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Theatre Communications Group Announces Tenth Round of Recipients of Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowships

New York, NY – The William & Eva Fox Foundation and Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for theatre, are pleased to announce the tenth round of **Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowships** recipients. The program is designed to support actors' professional and artistic development, to enrich relationships between actors and nonprofit theatres and to ensure continued professional commitment to live theatre. Funded by the Fox Foundation and administered by TCG, the fellowship is one of only a few programs of its kind for actors in the country.

"The Fox Foundation expresses our continued appreciation of the long-term collaborative relationship between Fox and TCG," said **Robert P. Warren**, president of the Fox Foundation. "This program has provided extraordinary opportunities for Fox Fellows to further their artistic development and enhance their craft. The proposals from this year's recipients hold great promise, not only for them personally and professionally, but also for their sponsoring theatres and the communities they so richly serve."

The Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowships awarded grants totaling over \$195,000 through two categories:

- **Extraordinary Potential** recipients are early- to mid-career actors, who have demonstrated a strong interest and commitment to continued training. Each fellow receives \$15,000 each, with up to an additional \$10,000 available to relieve student loans. The host theatre companies will receive grants of \$7,500 in support of these residencies.
- **Distinguished Achievement** recipients have demonstrated considerable experience in professional theatre with a substantial body of work. Each fellow receives \$25,000 awards. The host theatre companies will receive grants of \$7,500 in support of these residencies.

"Through their commitment to artistic excellence and community engagement, these six new Fox Fellows exemplify the transformative potential of acting," said **Teresa Eyring**, executive director of TCG. "Thanks to our enduring partnership with the Fox Foundation, this program will help empower these artists and their participating theatres to actualize that potential through rigorous professional development and impactful community engagement."

The Fox Foundation fellows and host theatres are:

Extraordinary Potential

Obehi Janice, Company One Theatre (Boston, MA), will engage the audiences and artists connected to Company One Theatre to further cultivate and grow these relationships. The mission of Company One Theatre is to change the face of Boston theatre by uniting the city's diverse communities through innovative, socially-provocative performance and developing civically-engaged artists. Company One Theatre serves an audience that is 55% people under the age of 35 and 31% people of color; with 31% self-identifying as low income (under \$25,000 annually). Obehi will work closely with students in the theatre's Stage One program through a series of master classes in creating original work through storytelling. The Stage One program is two-fold: there is an arts expansion program in the Boston Public School (BPS) system as well as an apprenticeship program for young artists. Master Classes will give BPS students close engagement with a working actor and writer and transferrable skills in storytelling and

creative writing. Young artists in the apprenticeship program will have the opportunity to create new work and have capacity support for their "Don't Kill My Scribe" new play workshop. She will mentor the young apprentices by being available to observe and read their work as well as provide a listening ear and guidance to any and all questions about maintaining a career in theatre. Further, she will visit the Professional Development for Actors class as a guest artist to conduct workshops related to storytelling and self-identity. She will travel to East Africa to observe and train. In Uganda, she will attend the Kampala International Theatre Festival under the guidance of Deborah Asiimwe. In Zimbabwe, she will attend and train at the Zimbabwe Center of the International Theatre Institute under the guidance of Lloyd Nyikadzino. As a first-generation actor and writer in Boston, Obehi understands the value of connecting with artists and audiences who are traditionally underserved. Obehi will represent Company One Theatre locally and abroad as an ambassador, an educator, and a performer who deeply cares about the theatre's mission and purpose.

Bi Jean Ngo, Lantern Theater Company (Philadelphia, PA), will study classical text and voice through Linklater workshops as well as stage combat, Elizabethan dance, and movement during a month-long intensive workshop at the Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, MA. She'll also take part in a three-week workshop at Dell'Arte International in the summer of 2017, where she will learn mask, clown, and how to devise theatre through physical movement. Afterward, she'll teach both the classical and contemporary text and movement skills to her peers and mentees of the Philadelphia Asian Performing Artists Group, under the auspices of the Lantern Theater Company. Her plan is to be a vanguard for diverse representation onstage not only in Philadelphia, but in other regions. Her goal is to use her exposure to influence more leading theatre companies to choose plays written by Asians, featuring Asian actors, and directed by Asians, as well as to create and act in plays that reflect her own ethnic experience and the stories of her immediate community. By acquiring facility with classical theatre from Shakespeare & Company, Bi will be better equipped to add her voice to the company's classical repertoire which is routinely performed throughout the region. The masterclasses that she will conduct after each residency will provide vital training opportunities for emerging Asian performers, helping to give them work and empower their creative voices.

Reggie White, Berkeley Repertory Theatre (Berkeley, CA), will combine White's experience as an actor in play productions and actor training with Berkeley Rep's knowledge of mentorship and new play development. They will work towards a common goal: creating a bridge between exceptional teen writers of color and the framework of institutional theatre. With this project, eight exceptional high school students of color in Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco that are interested in writing will have an opportunity to attend an immersive, year-long relationship with the theatre as playwriting apprentices. They'll participate in writing masterclasses and see some of the best new work being done by playwrights of color in the Bay Area. They will also have the opportunity to sit in on rehearsals for a new play in Berkeley Rep's season, observing how plays move from the brain of the playwright to the proscenium. Their apprenticeships will culminate in writing a play of their own, workshoped by professional actors, directors, and dramaturgs. Berkeley Rep's existing work with teens is focused on developing future arts leaders. Together with their claimyourARTS advocacy initiative, Teen Council leadership group, and other programs, this new project will add another avenue for teen participation outside of the normal pipeline for playwrights and arts leaders. The teens' presentations, occurring at the same time and with invited artists from The Ground Floor's Summer Lab, will raise national awareness of this work and the talent of these students.

Distinguished Achievement

Marissa Chibas, Bootleg Theater (Los Angeles, CA), will travel to Crete and research matrilineal caves and sacred sites in preparation for her first project at Bootleg, *The Second Woman*. This interdisciplinary performance draws from John Cassavetes' film *Opening Night* and Henry Rider Haggard's novel *She*, both of which share themes of the terror of aging and the mysteries of the feminine. Marissa will deepen and enhance her skills as a performer by taking intensive workshops in improvisation, clowning, Afro-Cuban dance, and vocal technique. These workshops will be conducted at Bootleg and made available to high school students from the downtown Los Angeles area. She will include community members in her process and encourage them to generate their own work through multi-disciplinary workshops. Training

sessions related to *The Second Woman* will be opened up to community members free of charge to provide an opportunity to participate and witness the process of developing this play. She is also deeply invested in the women in her community and through this piece hopes to offer a ritual for embracing change and age.

Bobbie Steinbach, Actors' Shakespeare Project (Somerville, MA), will embark on a series of trainings to stretch the boundaries of her physical work and explore new art forms, then integrate these practices into Actors' Shakespeare Project's (ASP) workshop of her one-woman show, *In Bed with the Bard*. She will also work with the women of the ASP company to develop a devised piece called *I Am Lear*, and use her unique vantage point, wisdom, and skills to create and run workshops for seniors in the community and aging actors in the field. Many older actors are struggling to keep their careers going and Bobbie has identified the need for senior actors to be encouraged to take charge of their creative energy and find new ways to expand their professional skills. This integrated project models the role an artist can play as a professional actor, mentor, director, teacher, and collaborator—something that sits at the heart of ASP's work. She will work with community seniors from NewBridge on the Charles and Millers River Housing for Elderly and Disabled, as well as acclaimed photographer Liz Linder.

James Austin Williams (J.W.), Pillsbury House Theatre (Minneapolis, MN), will build on his 30-year career as a text-based actor to further develop approaches for using music and movement in the creation of characters whose stories have roots deeper than text. Using the unsolved (and unspoken) 1932 murder of his own grandfather as a starting point, Williams will use new skills to explore death, abandonment, and secrecy as they apply to father-son relationships among African American men. Pillsbury House Theatre (PHT) focuses their work on the 23,000 people living in four adjoining underserved neighborhoods of South Minneapolis. The 2010 U.S. Census figures show the area includes 37% white residents (as compared to 64% citywide), 33% Hispanic or Latino residents, and 21% Black or African American residents. Over 20% of area residents live below poverty, and nearly one quarter are first-generation Americans. J.W.'s fellowship will give voice to the unspoken legacy of secrets that are handed down through generations of African American men and then bring the resulting work to workshop groups in the communities served by PHT. In the context of PHT's larger body of work, J.W.'s fellowship promises to strengthen PHT's ability to represent the experiences of people in the communities they serve.

The **Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowships panel** included **Mark Booher**, Artistic Director, PCPA – Pacific Conservatory Theatre; **Aaron Calafato**, Actor; **Leilani Chan**, Artistic Director, TeAda Productions; **Anne D'Zmura**, Department Chair of Theatre Arts, CSULB; and **Kent Gash**, Founding Director of the New Studio on Broadway at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. The panel's recommendations were presented to **Robert P. Warren**, President of the Fox Foundation, and the Foundation made the final selection.

The William & Eva Fox Foundation was established in 1987 by Belle Fox in honor of her parents, who founded the Fox Film Corporation. The Foundation has awarded more than \$3 million in fellowships to 335 actors since 1994. The Fox Foundation is the largest U.S. grant maker dedicated to the artistic and professional development of theatre actors, and one of very few that provides direct financial support to individual actors. For more information, visit http://www.tcg.org/grants/fox/fox_index.cfm and www.thefoxfoundation.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.

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