



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 15, 2014

CONTACT:
Dafina McMillan
dmcmillan@tcb.org
212-609-5955

Theatre Communications Group Announces Ninth 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 ninth 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 \$200,000 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.

"We continue to be amazed and inspired by the creative and thoughtful work that our Fox Fellows are developing in collaboration with theatres around the country," said **Teresa Eyring**, executive director of TCG. "This year is no different, and through our partnership with the Fox Foundation, these exceptional artists are able to further perfect their craft, and more importantly, engage with an array of diverse communities in a deep and meaningful way."

The Fox Foundation fellows and host theatres are:

Extraordinary Potential

Sha Cage, Penumbra Theatre Company, (St. Paul, MN), will sharpen her skills in voice, movement and text. She will work intensively with Penumbra's Summer Institute teens towards developing their new works and artistic voices. She will train in le jeu, clowning and improv and will use these skills to add dimension to the work. She will also study African drumming as a cultural call to action with Fode Bangoura to integrate techniques with the teens in their storytelling. Cage has performed at the Guthrie Theater, Ten Thousand Things, Frank Theater, Mixed Blood Theater and Theatre de La Jeune Lune, among others. She is the recipient of a Mcknight Theater Artist Fellowship, a NPN New Works Commission & Creation Fund, a regional Emmy and was named a Change-maker by the Women's Press.

Heather Litteer, La MaMa E.T.C., (New York, NY), will create a new solo work called *A Rabbit: HerStory and in High Heels* composed of dance, music, storytelling, puppetry and poetry. She will engage in intensive acting, dance and vocal training led by Robert La Fosse for movement and ballet, Master Puppeteer Basil Twist with a focus on Silks, Nick Hallet vocals rooted in the Bel Canto technique and Barbara Maier Gustern for voice and mentored by Nicky Paraiso of La MaMa. She will travel to La MaMa Umbria's Playwriting retreat in Italy. In addition, Litteer will work with young women of the Lower East Side in a workshop using theatre to encourage self-expression, strength and confidence. Litteer has been a core member of Big Art Group since 2004 performing in France, Austria, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Canada and throughout the US and has acted at La MaMa, Wild Project, Bruno Walter Lincoln Center, Producers Club, Abrons Art Center and The Jackie 60 Playhouse, among others.

Distinguished Achievement

Miriam Laube, Oregon Shakespeare Festival (Ashland, OR), will study the classic forms of Ovid's poetry and Indian classical ragas to create a song cycle based on Ovid's *Heroides* in collaboration with women actors of the OSF acting company. She will undertake courses at the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Francisco, private study with Myra Melford, associate professor of Music, UC Berkeley, and John Fyler, professor of English, Tufts University and travel to India to do an intensive course in Indian classical music in conjunction with Theatre Mitu. Laube hopes her work will foster a connection with a South Asian community who might be drawn to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Laube has worked with OSF for eleven seasons as an actor, director, educator and fundraiser. Acting in professional theatre for 21 years, she has performed in productions at The Guthrie Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theater, Public Theater, Dallas Theater Center, among others. Laube will play the role of Cleopatra in Bill Rauch's production of *Antony and Cleopatra* and has appeared in the world premieres of *Family Album* and *Party People*.

Gavin Lawrence, Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati, (Cincinnati, OH), will develop his skills as a solo performer and, through collaboration with playwright Daniel Alexander Jones and director/choreographer Laurie Carlos, he will create a solo performance piece about the evolution of the Over The Rhine community in Cincinnati. He will study at Susan Batson studio to craft distinct characters based off of community members he interviews. He will consult with solo performers Roger Guenveur Smith and Danny Hoch and work under the mentorship of historian Peter Racheff. Lawrence's goals are to create theatre that could embolden the African American residents in the Over the Rhine community to stay the course while also giving voice to the new residents of the neighborhood. Lawrence has performed at Steppenwolf, Goodman Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Mixed Blood Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, among others. His play, *Cut Flowers*, won five Black Theatre Alliance Awards, including the Lorraine Hansberry Award for Best Writing of a Play. He won the Audelco Award for Outstanding Lead Actor and his grants and fellowships include a Cultural Community Partnership grant from the NEA and the Minnesota State Arts Board and a Many Voices Fellowship from the Playwrights' Center.

Sonja Parks, Children's Theatre Company, (Minneapolis, MN), will explore Theatrical Jazz aesthetic and "jazz acting" methodology by spending time in Lagos, Nigeria to study the practice of Oriki (Yoruba 'praise poetry'); she will learn from the Gullah people of the South Carolina Islands who employ a vocal polyrhythmic mastery to increase her vocal dexterity; she will participate in Shamanistic healing circles in the American Southwest; and will travel to Reykjavik, Iceland to observe Skalds who fuse traditional sagas with digital storytelling. Utilizing the Theatrical Jazz aesthetic, she will aid the children in Minneapolis, MN and Lagos, Nigeria in telling their own stories and sharing their stories firsthand via Livestream and/or Skype. Parks was an original member of poet/playwright Sharon Bridgforth's root wy'mn theatre company and toured nationally with them for 3 years. She has performed at The Public Theater, Playwrights Horizons, The Kennedy Center, The Royal Shakespeare Company, among others. Sonja is the recipient of an NEA Grant, a 2002 and 2013 Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship, a McKnight Artist Fellowship, two Minneapolis Ivey Awards. She currently teaches acting at the University of Minnesota.

Keith Randolph Smith, Alliance Theatre, (Atlanta, GA), will create a one-man show based on letters between him and his son, who was incarcerated. He will attend the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. He will take a course in criminology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and sit in on classes with legendary performers, Joan MacIntosh and Deb Margolin. The play will be shaped under the guidance and direction of Kent Gash. Smith intends his story to speak to community members who have been affected by the prison industrial complex and will engage in dialogues to present options and hope while addressing the realities of addiction. Smith has acted on- and off-Broadway and regionally at Circle in the Square, Samuel Friedman Theatre, Classic Stage Company, Second Stage, Manhattan Theatre Club, Old Globe Theatre, Yale Repertory, among others. He has a New Dramatist Charles Bowden Award, an Audelco Award Best Actor Nomination for *Holiday Heart*, an Elliot Norton Award Nomination for Outstanding Solo Performance for *Looking Over the President's Shoulder*, and a Black Theatre Alliance Award Nomination, Best Actor in a Play for *Jitney*.

Joe Wilson, Jr., Trinity Repertory Company, (Providence, RI), will expand his ability to create character and develop his skills in conceiving new work. He will evaluate the evolution of his acting and master new techniques in order to enhance his performance and flourish as a member of an acting company. He will develop a play centered on the life and work of Duke Ellington's composer, Billy Strayhorn, under the guidance of Kent Gash and he will continue his vocal and physical training in The Margolis Method. Wilson, an actively engaged artist activist, who has received honors for his advocacy of the arts, education, marriage equality and underserved youth, will use his fellowship to empower himself to become a stronger catalyst for his community by telling the story of Billy Strayhorn, an openly gay, African-American man and civil rights activist. Wilson has appeared on Broadway, Off Broadway and regionally, working in nearly 30 different roles at Trinity Rep. He has taught at Brown University, University of Minnesota and Tulane University and is a recipient of the Siseretta Jones Award for Cultural Literacy and the Arts, the Pell Award and received citations in 2012 and 2010 from U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, RI Governor, RI Speaker of the House and Providence Mayor for representing achievements and aspirations in the RI, Providence and African American communities and as an outstanding actor.

The **Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowships panel** included **Tisa Chang**, Artistic Producing Director, Pan Asian Repertory; **Nataki Garrett**, Associate Artistic Director, CalArts Center for New Performance; **Loretta Greco**, Producing Artistic Director, Magic Theatre; **Eric Rosen**, Artistic Director, Kansas City Repertory Theatre; and **Gerard Stropnick**, Founding Member Emeritus, Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble.

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 \$2.8 million in fellowships to 329 actors since 1994. The Fox Foundation is the largest US 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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