theatre to world classics; Rauch directed the Sanskrit "The Clay Cart" in his first season as Artistic Director. He is also committed to continuing OSF's reputation for **fostering new work** with the production of at least one new play per season. Under Rauch's direction, "American Revolutions: the U.S. History Cycle"--inspired by Shakespeare's history plays—has been launched. This initiative will commission 37 new plays across the next ten years, plays which explore United States history. The first round of commissionees includes: Culture Clash (Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas and Herbert Siguenza); David Henry Hwang; Lynn Nottage; Suzan-Lori Parks; Robert Schenkkan; Naomi Wallace; and the collaborative team of Jonathan Moscone and Tony Taccone. With these initiatives, Rauch is making direct connections between classic plays and contemporary concerns, exploring beyond the Western Canon to incorporate Asian and African epics into the Festival, and **reaching out to the next generation of theatre goers**.

This is the second year TCG has presented the Visionary Leadership Award, last year's recipient was Todd London.

The **2010 Theatre Practitioner Award** recognizes a living individual - artist or administrator, institutionally affiliated or unaffiliated - whose work in the American theatre has evidenced exemplary achievement over time and who has contributed significantly to the development of the larger field.

Bernard Gersten has been the **Executive Producer of Lincoln Center Theater** since its re-establishment in 1985, in partnership with Gregory Mosher through 1991 and with Andre Bishop as Artistic Director since then. In this role, he has had a hand in producing the 121 productions at Lincoln Center Theater over the last twenty-four years. Mr. Gersten was also Producer of the NBC documentary film VOICES OF SARAFINA! From 1960 to 1978, he was the Associate Producer of the New York Shakespeare Festival. Mr. Gersten was Executive Vice President of Zoetrope Studios, Executive Producer of Francis Ford Coppola's ONE FROM THE HEART, and Co-Producer of the live-orchestra presentations throughout the world of Abel Gance's NAPOLEON. He was the Vice President of Radio City Music Hall and Executive Producer of PORGY AND BESS and ICE. Mr. Gersten has been an adjunct professor of Theater Administration at New York University, Yale School of Drama, and Columbia University School of the Arts.

Previous recipients of the Theatre Practitioner Award include: René Buch and Gilberto Zaldívar, Zelda Fichandler, Maria Irene Fornes, Woodie King, Jr., Ming Cho Lee, Elizabeth LeCompte, Lloyd Richards, Ellen Stewart, William Swetland and Luis Valdez, and Peter Culman.

Accepting this award was Jenny Gersten on behalf of her father, Bernard Gersten.

The **2010 National Funder Award** recognizes a small, midsize or large company or foundation that has evidenced leadership and provided outstanding sustained national support of theatre in America.

The Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, established in 1978, is given annually to **recognize women who have written works of outstanding quality for the English-speaking theatre**. The Prize is intended both as a personal tribute to Susan, who died in 1977, and as an embodiment of values she believed in and devoted so much of her life to. After appearing in productions at the Alley Theatre and Little Theatre in Houston, where she grew up, and at Smith College, she studied acting with Uta Hagen and played several leading roles in New York. When she moved to London in 1962, she gave drama classes to schoolchildren while working as a journalist. She believed that society urgently needed more influence from talented women, and she encouraged many women to excel. It is the purpose of the Prize to perpetuate the high standards, the creativity and the vitality that were integral to Susan's life. The Prize is administered in Houston, London and New York by a board of directors who choose six Judges each year, three from each side of the Atlantic.

Previous recipients of the National Funder Award include: Time Warner, Inc.; Humana Inc./the Humana Foundation; Target; AT&T and Altria as well as the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Shubert Foundation, the Wallace Foundation; the Nathan Cummings Foundation; and The Boeing Company.

Accepting this award was Alex Kilgore, Susan's nephew and the president of the board of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize.

The **2010 Peter Zeisler Memorial Award** recognizes an individual or organization whose work reflects and promotes the ingenuity and artistic integrity that Peter Zeisler, late executive director of TCG, prized. The honorees exemplify pioneering practices in theatre, are dedicated to the freedom of expression and are unafraid of taking risks for the advancement of the art form. In honor of Peter's uncanny ability to introduce talent to the rest of the field, the nominees have not been recognized nationally for their work.

Jack Reuler founded the Mixed Blood Theatre Company in 1976 at the age of 22 after receiving a degree in zoology from Pomona College and Macalester College. In 1984 Jack was named to Esquire Magazine's first "**Register of People Under 40 Changing America**." Mixed Blood won three *Twin Cities Drama Critics Circle Awards* and, in 1985, the *Twin Cities Mayors' Public Arts Award*. Mixed Blood won the 1990 *Rosetta LeNoire Award*: Actors' Equity's first award for "celebrating the universality of the human experience on the American stage." Jack was named Macalester College's

1991 ***Distinguished Citizen***. He received the 1992 *Minneapolis Award* from the City of Minneapolis and the 1993 *Martin Luther King Humanitarian Award*. Mixed Blood was awarded the 1995 *Minneapolis Civil Rights Commissions' Martin Luther King Award*. In 1996 Mixed Blood was awarded the Minnesota Council on Black Minnesotans' "*Dream Keeper Award*." In 1997 the Minneapolis Foundation presented Jack with its *Diversity Award*. In 2006, he received the ***Local Legend Award*** from the United Negro College Fund/General Mills Foundation and the *Lifetime Achievement Award* at the 2006 Ivey Awards. In 2007 Mixed Blood received MetLife's *Access Award* at the APAP conference in New York. In 2009 he has received a *Sally Irvine Award* for Vision, Actors' Equity's *Spirit Award*, and has been named by St. Paul Foundation a *Facing Race Ambassador*.

Previous recipients of the Peter Zeisler Memorial Award include Mildred Ruiz and Steven Sapp, The Foundry Theatre, Will Power and Elevator Repair Service.

The **2010 Alan Schneider Director Award** was created in memory of Alan Schneider, a prolific director and mentor responsible for over one hundred productions in the American theatre. He introduced American audiences to Samuel Beckett—directing the 1956 American premiere of *Waiting for Godot*—as well as many others including: Edward Albee; Michael Weller; Harold Pinter and Bertolt Brecht. This award was established in honor of Alan Schneider's significant contribution to the American theatre and his lifelong concern for the development of career opportunities for freelance directors. The award is designed to identify and assist exceptional directors whose talent has been demonstrated through work in specific regions, but who are not known nationally.

This year's recipient, **Anne Kauffman**, is a New York-based director primarily **focused on new plays**. A founding member of the Civilians, she is also a Usual Suspect at New York Theatre Workshop, an alumnus of the Soho Rep Writers and Directors Lab, Lincoln Center Directors Lab, The Drama League of New York, on the advisory board for Soho Rep and LCT3, and a member of New Georges Kitchen Cabinet. In addition, she is a recipient of a Lilly Award for Directing, a Big Easy Award for her production of *The Children's Hour*, and an OBIE Award for her work on *The Thugs* by Adam Bock at Soho Rep. Anne received her MFA in directing from UCSD. Anne Kauffman was nominated by Blanka Zizka, Artistic Director of the Wilma Theater (Philadelphia, PA), who commended Anne for "her inventive and imaginative Off-Broadway work with young, up-and-coming playwrights ... Her work on [our] production of *Becky Shaw* has exceeded all of our expectations, both in the power and economy of her directorial vision and in her generous approach to collaboration."

Previous recipients of the Alan Schneider Director Award include: Joel Sass, Michael John Garcés, Nancy Keystone, Darko Tresnjak, Henry Godinez, Roman Paska, Mark Brokaw, Charles Newell, David Saint, Roberta Levitow, Kyle Donnelly, Peter C. Brosius and Mary B. Robinson.

About the TCG National Conference:

The TCG National Conference brings together approximately 800 theatre professionals from across the nation and around the world for meetings, speeches, performances and a chance to explore the local theatre community.

The 2010 Conference was held in **Chicago, Illinois from June 17-19** at the [Palmer House Hilton](#) - 17 E. Monroe Street, Chicago, IL and hosted by The League of Chicago Theatres. In addition to the Palmer House, conference activities were also held at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, The Goodman Theatre and Steppenwolf Theatre Company.

For more information, go to www.tcg.org/conference