
Creation and Forth Funds Available to Qualified U.S. Presenters

Ready to commission new work? Even if you are NOT an NPN Partner, you can access a pool of matching funds, simply by partnering with one (or more) NPN Partners across the country. Letters of intent are due January 28, 2013 at 5PM CST. The deadline for full applications is Friday, February 15 at 5PM CST. Awards will be announced March 15, 2013.

Last year, the Creation Fund and Forth Fund supported new work from a diverse range of artists, including AXIS Dance Company (Oakland, CA), Dance Exchange (Takoma Park, MD), Miguel Gutierrez (Brooklyn, NY), Morgan Thorson (Minneapolis, MN), Sharon Bridgforth (Austin, TX) and 15 other artists/companies.

Read full guidelines on npnweb.org.

Please note: The Creation Fund now has only ONE deadline per year. Every Creation Fund Project will receive additional Forth Funds to develop the work.

Money for Presenters: inquire within...

The National Theatre Project (NTP) recently awarded grants to promote the creation and touring of exemplary artist-led collaborative ensembles and devised theatre, with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Seventeen companies are on the roster of funded artists, including several with NPN connections: Los Angeles Poverty Department, Sandglass Theater, Universes Theatre Company, Mondo Bizarro and others. NTP, a program of the New England Foundation for the Arts, offers presenters a subsidy of up to 50% to support touring, as well as travel grants to see the work first-hand. For complete guidelines and to learn more about the entire roster of funded artists, visit www.nefa.org.



Team Sunshine Performance Corporation, Photo: John Altdorfer

Performance Spotlight

On December 14–15, 2012 ten companies performed their work for attendees at NPN's 27th Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, including four Creation Fund awardees from across the country and six Philadelphia artists selected by the local host committee. Live-streamed on #NewPlayTV, the performances are archived at livestream.com/newplay. NPN's National Subsidy Director Stanlyn Brevé asked the artists to share some insights and reflections on their working process ("Spotlight on Philadelphia Artists"), the impact of the Creation Fund and the relationship between artist and presenter ("Reflections from Creation Fund Artists").

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Does Size Matter?

Animating Democracy's current blog salon, "Does Size Matter?" asks the critical question: how does (or could) scale influence social impact? MK Wegmann, CEO and President of NPN, is one of 20 writers from across the country whose thoughts will be posted during December.

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A Network of Networks

NPN is one of seven other cultural networks that are connecting through The Ford Foundation's Diverse Arts Spaces Initiative (DAS). Funded through Ford's Freedom of Expression Program, the initiative promotes a new generation of 21st century arts spaces and arts leadership that reflect the cultural richness of diverse communities.

Diverse Arts Spaces Initiative

The Ford Foundation supports the National Performance Network as part of the foundation's Supporting Diverse Arts Spaces Initiative (DAS). NPN is proud to join Alternate ROOTS, Artspace, First People's Fund, Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, Leveraging Investments in Creativity, National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, and New York Foundation for the Arts in extending its programming to DAS and building collaborations between networks. This program is funded through the Ford Foundation's Freedom of Expression Program, which promotes a new generation of 21st century arts spaces and arts leadership that reflect the cultural richness of diverse communities. In alignment with NPN's commitment to fostering diversity and artistic experimentation, NPN's strategic partnership with Diverse Arts Spaces builds collective power and united advocacy for the creation, presentation and public experience of contemporary art in the U.S. The DAS Initiative has enabled the support of artistic projects such as Tree City, created by Dennis Kim/Living Word Project, which was a result of a collaboration between Diverse Arts Spaces' Youth Speaks, Asian Arts Initiative, Intersection for the Arts, and Hip Hop Theater Festival. Tree City will be presented at NPN's Annual Meeting on Saturday December 15, 2012 at the Painted Bride Art Center. Visit nnpweb.org for more information about the Diverse Arts Spaces Initiative.



Super Nature, Body Cartography Project, Pictured: Anna Shogren, Photo: Gene Pittman

Creation to Coil

With support from NPN Creation and Forth Fund awards, the Body Cartography Project of Minneapolis created "Super Nature," a visceral emotionally-charged group choreography, with an aural landscape developed by electric harp pioneer/composer Zeena Parkins. Emily Johnson's Creation/Forth Fund work "Niicugni" ("listen") is a new performance/installation centered on movement, story and sound housed within a light/sound installation of hand-made, functional fish-skin lanterns. "Super Nature" and "Niicugni" will be presented in New York City on January 14–17, 2013 as part of P.S. 122's "contemporary, textured, global, local, contemplative, grounded, rigorous, and always very live" Coil Festival. ps122.org/coil-2013/. Body Cartography is co-presented with American Realness at the Abrons Arts Center.

Spotlight on Philadelphia Artists

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Six Philadelphia companies were part of the showcase at the NPN Annual Meeting in Philadelphia this December. Four artistic directors shared reflections on their artistic practices with the NPN staff.

Movement-Centric Theatre

Makoto Hirano of Team Sunshine Performance Corporation reflects on the company's origins in 2008:

We came together for a very simple reason: to make one, excellent hybrid piece of movement-centric theatre, entitled "Punchkapow." Three experienced and widely varied independent performance artists — myself having a successful career working in post-modern dance-theatre, Ben Camp in European physical-theatre, and Alex Torra as a director of multiple experimental genres. Coming together to collaborate on the project itself, for us, was an act of creating community. Since then, we've decided to continue our work together in a wide range of projects, from curating "salons" to launching mini-performance "events," and offering one-on-one sessions to prepare for the Zombie apocalypse.

Presented at the Philly Annual Meeting is Team Sunshine's project *JapanAmerica Wonderwave*.

Movement-Centric Theatre

The process for anonymous bodies || art collective's *other.explicit.body*, like the process for all their work, is

...rooted in our dedication to the idea of creation-via-consensus and to the notion that we can make the most interesting art when everyone involved has a voice. Crowd-sourcing and group ownership is the name of our game, and though there is often a director and/or lead-artist, those individuals serve as an architect for creation instead of the source of it. There is no playwright, there is no single-voice — there is only a process that asks participants to participate hard, generating material through interviewing-techniques, long-form improvisation, free-writing exercises, and our own particular approach to on-your-feet playmaking.

Jaamil Kosoko will perform *other.explicit.body* during a January APAP Showcase at Dance New Amsterdam in New York City, and on February 15-16 at the Third Annual "Black Aesthetics As Politics" conference in Pittsburgh, PA.

Multi-layered, Over Time

Kariamu Welsh, artistic director of Kariamu & Company: Traditions, talks about her own creative process as multi-layered:

An idea, thought, image, scene, story or moment can strike me. A mood, color, tone, rhythm or sound can also ignite a seed that often grows into a work but not always. These ideas can fester for some time until one of them becomes front and center in my consciousness and then I act on that idea by taking it to the studio. The work is never fleshed out beforehand and even as I am choreographing the work, the piece will often take a completely different direction that may not seem to have any rhyme or reason to it but I have learned to trust my artistic instincts and off I go in that direction. I can keep several works in my head at a time. There is no special queue or lineup to my approach or decision to choreograph a work, but one work will emerge as the one that I need to work on at that time.

Welsh emphasizes that as choreography is her work, "an important part of that process is my relationship with dancers. These relationships are integral to my creative work and often the dancers shape the dance in subtle and nuanced ways. Their bodies, energy, experiences and presence are many parts that make up the whole. I have been extremely blessed in working with dancers for as long as twenty years. We are able to grow together and to 'return' to dances that need adjusting."

Research Lays the Foundation

Artistic director and co-founder of 1812 Productions, Jennifer Childs takes traditional comedic forms (stand-up, improvisation etc.) and re-purposes them as theatrical storytelling engines. "While the original work takes different forms — from full-length musical with five-piece orchestra to quick-change vaudeville to intimate cabaret acts — all are a mix of form and chaos. The strict architecture of comedic form, the mathematics of building a joke and



anonymous bodies || art collective,
Photo: John Altdorfer

the insistence of comedic rhythm combine with the divine messiness of being human and flawed."

Childs speaks of the central importance that research has in her creative process:

Regardless of the form the final piece takes, the development process includes extensive research. In the case of "Why I'm Scared of Dance..." [showcased at the NPN Annual Meeting], that research included dance lessons with hip-hop, ballet, jazz and modern dancers. For a series of pieces on comedic history, research included interviewing, connecting with and learning from comedic icons such as Phyllis Diller, Sid Caesar, Mort Sahl and Dick Gregory. Research for our current project under development is much more community-based — interviews with over 50 women of all different backgrounds about the role of comedy in their lives.

All of this research is then brought into the rehearsal room, using guided group improvisation, writing exercises and most importantly, Childs says, "harnessing the natural energy and chemistry of the ensemble and making each other laugh." Childs then structures and shapes the final piece.

"Why I'm Scared of Dance..." by Jen Childs can be seen January 15–27, 2013 in Ambler, PA at the Act II Playhouse. Her new work, *It's My Party: The Women and Comedy Project*, will premiere at the Plays and Players Theatre, Philadelphia PA, April 25–May 19, 2013.

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Process, Practice and Philosophy: Reflections from Creation Fund Artists

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NPN's practice is to offer performance opportunities at the Annual Meeting to a select number of Creation Fund artists who were nominated by the NPN Commissioning Partners. The Forth Fund, which offers additional support for further development of the newly created work, was a pilot project in FY10 when awards were made to six artists. Beginning in FY12 all Creation Fund recipients can receive this additional support. Below are some thoughts from three of the national artists who will be presented at the Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. The Creation Fund is supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, The Ford Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Forth Fund is supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The Law of Attraction

Teo Castellanos' D-Projects adopts training practices from various sources, from the classic Eurocentric actor training of Stanislavski, to cultural B-Boy/Girl dance training, to Zen meditation, practice and philosophy. "When we go out into different communities we introduce social issues to audiences through the allure of contemporary art forms while simultaneously cultivating an activist spirit."

Teo grounds his creative process in social issues that he needs to speak to:

Then ideas begin to formulate in my head. My interests lie in culture, anthropology, ritual, and spirituality. I bring these elements

into my work in an attempt to create a visual collage for the stage. I research, write and, with my company, we begin brainstorming, manifesting ideas that begin in our heads. We also have a rigorous training process that includes formal Zen meditation and many times grueling exercises. This training also helps us with the formulations of artistic concepts and ideas.

Teo talks about his approach to building D-Project's long-term sustainability:

Cultivating relationships with NPN partners, sharing your process, ideas and vision is an important part of moving your work forward and onto the radar of presenters. But I believe authentic friendships are vital, an artist should never create relationships to book gigs; rather I feel that we should build friendships through having similar interests both in work and life.

Teo holds a very Zen approach to the work, rooted in his own spiritual practice: "I believe attraction is better than promotion. Though this was not always the case for me, after maturing as an artist I realize that the folks who have similar likes in aesthetics will find their way to me (or me to them)." The 'perfect fit' spurred by mutual interest, usually arises by itself:

The presenters I have worked with in the past, and especially commissioning partners, are more than business partners — they are friendships cultivated over some years. They are people with like interests and commonalities and I have been interested in their work as much as they have been interested in mine. The presenters in my hometown have given us rehearsal space, community support, and have collaborated with us on educational and other projects.

Fat Boy, a FY11 Creation Fund award, was commissioned by Tigertail Productions and 7 Stages.

Visual Design Co-Created with Workshop Youth and Audience

Tree City Legends by Dennis Kim was commissioned by Youth Speaks, Asian Arts Initiative, Hip Hop Theatre Festival and

Intersection for the Arts. A multidisciplinary theater work, it melds post-hip hop aesthetics, urban folklore, Korean traditional tales, live music, legend, and parable, expanding beyond any specific Korean American experience and exploring the profound feelings of rootlessness and abandonment of urban people of color, specifically Asian Pacific Islander American immigrants. Joan Osato, producing director and a member of the collaborative creative team, reflects:

The support of the Creation Fund was critical in the evolution of the piece from a solo work written and performed by Dennis Kim, to a fully fleshed-out play with an ensemble cast. The writer, director and dramaturg were able to focus on development of the script and song while immersing the rest of the family characters into the world of "Tree City."

The Creation Fund also funded the work of the design team that developed the rich visuals, firmly rooting *Tree City Legends* in place, time and environment. These visuals were created in part through the work of the cast and crew who are artist/educators in a wide variety of disciplines. During an NPN Performance Residency, they worked with youth in the Bay Area through workshops and object-making rituals, examining the themes of love and loss. An evolving and open memorial on the set of *Tree City Legends* is constructed of letters written to loved/lost ones, a community altar and an installation of prayer flags made by audiences and visitors. You can view a short documentary on the play and communities of *Tree City* at www.vimeo.com/37065318.

An Opportunity to Re-invent

Founded by Shinichi Iova-Koga in 1998, inkBoat is a performance collective built by and with the collaborative efforts of choreographers, dancers, musicians, visual artists, directors and actors. Presenting in environments ranging from traditional proscenium to site specific, inkBoat's performances evoke both the traditional and the experimental, influenced by pioneering work from Japanese masters, Jerzy Grotowski,



Fat Boy, Teo Castellanos D Projects, Pictured: Teo Castellanos, Photo: Glassworks Multimedia

Peter Brook, Anna Halprin and Ruth Zaporah.

In 2009, inkBoat received funding from the NPN Creation Fund to support the creation of *Crazy Cloud*, a collaboration with Butoh dancer Ko Murobushi. Shinichi first met Ko in 1996 in Rome, Italy, where both were on a shared program. Ko's hard-edged physical commitment impressed Shinichi. Years later in 2007, co-commissioner Andrew Wood of San Francisco International Arts Festival and Kyoko Yoshida of U.S./Japan Cultural Trade Network asked inkBoat what future projects they might support. Shinichi says, "At that time we were interested in using literature as the backbone. The book *Crow with No Mouth* by 15th century monk Ikkyu Sojun was the one, filled with biting and humorous poems."

"Our rehearsals for *Crazy Cloud* began in 2008. Ko was flown out to our studio on the Lost Coast of California and we experimented for one week, putting ourselves under his direction and presenting the result to the local community in Petrolia and then in San

Francisco at NOHspace." In 2009, Ko and Shinichi met at Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography (MANCC) and worked for three days creating a duet, as further preparation for the world premiere. Unfortunately, at the final stage of development (also at MANCC) before the premiere in May 2010, Ko was delayed by three weeks because of visa problems. So Shinichi directed and choreographed the work, spinning off from the earlier work with Ko. Shinichi elaborates:

When he arrived a week before the opening, Ko added a few touches and our collaboration was officially birthed. Two years later, in May 2012, we created another version that toured to San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Arcata and Philadelphia. This version had a stronger "Ko" stamp, much leaner and meaner than our 2010 premiere. Our present version carries on many of Ko's ideas, though without Ko himself.

The entire project proceeded on a step-by-step basis.

Until we had received the Forth Fund, the project might not have had a life beyond the 2010 premiere. But with this funding and the commissioning structure of the NPN, we were supported and encouraged to take the project into 2012, re-working much of the piece in the process. Because we already had a two-site tour built into the NPN commissioning and with tour support from National Dance Project, it was possible to leverage further funding from The Japan Foundation and realize the May 2012 tour, which included the *Painted Bride*. ...Throughout this four-year process, we kept returning to the source material — the life and poetry of Ikkyu Sojun, whose vibrant existence is documented through scholarship, folk tales, manga and a children's cartoon.

There is No Such Thing as “McArt”

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by MK Wegmann

The topic of scalability, model projects, and replicability evokes the idea of franchising: perfect a process, carefully design the ingredients, control the actions of the people according to a script, create a unified brand, and BANG! you’ve done it again and it tastes the same. Thank Goodness. I want something familiar. Is art like that?

In considering whether a successful project, organization, or structure is viable for replication, one variable to consider is the role the individual artist(s) hold in the projects and organizations.

If some creative process, product, or system of program delivery is created to respond to a particular issue or circumstance, to address a problem or to inspire a particular community, what happens when that art/work gets translated somewhere else?

When the artist is the driver and initiator, how do we analyze it to understand if it can be “picked up” and moved to another place and circumstance, and be successful in the same way — with perhaps other artists and in a different community context.

Analysis can illustrate the bones of the process or structure, but to some degree, the interactive nature of this kind of work means that it is situational and may be tied to a specific artist or group of artists, and they have the right to

control it.

Urban Bush Women’s approach talks about “entering, building, and exiting community,” offering principles to consider when community engagement is an intended aspect of a project. They provide leadership training as a means to replicate their way of working.

This training model of scaling up or replicability is one that many other artists are pursuing, including Cornerstone Theater Company, Junebug Productions, and Liz Lerman for example. Another example is Marty Pottenger’s Art at Work, which is expanding from Portland, ME to Holyoke, MA and Providence, RI.

The drive to scale up is coming from the artist in these cases. These are all mature artists/ organizations that have honed their work over time.

How does this opportunity play out, when we live in cycles of decision making that are too short-term and time-limited, and the environment for resources can be whimsical



MK Wegmann

and cyclical?

Systemic change takes time and can't really be measured within most current funding structures. Who decides which projects are worthy or successful enough to receive the deep investment of time and resources? The system is not set up for it. In the current climate, most are struggling to keep what they have gained; it is much harder to start something new now.

Arts programs are not fast food franchises that can have a mapped series of steps and ingredients that will produce guaranteed and consistent results. When work is situational, is a creative process, is driven by artists and is collaborative with its community, I have a hard time thinking it would be possible to transport it to another place and time and community arbitrarily.

Artists/companies do perfect processes and do have a way to engage community and galvanize change. The work can be scaled up and can be replicated when there is investment and drive to do so. And there is inherent risk in this kind of investment; after all, four out of five new businesses fail in the first five years, a risk clearly understood by venture capitalists in the for-profit world.

This is not magic. I believe that context is essential, that organizing principles are skills that can be shared and learned. It really does come back to resource. This is people intensive work that takes time and skill.

Where are the opportunities for us to know what one another is doing, the resources to

document our work and methodology?

What is the national infrastructure that connects us to one another, and allows this field learning to take place? In the "old days" of the National Endowment for the Arts, we had multi-day peer panels reviewing hundreds of proposals, we had site visits, we had policy panels — many of us met one another and learned about other approaches.

Besides being a reliable funding source, there was a crossroads where some of the arts community met and got to know one another, albeit still in the many silos of the field. We could feel isolation in our home place, and then have an opportunity to meet others who were sharing the same struggles.

I certainly learned about projects or systems that I would replicate in my own work. Is the opposite of replicability reinventing the wheel? How many times have we seen this? How often have we felt this? The national infrastructure is a fragile system that is still trying to gain national connectivity.

How are successful projects shared in order to be replicated?

Is it a funder who picks a successful project in one place and then seeds it in another place the way it happens? Or do peers seeking to solve similar problems meet one another and learn from each other?

I would argue for the latter.

How do you think resources can grow to support it?

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National Performance Network
PO Box 56698
New Orleans, LA 70156
504.595.8008 PHONE
npnweb.org WEB
