



NPN Awards \$230,000 to 20 New Projects

The Creation Fund is designed to support the creation and touring of new performance work, involving the participation of two or more co-commissioners. Moving from a semi-annual to an annual award cycle, 20 projects were selected for support this coming year.

Chang(e), Video Shoot
Soomi Kim
Photo: Kendall Whitehouse

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...If this is Friday, It Must Be Fusebox...

After two years of reciprocal visits and exploratory conversations, a team of three Japanese curators visited three U.S. cities, meeting with 20+ choreographers in order to choose a company for the inaugural Japan tour of NPN's International Program. Ritsuko Mizuno, the artistic director of the Japan Contemporary Dance Network reflects on their visit and offers some observations about the differences and similarities of the state of dance in both countries.

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Local Partner Replicates El Sistema in New Orleans

NPN has developed a Local Network of twelve organizations working in New Orleans. Here is a recent newsletter from the Youth Orchestra of the Lower Ninth Ward, talking about their approach to El Sistema, the Venezuelan youth development model that uses music education as an avenue for personal growth and community change.

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From Follower to Leader

Four years ago, when Jessica Huang performed on the Pangea stage in Minneapolis, she had no idea that she was embarking on a journey that would lead from artist to administrator, part-time contractor to salaried employee, from follower to leader. A Mentorship and Leadership Initiative grant from NPN helped Huang to slowly grow into the confident, committed and passionate leader she is today.

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Japanese Presenters Explore Dance in the U.S.

by Ritsuko Mizuno, Artistic Director
Japan Contemporary Dance Network (JCDN)

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Three partners of the Japan Contemporary Dance Network (JCDN) — Ms. Kyoko Yokoyama, formerly the Program and Planning Coordinator of the Fukuoka City Foundation for Arts and Cultural Promotion (Fukuoka); Ms. Reiko Hagihara, Program Director of the Kyoto Arts Center (Kyoto) and myself (Kyoto) — traveled to New York, Austin and Chicago for ten days in April, 2013. During this trip, thanks to NPN's arrangements, we met with twenty choreographers as well as the directors of New York Live Arts (formerly Dance Theater Workshop), Fusebox Festival, National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts, and DanceWorks Chicago.

We have spent the last two years visiting each other's country, including the JCDN partners' attendance at NPN Annual Meetings in Tampa and Philadelphia and several meetings with NPN members when they visited Japan. As we enter the third year, we have steadily deepened our mutual understanding of each country's society, culture and recent trends in the performing arts field. In addition, our discussions about Japan's future in the performing arts have been tremendously inspired by NPN's significance in the U.S.

During this trip to the U.S., NPN generously met our request to see as many choreographers as possible in order for us to select a U.S. choreographer who would do a creative residency in Japan next year. When the U.S. curators made their recommendations at the TPAM meeting in Yokohama last February, they asked us a question: "For the creative residency in Japan, are you looking for choreographers who are good at creating a work with non professionals in a specific community,, or choreographers who are free to do what they want during their stay in Japan? What is your focus?" It is undeniably more logical to have a fixed focus before choosing an artist. However, we wanted to meet the choreographers first and learn about what each of them is currently interested in and what he/she is hoping to create in Japan. We hoped to design the program from these conversations.

Our extravagant hope was generously granted, and we had a brilliantly coordinated, productive trip in each city. We were able to meet a wide range of choreographers whose focuses were not restricted so we could explore the various possibilities in the limited amount of time. Sixto Wagan, then Artistic Director of DiverseWorks,

organized our visit to the Fusebox Festival and meetings with Austin-based choreographers. Yolanda Cursach, Associate Director of the Performance Program at the Museum of Contemporary Art, arranged performances, showcases, studio visits and meetings at various dance studios. For the occasion, she had reserved the MCA theater stage where many of these events took place. Kyoko Yoshida, Executive Director of the U.S./Japan Cultural Trade Network and consultant of the U.S./Japan Connection, accompanied and interpreted the conversations for us during the whole trip, and Renata Petroni, Director of International Programs at NPN, organized the whole itinerary as well as the coordination of our New York trip. I would like to express my gratitude to these NPN partners and staff members for making the carefully planned and intricate arrangements.

I would like to share several things that especially made me ponder and inspired my thinking about the residency project of the U.S. choreographers in Japan. We were strongly encouraged to hear that all the choreographers we met had positive opinions about doing a residency in Japan.

I got the impression from most of the



Opposite: from front right Lisa Choinacky, Kyoko Yoshida, Reiko Hagihara, John Herbert, Kyoko Yokoyama, Ritsuko Mizuno

Above: MCA Plaza, Chicago
Photos by Ritsuko Mizuno

choreographers' presentations that each of them has a clear idea and concept of his/her work, engages in a research process to deepen the concept, then develops and completes the piece. Thus, they know how to create a work that clearly communicates what they want to express, and their individual perception of the world. The process may seem obvious for creating an artistic work, but, I feel that Japanese choreographers should understand this process more fully.

The ideas that artists were trying to address in their work were not always conventional. Indeed, the subject matter was often difficult to share with the general public. I saw that in many circumstances, the work's focus was outside the mainstream point of view and/or consciousness. For example, Ms Beth Gill, a New York-based choreographer, creates works that specifically focuses on the body's physical stance and on the relationship between space and choreography through her unique perspective. In Japan, this kind of work could be presented only in the Tokyo metropolitan area, but in the U.S., it was presented at the Fusebox Festival in Texas. I was pleasantly surprised to see such work enjoying this broad exposure.

I also felt the energy with which each artist pursues his/her own style. For example, one choreographer would conduct long-term research on a grand theme to reach the point where his/her expression expands into other genres beyond dance, while another would begin the choreographic process from personal trauma, memory, history and identity and eventually turn it into sublime and universal work of intense choreographic movement. Moreover, I was impressed with the generous capacities of the presenters, including the theaters and festivals that embrace these artists and their works. In contrast to the current circumstances in Japan, during the trip in the U.S. I was able to glimpse into the segment of the society that supports and accepts contemporary dance.

Another difference with Japan is that U.S. artists actively reach out and knock on new doors to open up possibilities for themselves. For example, Ms Allison Orr, whom we met in Austin, is a choreographer who has been actively involved with the community. She wanted to bring attention on a group of manual laborers, such as garbage workers, who are necessary but invisible to our society, and she wanted to create a dance piece involving

them. Instead of asking the administrators to set up activities, she knocked on the city's doors herself, went to their workplace and worked with them side-by-side in order to build trust. If a U.S. artist wants to pursue something that is crucial for him/her, he/she doesn't just sit around waiting or expecting something to be set up by others.

This made me think again what the essential motivation of the "creation" should be and in what ways the relationship between society and dance can be "exciting." This is a question not only for the artists but also for the theaters and the administrators. In recent years, JCDN has placed an emphasis on dance in the communities and helped to spread this type of activity throughout Japan. This trip offered the opportunity to make us question once again how successful we were in examining the possibilities of dance.

What I found the two countries have in common is that, although contemporary dance artists' activities and programs are increasingly seen nationally in Japan, the long-time trend of concentrating the work in the Tokyo metropolitan area continues. We share this with the U.S. in terms of the concentration of talented choreographers in New York. After



Okwi & Ritsuko Mizunoo

the 3.11 Earthquake, however, we see more artists moving away from Tokyo to other parts of Japan. It was interesting to learn that there are some U.S. artists moving their base away from New York City. I wondered if we share a similar trend of de-centralization. Some artists, who have worked in New York City for a few years, move away and are able to continue their activities in the new hometown without slowing down and to tour nationally as well as to NYC. The artists who move away from Tokyo are doing the same, but the difference is that the number of presenting venues and festivals outside of the metropolitan area in Japan compared with the U.S. is much smaller. However, the belief that artists have to be based in Tokyo or New York City is not as strong as a decade ago. Today, there seems to be more artists who appreciate the value of working within their life styles and who are capable of keeping the right distance between society and their activities. The geographical inclusiveness of the NPN was another benefit, which offered us the opportunity to talk about the activities and experiences with choreographers who are based in Austin and Chicago, not just in the New York metropolitan area.

I found artists' activities and programs in different parts of the U.S. uniquely distinctive. It may be because NPN connects each region nationally through their network, and as one of the organizational goals, it promotes

regional activities/characteristics nationally on an equal basis. NPN's system and activities support presenters, festivals and museums in different parts of the country to pursue their unique mission through their own programs, and promotes mutual support between and among NPN partners, independent artists and companies that helps them survive and thrive locally. When it comes to how a network should work, I think this is a model we should learn from.

For instance, I was amazed to see an organization like DanceWorks in Chicago thriving. They put in place a system that supports dancers and choreographers and teaches them to be independently successful. Needless to say, the company's success largely rests on the efforts and beliefs of the director, who has a strong sense of mission. I also had an opportunity to attend an evening program that combined three different companies of dance, music and theater, presented as part of a joint fundraising event at MCA. This kind of program, designed to support fundraising efforts and co-organized by the presenter and the independent choreographers and companies, doesn't really exist in Japan. The evening taught me a daring approach to developing an audience, who would attend genres beyond their usual interests, and to cultivating opportunities for new individual or organizational patrons/supporters by

cooperating with the artists of multiple genres. The event provided me with some ideas and references for the future, even though donating money in the arts has not yet become a common practice in Japan and there is a vast difference in the culture of charitable giving between the two countries.

We had dinner with Ms Nora Chipaumire after seeing her performance *MIRIAM* on our last evening in Austin. The conversation I had with her further inspired me about possible directions we should consider in planning this project. *"I do not want to work for a one-shot deal bound by a fixed framework. I would like to take time to work on a project I really think is meaningful over the course of two to three years."* I agreed with her completely. I strongly feel that we want to make the project truly meaningful for both the U.S. and Japanese sides.

I would like to sincerely thank the artists and the presenters who spent their precious time to introduce us to their work during our stay. Now, processing all the information and reflecting on the experiences we gained during this trip, it is our turn to think about ways of developing a program that will stimulate and energize the dance field in Japan. We truly appreciate NPN's continued support and cooperation, which are indispensable for our mutual endeavor.

New Orleans Hosts One of 40 El Sistema Projects in the U.S.

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**el Sistema
USA**

+ YOUTH ORCHESTRA OF THE LOWER 9TH WARD



Dedication, commitment, passion, hard work, consistency — and let's not forget love, fun, family, and community. These are values that define the daily work and program structure of the Youth Orchestra of the Lower 9th Ward (YOL9W). Founded on passion, driven by love and sweat equity, and aimed at breaking the poverty cycle, the program began with five students in September 2011 in a converted Walgreens on the corner of St. Claude and Caffin Avenues in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans. Now there are 42 students (with a waiting list), in only two short years.

YOL9W is modeled after the Venezuelan Youth Orchestra System, El Sistema, which produced Gustavo Dudamel (current conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic) and Edison Ruiz, the youngest member of the Berlin Philharmonic. El Sistema was founded in 1975 and based on the principal that music can be used as a vehicle for social change. YOL9W is currently one of over forty El Sistema inspired programs across the U.S. For thirty weeks each year, students attend hour-long music classes four days a week. Highly qualified teachers work with small groups of students on scales, repertoire, technique, and the fundamentals of reading music. In one year, the students have performed eight public concerts at local music venues, church services, and Tulane and Loyola University. Currently, the program enrolls students ages five to fourteen. All YOL9W students live in the Upper 9th Ward, the Lower 9th Ward, and the 7th Ward. In addition to daily instrumental music lessons, the students also receive a healthy dinner and a half hour of homework help.

Although the program is called a “youth orchestra” the name is actually quite deceiving; YOL9W is not a training program for classical music. The program's repertoire is selected and

arranged for strings (violins, cellos, and basses) from traditional New Orleans' tunes, spirituals, hymns, and the music of local composers. The staff and board continue to build a program that teaches young people about New Orleans' music and the importance of their culture and local traditions. This year, the students performed “I'll Fly Away,” “Saints Go Marching In,” and “Iko Iko.” YOL9W students have had the opportunity to work with a bassist from Preservation Hall, a jazz violinist, and several other outstanding local musicians.

In addition to teaching music, the program aims to create a community among its students, faculty, staff, and volunteers. YOL9W teachers frequently take their students to outside performances, stay late to have dinner with the kids, and show up on their days off to celebrate holidays and birthdays. As the program continues to grow and progress, YOL9W will strive to create an environment in which its students stay motivated and strive for excellence. Centered in “blighted” neighborhoods in the 9th Ward, YOL9W offers kids a safe environment and a positive way to channel their energy. By creating opportunities, training competent musicians, and inspiring students to achieve their full potential, the YOL9W staff and board hope to see personal and musical growth throughout the years. Next school year, YOL9W plans to partner with the Sarasota Orchestra to send ten students to their three-week camp in Florida, host musicians from Youth Orchestra of the Americas, and send several students to New York in partnership with Operation Southern Comfort and the Tri-Valley YMCA.

More information on the program is available at: www.yol9w.org

Creation Fund Awards FY 2013

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Ain Gordon – Pick Up Performance Co. (New York, NY)
Not What Happened (theater)
Commissioners: Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, Vermont Performance Lab, Juniata Presents

Not What Happened invokes a duet of nearly invisible women offering presenters deep relevance to our rural and semi-urban American landscapes and a vital opportunity to engage our communities at the intersection of performance, history and community identity.

Aion Productions (Durham, NC)
The Clothesline Muse (multidiscipline)
Commissioners: Painted Bride Art Center, St. Joseph's Historic Foundation

The Clothesline Muse is a multidisciplinary theater project that explores the clothesline as a metaphor of our community lifeline and its ties to our environment. The performance will include dance, live music, spoken word, interview text, video and interactive art, six dancers, a percussionist, and singer Nnenna Freelon as “The Muse.”

Charlotte Brathwaite and Jennifer Newman (New York, NY)
The Geneva Project (multidiscipline)
Commissioners: 651 Arts, Yale University

The Geneva Project is an interdisciplinary dance work exploring history, blood-memory and traces of an ancestral past. In the piece, visual imagery, language and sound are collaged with the corporeal, creating conduits for connecting the past to a contemporary reality.

Dahlak Brathwaite (Elk Grove, CA)
Spiritrials (theater)
Commissioners: Youth Speaks, Painted Bride Art Center, Hip Hop Theater Festival, Maui Arts and Cultural Center, Legion Arts

Written by Dahlak Brathwaite, and directed by Duke Artist Fellow Marc Bamuthi Joseph, *Spiritrials* is a dramatic reenactment of one boy's profound journey through the criminal justice system. Through spoken word, live music-production, and character monologues, the play will premier in early 2014, followed by a national tour.

Gary Kubota (Wailuku, HI)
Legend of Ko'olau (theater)
Commissioners: Maui Arts & Cultural Center, Waimea Historic Theater

Legend of Ko'olau is a two-act historical drama that describes the life of Ko'olau, a Hawaiian outlaw cowboy. This one-man play is among the few plays to portray a native Hawaiian male in a leading role. Through the eyes of Ko'olau, a courageous story unfolds about a Hawaiian family fighting for their survival amid the chaos and loss of Hawaiian sovereignty in 1893.

Heather Kravas (Seattle, WA)
the quartet (dance)
Commissioners: Performance Space 122, On the Boards, Fusebox Festival

The quartet is a contemporary dance performance inspired by the concentration and implications of self-identifying communities; it is choreography for four dancers who manifest four dances. Comprised of a ballet,

a human tower, a manifesto, and a folk dance, the work utilizes and undermines the clichés of contemporary performance practice to examine the underlying passions that guide its creation.

Hijack (Minneapolis, MN)
Hijack's Red Eye (dance)
Commissioners: Walker Art Center, Colorado College, Department of Theater & Dance, Legion Arts

Hijack's Red Eye is a work rooted in years of creating duets. Several pairs of guest performers will perform sections alongside Hijack for this evening of choreography based on printed material. While primarily concerned with newspaper press and prose, the choreography will entertain the same textures and strategies of the context of journalistic and fictional stories and their graphic layouts dependent on the different formats and trends.

Holcombe Waller (Portland, OR)
WAYFINDERS (multidiscipline)
Commissioners: On the Boards, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Miami Light Project, Legion Arts

WAYFINDERS uses stories-in-song and recitative presented within a visually rich stage picture featuring video, lighting, scenic design and movement to weave together stories from one of humankind's most courageous achievements: the navigation of the open sea. *WAYFINDERS* explores themes of orientation, dead reckoning and technological progress to delve into the question: How can we move forward now that markers we once considered intractable have disappeared?

José Torres-Tama (New Orleans, LA)
ALIENS Taco Truck Theater Project (performance art)
Commissioners: Living Arts of Tulsa, Pangea World Theater

Inspired by Luis Valdez's Teatro Campesino that brought farm workers' stories to public forums on flatbed truck stages, the *ALIENS Taco Truck Theater Project* will transform a truck into a “theater on wheels,” and bring the heroic stories of immigrant workers to Lowe's and Home Depot parking lots, day laborers' pick-up points, schools, and other public spaces—crossing the borders of economical, racial, and geographical divides as a site-specific work and new stage show.

Leilani Chan/TeAda Productions (Santa Monica, CA)
Global Taxi Driver (theatre)
Commissioners: Intermedia Arts, TeAda Productions, East West Players

Rooted in the stories of taxi drivers from around the world, *Global Taxi Driver (GTD)* will explore immigration and mobility in the 21st century. The project will develop a community-based ensemble that looks closely at issues of cultural difference, class, gender, and ethnicity. In GTD, taxi ride stories will be staged as a metaphor of the different travels, literal and metaphorical, of drivers and riders and their life experiences.

LEVYdance (San Francisco, CA)
Comfort Zone (multidiscipline)
Commissioners: Dance Place, Z Space, ExplOration

Comfort Zone is an interactive dance/media installation, created by Benjamin Levy in partnership with the Exploratorium and Z Space, which investigates the ways individual and social identities are created. The experience will pique curiosity, promote self-reflection and explore

concepts in relation to cross-cultural understanding, in a world of cyber communication.

Lisa Suarez (San Antonio, TX)
ADOPTION PIECE (theater)
Commissioners: Su Teatro, Jump-Start Performance Co., MACLA

The *ADOPTION PIECE*, with the current working title *Yours Truly*, Tu Seester will be a multidisciplinary bilingual theatrical production exploring adoption issues, concerns and experiences by the adopted, those adopting and the agencies that handle adoptions.

Luciana Achugar (Brooklyn, NY)
OTRO TEATRO (dance)
Commissioners: New York Live Arts, Walker Art Center

OTRO TEATRO, which translates both to “another theater” and “other theater,” will examine the role of dance as a form within the context of western theater, proposing another kind of theater, a theater of the other that will give voice to the arcane spirit, instinct and desire of our bodies. *OTRO TEATRO* will be performed by three main dancers and 20–30 local guest performers, who will be seated among the audience and move fluidly between the roles of performer and viewer.

Lucky Plush (Riverside, IL)
The Queue (dance)
Commissioners: Out North Contemporary Art House, Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, Links Hall

Co-created by Lucky Plush Artistic Director Julia Rhoads and theater director Leslie Danzig, *The Queue* is a dance-theater work that exposes the epic narratives that unfold while waiting for our lives to happen. The Queue employs highly stylized classic forms, such as slapstick and Vaudeville, within the ordinary and non-theatrical contemporary context of an airport, ultimately accumulating in a moving, long-form narrative.

Michelle N. Gibson (Irving, TX)
Takin' It to the Roots (multidiscipline)
Commissioners: South Dallas Cultural Center, Ashe Cultural Arts Center

A solo dance/theater work, *Takin' It to the Roots*, will explore what Michelle terms her “Second Line Aesthetic.” Prior to this project, Michelle choreographed a work with the same title for her company with recorded music. The new work will include composer Jason Davis, filmmaker Lauren Woods, playwright Jonathon Norton and lighting designer Jeff Hurst, along with a four-piece band, so that all music, sound design and visuals will be original material.

Navarassa Dance Theater (Menlo Park, CA)
My dear Muddu Palani – Performing the Sensual (theater)
Commissioners: La Pena Cultural Center, Navarassa Dance Theater, Boston Center for the Arts

My dear Muddu Palani is a duet dance-theater performance exploring the liberation of woman's sensuality from a woman's perspective, through literature and performance, across the centuries in India. This is a work written by a woman, re-published by a woman, and reinterpreted by a woman. Performed in the Bharatanatyam dance-theater Indian classical style it introduces cutting edge, new creative visual and multimedia components.

Progress Theatre (Prairie View, TX)
The Burnin' (multidiscipline)
Commissioners: Junebug Productions, Harford Stage

Inspired by the historic 1940 Rhythm Club Fire in Natchez, and a tragic 2003 event where patrons of a popular urban Chicago nightclub were killed, *The Burnin'* is an a capella musical that straddles time between two clubs to offer an imaginative exploration of the night of the fires and the ensuing media coverage. Through story, song, and dance, *The Burnin'* traces how young African Americans receive and redefine legacies of identity and freedom to accommodate their realities.

Sibyl Kempson (New York, NY)
River of Gruel, Pile of Pigs: The Requisite Gestures of Narrow Approach (theater)
Commissioners: Fusebox Festival, The Chocolate Factory

Kempson has been commissioned to devise a work in deep collaboration with the Austin theater community. Kempson and artists from Rude Mechs, Salvage Vanguard, Physical Plant, Rubber Reparatory, Austin Scriptworks, Trouble Puppet and composer Graham Reynolds (collectively called the Pig Pile) have been assembling a collection of seemingly unrelated imagery, geography and aromas, that over time begins to reveal an intimately connected web of enfolded mythologies.

Soomi Kim (New York, NY)
Chang(e) (theater)
Commissioners: Asian Arts Initiative, HERE Arts Center, Eventual Ashes

Chang(e) is based on the life of Philly-based Asian American outsider performance artist/activist Kathy Change, infamously remembered for her last "performance," in which she set herself on fire and danced in protest of the political apathy of the elite students of University of Pennsylvania. This new hybrid dance theatre performance will incorporate dance on film, reenactments of Change's performances, text from transcribed interviews, movement, video and original music.

Step Afrika! (Washington, DC)
Green is the New Black (dance)
Commissioners: Carver Community Cultural Center, Dance Place, Washington Performing Arts Society

What if we could take the energy of dance, harness it and reuse it to power devices and communities? Step Afrika! seeks to create a new work that will not only explore, through the use of piezo technology, our capacity to capture the "power" created through dance, but also to convert the dance into electrical energy. The work will also promote concepts of sustainable energy and "climate care" through a performance that is partially or completely powered by the energy of dance.

The Creation Fund is made possible by support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts (Dance Program) and the Ford Foundation.



A Journey from Follower to Leader



by Jessica Huang, Development Associate, Pangea World Theater

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Strange to think I'd never been to a national theater conference before last year. Now I feel like an old hat — having been to one in Philadelphia, one here in Minneapolis, and about to hop a plane for my third — in Dallas. All that travel, as well as the additional workshops and conversations are thanks to the Mentorship and Leadership grant from NPN that afforded Pangea and me the opportunity to develop my fundraising/grant-writing skills, as well as introduce me to Pangea's work on a national level through attendance at multiple theater conferences.

My journey with Pangea began in 2009, when I worked as an artist on *The Bridges Project*, which involved mornings of Open Space conversation that convened around race, gender, class, aesthetics and so forth, and afternoons and evenings of rehearsal that then transformed those conversations into a performance piece. I participated in various projects in the following years until I joined the staff in 2011 — first as a part time contractor, then as a full-time member of our team. I also have grown individually from my time at Pangea — I used to be silent in all meetings with outside participants, terrified to misspeak and incorrectly represent what I believe to be vitally important work. Now I have interns reporting to me, and am comfortable articulating our practice and our vision for others.

I mention all this because I feel it's important to note: my growth at Pangea was not constrained by the MLI grant period — during my whole Pangea experience I transitioned from artist to administrator, part-time contractor to salaried employee, and follower to a leader participating in the shaping of the next 17 years of our organization's development. However



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the MLI grant made my development as a team-member front and center, and also made particular opportunities affordable for our small staff/budget.

My MLI grant covered my travel costs and registration for several national conferences that I attended as a representative of Pangea. Until I had the opportunity to attend NPN, I had no grasp of Pangea's position and responsibility in the national theatre conversation. My experience at the NPN annual gathering widened my understanding of what is possible in our field, as well as what work is being created out there all the time. During breakout conversations, I learned as much about making work as an individual artist as I did about curating performances and effectively running an organization that puts social justice in the forefront of our consciousness. I also got to attend a bit of the inaugural Minnesota Theatre Alliance conference here in Minneapolis — which was a critically important gathering of theater artists from the Twin Cities that emphasized organizational structure, collaboration and partnership, and an ever-intensifying commitment to inclusivity in our local ecology.

I was also awarded funding for the growth of my development skills. Back when I began at Pangea as a part-time contractor, I was a playwright with a degree in journalism and absolutely no experience with grant writing or fundraising. But Meena Natarajan, our literary/executive director, took time and care cultivating my skills as a fundraiser to the point where now the majority of Pangea's grant proposals are under my purview. The MLI was crucial for this — funding allowed me to attend several development workshops

where I learned the nuances of maximizing the use of social media or the potential within our website to leverage funds. Our organization has affected institutional change based on some of these learnings — we created a part-time social media marketing coordinator who has increased our presence online considerably, and — whether coincidental or not — our local presence has also seemed to have grown concurrently.

I've just booked my tickets to TCG for the upcoming *Learn, Do, Teach* conference in Dallas — also funded by the MLI, and I'm so excited to attend. I know I've grown so much since the NPN gathering just six months ago, and I'm excited to take in more knowledge about audience development, artistic creation and how best to be an inclusive organization. Of course I'll hope to bring back more field-wisdom about fundraising as well — which I've frankly fallen in love with over the past year. I'll be representing Pangea by myself at this upcoming conference, and while it's a little nerve-wracking, it's something I feel I've been given all the tools and training to do well.

The Mentorship and Leadership Initiative, as part of the Community Fund, is made possible by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, MetLife Foundation, and American Express.



MetLife Foundation



Southwest Airlines, Official Airline of National
Performance Network

