



Argentine Artist Jorge Onofri during artist talk at Double Edge Theatre's The Farm Center during 12-13 Creative Exchange  
Photo: Courtesy of Double Edge Theatre

## Investing in International Creative Time: NPN Announces Creative Exchange Awards

*Three artists (from two cities in Mexico) will visit U.S.-based presenters in Los Angeles, El Monte and Berkeley CA, developing new work, performing, and collaborating with local artists over three- or four-week-long residencies between August 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014. Reciprocally, three U.S. artists from New York, Los Angeles and Putney, VT will travel to Brazil, Guatemala and El Salvador, rounding out this year's roster of Creative Exchanges, which are funded by the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of Los Angeles.*

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### A Chance to Ask "...suppose this happens?"

*A search for guidance from two founder-driven organizations created a much-needed space for "collective learning and sharing that is rooted in our past and helping us chart our future," according to Stephanie McKee. NPN staff Will Bowling sat down with McKee, artistic director of Junebug Productions, and Kiyoko McCrae, managing director, for a conversation about the lessons learned when they embarked on a mentorship with Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, director of Urban Bush Women, and Linda Parris-Bailey, director of Carpetbag Theatre. MLI is supported in part by American Express, MetLife Foundation, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.*

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### Initiative Supports Travel and Exchange Projects

*US/LINKS is a one-year project of NPN initiated by Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC), funded by the Ford Foundation. Its goal is to increase knowledge and opportunities for the free flow of artists and ideas within the Supporting Diverse Arts Spaces cohort (organizations that received support from LINC's Space for Change program) and the professional U.S.-based visual and performing artists who are supported/commissioned by these organizations. Twelve grants were made.*

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# 2013–2014 Creative Exchange Projects

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A panel of curators composed of NPN Partners, curators from La RED (redlatinoamericana.com) (NPN's Performing Americas' partner network) and independent artists recently selected six projects for the Creative Residency program, to begin August 1, 2013. Funding is provided by the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and (for Los Angeles-based companies) the City of Los Angeles' Department of Cultural Affairs. Guidelines for the 2014/15 program will be available on the NPN website in early December, for a March 2014 deadline.

Host: Double Edge Theatre (DE); Ashfield MA

Artist: Jorge Onofri; Cipoletti, Argentina

Argentine puppet designer/director Jorge Onofri (La Caja Mágica) will visit The Farm — DE's rural international center for performance, collaboration and research in western Massachusetts. This three-week visit will be the 2nd phase of a multi-year collaboration between Onofri and Double Edge, the first of which was funded by NPN's Creative Exchange in 2011. Hear an artist-talk on Livestream:

[www.livestream.com/newplay/](http://www.livestream.com/newplay/)

video?clipId=pla\_50e372c5-987e-4d4b-9aa8-1fd712323089

Host: La Peña Cultural Center; Berkeley CA

Artist: Patricio Hidalgo Bell and Felix Jose Oseguera Rueda; Veracruz, Mexico

These master *son jarocho* (regional Mexican folk music) artists from Veracruz and local *sonero* artists from the Bay Area will work collectively to create a new urban fandango in the *son jarocho* tradition. The project will reflect the life and culture of the East Bay immigrant communities that gather at La Peña Cultural Center as an artistic hub to maintain and recreate this form of popular aesthetic expression.

Host: REDCAT; Los Angeles CA

Artists: Claudio Valdés Kuri and Fabrina Melón (Teatro de Ciertos Habitantes); Mexico City

The artists will explore the theatrical dynamics and develop specific technical sections of their upcoming production based on Calderón's *Life is a Dream*. They will also participate in the RADAR L.A. Festival Symposium and other festival activities while in residence in Los Angeles.

Host: South El Montes Art Posse (SEMAP); El Monte CA

Artists: Diego Flores Magon and Froylan Vladimir; Mexico City

Working collaboratively with museum, archive, and journalism professionals from La Casa de El Hijo del Ahuizote in Mexico City, SEMAP will host a series of interdisciplinary workshops to create an alternative archive via exploration of their site-specific process for creating public art that reflects their community.

Host: Companhia de Danças de Diadema; Diadema, Brazil (São Paulo)

Artists: Bill Young and Colleen Thomas; New York NY  
The artists will teach classes, rehearse daily with all the dancers of the Co. de Danças de Diadema, and complete a new work for the company to perform and tour. This project is an extension of a previous PAP touring residency with the artists.

Host: Guatemalan Theater Company iik;

Guatemala City, Guatemala

Artist: Lorena Moran - Teatro Jornalero Sin Fronteras (TJSF); Los Angeles CA

TJSF will work with iik to share and develop ensemble-based working methods, exchange script writing and improvisation techniques. They will use their combined skills to engage the community of Guatemalans who have immigrated to L.A., worked as day laborers or domestic workers, and have been deported back to Guatemala. They will collect stories from this community and create a work to be performed for these communities on both sides of the border.

Host: Teatro Luis Pomo; San Salvador, El Salvador

Artist: Sandglass Theater; Putney VT

This residency will focus on the early stages of the collaborative, cross-cultural production of Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*. Written in 1779 in Germany, the text is a fervent plea for religious tolerance. This process will develop the script and distill the main characters. The final work will be a theatrical production using puppetry.

The Creative Exchange component of NPN's International Program began as part of the Performing Americas Program (PAP) in response to a call from NPN and international partners to have deeper cultural exchanges between artists and communities.

Now in its sixth year, the Creative Exchange has supported over 30 artists/companies from across the hemisphere for three- to five-week residencies with hosts abroad. As an outgrowth of PAP, the residencies are focused on exchanges between the U.S. and Latin America and the Caribbean, specifically U.S.-based artists traveling to hosts in Latin American and the Caribbean, and Latin American and Caribbean-based artist traveling to U.S. host sites. The Creative Exchange is designed to allow artists to develop relationships with host communities over a long time period. After having spoken with artists and hosts that have participated in the Performing Americas Touring Program, the message was clear: international exchanges were more than just performing and moving on to the next city — communities and

artists on both sides desired more time to collaborate, develop new work in unique environments, understand the process and methodology of partners, and to be part of a cultural exchange that builds lasting relationships through the performing arts.

Artists and hosts alike have expressed how meaningful and important the program has been to their work.

"This residency encouraged me powerfully to take more risk on my work, and especially in my creative process. Just the intercultural experience inspired me and exposed me to new views of the world, giving me a new critical vision of my work, and a new perception of dance creation in a respectful and honest environment in the U.S."

—Tatiana Mejia (Dominican Republic) after her Creative Exchange Residency at Bates Dance Festival, 2011

Recently, puppetry artist Jorge Onofri from Cippolletti, Argentina traveled to The Farm Center in Ashfield, Massachusetts to conduct a month-long residency with Double Edge Theatre and their community. For a taste of the kind of collaborations being conducted through this program, please watch the Livestream for a video of a conversation with Double Edge ensemble members and the artist:

[www.livestream.com/newplay/](http://www.livestream.com/newplay/)

video?clipId=pla\_50e372c5-987e-4d4b-9aa8-1fd712323089

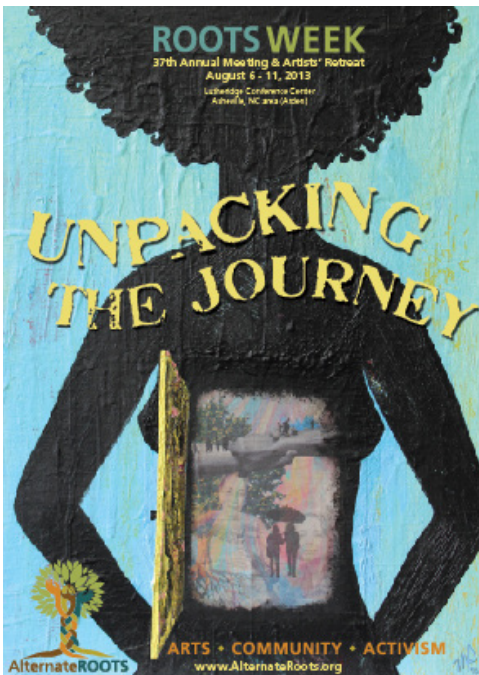
For more information about NPN's International Program, check out [npnweb.org/whatwedo/programs/performing-americas/](http://npnweb.org/whatwedo/programs/performing-americas/) or contact [edoud@npnweb.org](mailto:edoud@npnweb.org).





## Tip o' the Hat to Outgoing Board Members

*NPN wants to thank our outgoing board members, Mildred Ruiz Sapp and Arnie Malina, for their years of service to the board of directors. Their time, passion and talent are truly appreciated and will be missed.*



### Registered Yet?

NPN/VAN staff members will join Alternate ROOTS members, colleagues, and artists August 6-11, 2013 at the Alternate ROOTS' Annual Meeting. *ROOTS WEEK* is part meeting, part retreat and part performance festival in the beautiful mountains south of Asheville, NC. It's a gathering created by artists, led by artists, for artists, and those who support art rooted in a community of place, tradition or spirit. Alternate ROOTS is an organization based in the Southern U.S. whose mission is to support the creation and presentation of original art, in all its forms, that is dedicated to undoing oppression. Alternate ROOTS is a strategic partner of NPN through the Supporting Diverse Arts Spaces Initiative of the Ford Foundation.

For more information:

[www.alternateroots.org/programs/annual\\_meeting](http://www.alternateroots.org/programs/annual_meeting)

NPN/VAN staff and Partners will also be attending *People, Places, and Policy*, August 2-4 in Providence RI. The Association of American Cultures (TAAC) invites leaders, both established and emerging, to "Open Dialogue 13" to formulate action agendas promoting equity in cultural policy, funding and leadership in the 21st Century.

Register today:

[www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1239869](http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1239869)

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## Claiming and Naming Your Practice: A Conversation about Mentoring and Change

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*NPN Partner Junebug Productions has entered a new phase in its long history. In the summer of 2012, Junebug received a Mentorship and Leadership Initiative subsidy, which gave Stephanie McKee and Kiyoko McCrae, the newly appointed artistic and managing directors, the opportunity to look to the leadership of two other performing arts organizations for guidance and support, both of which have experienced similar challenges in times of transition. NPN staffer Will Bowling sat down with Stephanie and Kiyoko to inquire about their discussions with Jawole Willa Jo Zollar from Urban Bush Women (UBW) and Linda Parris-Bailey from Carpetbag Theatre. This is a small portion of their conversation, edited by Kathie deNobriga and Steve Bailey.*

**WILL:** Give us a little bit of background on how you first started working with Junebug Productions.

**STEPHANIE:** Junebug invited me to be a part of their Celebration of Women in the Arts in 1995, and subsequently the subject of Urban Bush Women's Institute came up. Junebug wrote me a beautiful letter of recommendation, and that was how I was able to get a scholarship to the very first Institute. That also started my relationship with Jawole (Willa Jo Zollar, director of Urban Bush Women).

Next, between the Institute and the Festival, Junebug presented Moving Stories. At the time, it was just a theme for a dance - stories and movement that move you - but after we did it, it turned into a showcase of young choreographers. That was the first time ever that someone came to me and said, "we want to make sure that you can just do your work, so we're going to provide a theater space, the tech, the marketing, and we want you to just concentrate on doing your work." Because of that, it's always been very important to me to provide artists the space they need to be artists, which actually leads to one of the challenges in the transition. Kiyoko and I both are creative beings, and balancing the amount of administrative work is a challenge. That laid out some questions we wanted to explore with Jawole and Linda: "How do you balance those things and still keep your creativity? How do you keep creativity intact with integrity to the work?"

Junebug has had a few near-death experiences — we were in the middle of one — and they had too. So we wanted to ask them what that was like. They actually talked very honestly about that experience and what they learned in that process.

**KIYOKO:** It's important to remember that your (Stephanie's) first interaction was being presented by Junebug, I think that's really key; I remember your talking about their intention, with having one of the 10-person staff specifically dedicated to presenting.

**STEPHANIE:** And being committed to supporting local artists - we're really clear about that. That was a point of learning, through Jawole - what she always drove home, from my first interaction with her - the importance of place and the work that happens in place. So if Katrina happens in New Orleans and that's where you hang your hat, we know that we were affected

by all of the things that happen surrounding that, including the Recovery. That makes the work that we do even more important.

**WILL:** Kiyoko, you've been with Junebug since 2007, shortly after Katrina.

**KIYOKO:** I came in 2007 and I had just met John O'Neal, founder and former artistic director of Junebug. I had learned about the Free Southern Theater and Junebug with Jan Cohen-Cruz (at NYU), studying community-based theater. I was volunteering with the Douglass Community Coalition that Junebug had been part of, prior to the storm, and that's how I met John. John came in to teach about story circles. He was literally rebuilding the organization and needed help with the administration. Junebug has seen several transitions since Katrina - looking at different ways of staffing and structuring the organization. So when I heard Stephanie was reporting back, I thought I'd back her.

**STEPHANIE:** I can very honestly say that I wouldn't have done it if Kiyoko hadn't agreed to work with me. You need somebody who, first and foremost, deeply understands the work of Junebug, the history and the values attached to that. I needed someone I could trust, someone who is a creative being and who holds some institutional memory - she was here for all of the different transitions.

**WILL:** Can you talk a little bit about your relationship with Jawole and Linda as mentors and the conversations that you all are engaged in.

**KIYOKO:** One thing that we talked about with both of them was, "What is your practice?" Linda talked about the importance of naming your practice, and not just naming it, but being able to replicate it, having a very clear process that can be passed on.

**STEPHANIE:** That was also one of the things Jawole brought up - naming and framing our practice and not having it named or framed by someone else. Naming and framing happens all the time, but we typically are not the ones to do it. For example, story circles themselves are out of the oral tradition. In the African tradition, it's nothing for someone to have the story of somebody's father's father's father's father passed on — there's always a griot in the family. I don't augment that story when I pass it on to somebody else, and I always say my grandfather told me, so there is an honoring in where I got the story. There is a value to the oral tradition; there is great honoring in just being fully present and listening and taking it in.





Photo: Melissa Cardona

KIYOKO: It was interesting talking with Linda and John about how to name things, what values are embedded in how you name things, and how to document it, recognizing that we live in a society that honors the written word more than the oral word. Linda said it's been a challenge for them too, how to name their practice. They made a mistake in the past, bringing new people into the ensemble without fully training them; people can mimic the process, but don't really get it.

There is a theme here, a smaller organization, especially an organization of color, tends to struggle with how it assert itself in line with its values.

WILL: It's interesting to me, especially when you talk of naming things, how you identified these two arts leaders as possible mentors, and then you describe more of a collective learning space without a hierarchy.

KIYOKO: Talking about breaking hierarchy, I was reminded about the similarities among the organizations. I don't have statistics here, but we talked about the dwindling number of black theater companies and black arts organizations in the U.S. All three organizations (Carpetbag, UBW and Junebug) are struggling. So, we just started brainstorming: what would it look like to actually apply ideas to the three organizations together, trying to think

outside of the box in terms of, for example, fundraising. For so long, Junebug relied on John's touring income. We're not touring now, so we have to really look at how to increase Junebug's income in creative ways.

We have the 50th anniversary of the Free Southern Theater in the fall (2013), so we are inviting both companies to be here, and hopefully we're going to continue to have more rich conversations about that. More than just learning from each other, we are talking about how women of color and organizations actually support one another.

STEPHANIE: And, how do we identify ourselves? How do people see us? For a really long time, people said, "So I heard of Junebug, what does Junebug do?" Part of it was John's strong identity, but it's also the challenge of laying out an identity of what we actually do. What is really clear to us is that facilitation is something we do really well, and that the skill was heightened because of our work with Junebug.

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WILL: Where do you see the organization within the next year or so? This is an interesting time for transition — you spoke of a time where Junebug was a 10-member staff and had a constant revenue stream through John's touring, and here you have a staff of, essentially, you two.

STEPHANIE: It's exciting, and it is scary as hell too. Through all of the transitions that Junebug has had, they've never had a transition happen when the economy was just so damn bad, which has impacted philanthropy tremendously. Back in 2006, people were telling us, "it's bad, but you haven't seen the worst of it." We knew that it was coming, so it does require thinking outside the box. There is something in the idea of building your base and the idea that people will sign on for what they believe in. I do know there are a lot of people who believe in what Junebug has done and what it is doing; our job is to figure out how to capitalize on that and then do some kick-ass work with great integrity.

KIYOKO: If I had to sum up a major focus with the Free Southern Theater Institute, it's to be more locally-based and focused on New Orleans, and to nurture artists and folks who are interested in music. We just really want to build our base and our audience.

WILL: That's awesome. Thanks - mostly because I get to hear all this conversation, other people will just get to read some of it.

KIYOKO: Thank you. It goes without saying, NPN really is awesome, and having the time and space, specifically the Mentorship and Leadership Initiative, to sit down and have two full days of face-to-face conversations, and then checking-in on the phone, it's been great.

STEPHANIE: You remember what I said about the creativity? I found I was so alive and wanting to immediately do things after having those conversations. It was nice to have quiet time and space to be able to do that and not feel rushed, to be able to just sit there and have conversations with each other that were not about "what do we have to do next?" but more like "suppose *this* happens?"

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## US/LINKS Awards for 2013/14

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Crossings is a travel grant that supports curatorial and research travel to build knowledge about the arts across the U.S. and relationships with colleagues that will open up new opportunities for artistic exchange and increase organizational capacity. Eight awards were made:

- Beth Boone, executive director of Miami Light will travel to La Mama CultureHub and the Hemispheric Institute (New York City), and to Berkee College of Music (Boston MA), Watermill Center (Long Island NY) to see new work to expand Miami Light's programming as well as to learn about new technologies to build an archive and for diverse artists to share ideas and create new work.
- Tracy Taft, executive director of International Sonoran Desert Alliance in Ajo AZ will travel to Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (Seattle WA) to learn about Wing Luke's community-based curatorial process, and to Longhouse Education and Cultural Center (Olympia WA) to learn about their tribally specific and international curatorial process.
- Georgine Brown, board chair of the Lac du Flambeau Living Arts & Culture Center will travel to Longhouse Education and Cultural Center to learn about board development and board's fundraising capacity as well as Longhouse marketing and operations strategies.
- Laura Grabhorn, assistant director at Longhouse Education and Cultural Center will travel to the Alaska Native Heritage Center (Anchorage) to learn about culturally appropriate individual donor campaign, about the existing MFA in Native Arts program through the University of Alaska and explore collaborations with local institutions.
- Christine Licata, Director of Performing & Visual Arts at Casita Maria in the Bronx will travel to Intersection for the Arts (San Francisco) to deepen the connections with the organization and learn about programming, strategies and methods of cultural, urban and interdisciplinary work that can be applied to Casita Maria's arts and cultural community and program.
- Miranne Walker, program officer at First People's Fund (FPF) will travel to the Hip Hop Festival (New York City) to deepen the relationship with the festival for future collaborations and to record and document *Frank Waln* and FPF's *Our Nations Spaces* project.
- Silvia Duarte, managing editor at Sampsonia Way Magazine (Pittsburgh PA) will travel to NALAC (San Antonio TX) to build knowledge about NALAC's work, operation, networks and artists, and to interview Maria López de León in her role as a member of the National Council on the Arts.
- Rosalba Colon, artistic director of Pregones Theater (New York NY) will travel to the Pa'i Center (Honolulu HI) to identify Hawaiian artists for the *21 Islands* project and to find partners for Pregones' *Aloha Boricua* project.

The Creative Exchange Residency is a grant that supports three-to-five week residencies for one or two person(s) that encourages creative collaborations, community engagement and mentorships. Four awards were made:

- A three-week residency for hula masters Maui Ola Cook and Kapono'ai Molitau at La Mama in New York City to instruct resident artist Kiku Sakai in the rare art of hula ki'i.
- During a three-week capacity building residency, Vicky Holt Takamine, executive director of Pa'i in Honolulu will spend one week at Northwoods NiiJi (Lac du Flambeau WI) to meet with staff and board to make programming recommendations, while Patricia O'Neal, executive director of Northwoods NiiJii, will spend two weeks at Pa'i to study their marketing, fiscal planning strategies and programming.
- A month-long residency will enable visual artist Eduardo Duval Carrie and director Lars Jan to develop *Amanda*, a contemporary opera conceived and written by Carl Hancock Roux and commissioned and produced by Harlem Stage in New York City.
- A three-week capacity building residency for Cassie Chinn, deputy executive director, and Michelle Kumara, exhibits manager, at the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience to implement The Wing's community-based exhibition model at Asian Arts Initiative in Philadelphia.



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