



“Let’s start a theatre company...and NOT move to New York”

One of fifteen New Orleans-based arts organizations and artists’ projects in NPN’s Local Network, Skin Horse Theater has been devising fresh new work in the Big Easy since 2009. Meet this experimental theatre company as they talk about their most recent original work and their creative process.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 04

Pictured: Rebecca Elizabeth Hollingsworth, Veronica Hunsinger-Loe, and Shannon Flaherty in Movement Two
Photo by Jessica Chevis

NPN Awards \$238,000 in Creation Fund

Twenty companies or individual artists from 15 cities recently received NPN Creation Fund awards, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Ford Foundation. Each Creation Fund award comes with additional support from the Forth Fund, which allows further development of the work to become tour-ready — through production help, promotion or continued artistic growth — funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 02

Still On the Road!

NPN’s popular *Doin’ It On the Road* session checks into its next destination with a free workshop designed for touring artists, new or experienced.

May 6, 2014, 3-5 pm
Legion Arts, Cedar Rapids IA

To register, contact john@legionarts.org



Mark your calendar!

On May 6, NPN is participating in GiveNOLA Day, a 24-hour online campaign, hosted by the Greater New Orleans Foundation. NPN needs your support from afar. Help us claim our share of almost \$300,000 in bonus dollars. We call that Lagniappe! Look for more information closer to May 6.

FY14 Creation Fund Awards

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

Artist: ArtSpot Productions — New Orleans, LA

Title: *Sea of Common Catastrophe*

Discipline: Multidisciplinary

Commissioners: 7 Stages, Atlanta, GA; JEMAGWGA, Charleston, SC

Description: ArtSpot Productions, working with video artist Courtney Egan and choreographer Jeffrey Gunshol, will create “The Sea Of Common Catastrophe,” a new multidisciplinary performance inspired by a passage from Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s novella “The Sea of Lost Time” and informed by stories from cities that face the pressures of dynamic urban change.

NPN Subsidy: \$10,000

Artist: Ntozake Shange — Brooklyn, NY

Title: *Lost in Language and Sound*

Discipline: Multidisciplinary

Commissioners: 651 Arts, Brooklyn, NY; Kelly Strayhorn Theater, Pittsburgh, PA

Description: “Lost in Language and Sound” is a multidisciplinary choreo-essay, comprised of nine vignettes, that uses music, dance and spoken word to chronicle the arc of a woman’s journey with her writing.

NPN Subsidy: \$10,000

Artist: Sean Dorsey Dance — San Francisco, CA

Title: *The Missing Generation*

Discipline: Dance

Commissioners: Bates Dance Festival, Lewiston, ME; Queer Cultural Center, San Francisco, CA; Dance Place, Washington, DC; 7 Stages, Atlanta, GA; The Theater Offensive, Boston, MA

Description: “The Missing Generation” will investigate the contemporary impact of the loss of so much of an entire generation of transgender and queer people to AIDS during the 1980s. Dorsey will create the production through a two-year LGBT Inter-Generational Oral History Project, extensive archival research, and community engagement residencies in cities across the U.S.

NPN Subsidy: \$16,000

Artist: Everett — Providence, RI

Title: *Freedom Project*

Discipline: Multidisciplinary

Commissioners: Contemporary Dance Theater, Cincinnati, OH; The Yard, Chilmark, MA; Brown University, Providence, RI

Description: Everett will conduct a multi-year exploration of the ways that performance can help build a movement to end mass incarceration in America. This work will culminate in Freedom Project a touring theatrical production.

NPN Subsidy: \$12,000

Artist: Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh Dance Company — Washington, DC

Title: *Persistent Voices*

Discipline: Multidisciplinary

Commissioners: Dance Place, Washington, DC; Kala Vandanam Dance Company, Saint Paul, MN

Description: “Persistent Voices” is a multimedia dance theater work that uses dance, spoken word and video projections to bear witness to the ravages of the AIDS epidemic. Bearing witness to the first round of the epidemic is crucial to make sense of the current rising trends in risky sexual behavior and corresponding rise in HIV infections — we hope the project encourages reflection and care for the body.

NPN Subsidy: \$10,000

Artist: Kristina Wong — Los Angeles, CA

Title: *The Wong Street Journal*

Discipline: Theater

Commissioners: Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, Burlington, VT; Miami Light Project, Miami, FL; REDCAT, Los Angeles, CA; Circuit Network, San Francisco, CA

Description: “The Wong Street Journal” is a new solo theater work, written and performed by Kristina Wong, that will premiere in 2015. Half psychedelic TED lecture, half amateur hip hop extravaganza and half bullshit. “The Wong Street Journal” breaks down the complexities of global poverty and economic theory using uneasy-to-read charts, never-before-proven economic strategies for survival, and riveting slideshows of hustlers from the first and third worlds. In her research, Wong will be working directly with a range of entities, from a microloan organization in Northern Uganda to a homeless shelter on Skid Row. She’ll detail the intersecting politics of charity and economic development around the globe.

NPN Subsidy: \$14,000

Artist: Shā Cage — Minneapolis, MN

Title: *U.G.L.Y.*

Discipline: Theater

Commissioners: Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, MN; Historic Holmes Theater, Detroit Lakes, MN; Congo Square, Chicago, IL; Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis, MN

Description: U.G.L.Y. is a one-woman tour de force that seeks to challenge stereotypes of beauty by confronting popular myths and ideologies. It is a humorous and provocative integration of drama, clown, spoken word and global cases to examine identity. Shā Cage seamlessly inhabits over six characters to tell a personal and universal story.

NPN Subsidy: \$14,000

Artist: Maria de la Rosa — San Jose, CA

Title: *Fandango Urbano*

Discipline: Music

Commissioners: La Peña Cultural Center, Berkeley, CA; La Peña Cultural Center, Austin, TX

Description: Recognizing that *son jarocho* is a 300-year old lyrical genre of music and dance rooted in specific communities of southern Veracruz, Mexico, “Fandango Urbano” seeks to explore and expand the growing interest that this tradition has today in the Bay Area and to uncover the creative cultural translations between Veracruz and the Bay that are enlarging and enriching the common values held amongst those who participate in the emerging global *sonero* community.

NPN Subsidy: \$10,000

Artist: Hedwig Dances — Chicago, IL

Title: *Trade Winds*

Discipline: Dance

Commissioners: Links Hall, Chicago, IL; DanzAbierta, Havana, Cuba; COCA, St. Louis, MO; Kate Corby and Dancers, Madison, WI

Description: “Trade Winds” builds on a collaboration begun in 2012 between Hedwig Dances (Chicago) and DanzAbierta (Havana). The two companies are each creating a new work that will artistically stand on its own but will intersect when they come together on stage.

NPN Subsidy: \$14,000

Artist: Christopher K. Morgan & Artists — Rockville, MD

Title: *Pohaku*

Discipline: Dance

Commissioners: Maui Arts & Cultural Center, Kahului, HI; Dance Place, Washington, DC

Description: *Pohaku* (the Hawaiian word for stone) is a dance theater piece inspired by Morgan’s exposure to the work of his late cousin, hula master John Kaimikaua, and Morgan’s own multi-racial Hawaiian/Asian/Caucasian identity. The work will incorporate Hawaiian chant, hula, contemporary dance, theater and storytelling to explore universal themes that are compelling in the story of Hawaii’s native people, including land loss and fractured identity.

NPN Subsidy: \$10,000

Artist: The Seldoms — Chicago, IL

Title: *Power Goes*

Discipline: Dance

Commissioners: MCA Chicago, Chicago, IL; Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, IL

Description: “Power Goes” is a multidisciplinary work that considers political power as determined and expressed by personality, physicality and performance, and draws upon the historical figure of Lyndon Baines Johnson to confront our political context of gridlock and incompetence. Directed and conceived by choreographer Carrie Hanson and playwright Stuart Flack, the work will be developed with The Seldoms contemporary dance ensemble, visual artist Sarah Krepp, typographer Bob Faust, sound designer Mikhail Fiksel, and historian Michael J. Kramer.

NPN Subsidy: \$10,000

Artist: Rosie Herrera — Miami, FL

Title: *Cookie's Kid*

Discipline: Dance

Commissioners: Miami Light Project, Miami, FL; Dance Place, Washington, DC; Maui Arts & Cultural Center, Kahului, HI

Description: "Cookie's Kid" is a solo dance work choreographed and performed by Rosie Herrera. The project explores what is inherited muscle memory. Based on Herrera's experience growing up with a tough Bronx mother and a counter revolutionary Cuban refugee father, she delves into the exploration of ecstatic to discover what information her body holds about her cultural difference.

NPN Subsidy: \$12,000

Artist: Joshua Walters — Oakland, CA

Title: *UNPLUG!*

Discipline: Multidisciplinary

Commissioners: Myrna Loy Center, Helena, MT; La Peña Cultural Center, Berkeley, CA

Description: With the rate of technological advance, the world is becoming a faster, a more connected, and a more chaotic place. We are at a pinnacle moment in human history in which we can know everything and have our voices felt everywhere, but at what cost? What if everyone in the world stopped using technology for one day? To feel the effect on our minds, emotions, and connection to the divine: UNPLUG!

NPN Subsidy: \$10,000

Artist: Cynthia Oliver — Urbana-Champaign, IL

Title: *BOOM!*

Discipline: Dance

Commissioners: New York Live Arts, New York, NY; Dance Place, Washington, DC; Painted Bride Art Center, Philadelphia, PA

Description: *BOOM!*, a new duet by Cynthia Oliver features Oliver and Leslie Cuyjet as individuals, friends, strangers, family, younger/older versions of themselves, negotiating relations that are persistently in flux. Building upon a non-linear sequence of narratives around a life and a relationship – of a woman to herself, her history, her present and future, *BOOM!* is a choreography of shifting realities – a looping, fractured unfolding, examining notions of destiny, when LIFE happens, when "fairness" and cause and effect do not necessarily align.

NPN Subsidy: \$12,000

Artist: Amy O'Neal — Seattle, WA

Title: *Opposing Forces*

Discipline: Dance

Commissioners: On The Boards, Seattle, WA; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA; Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR

Description: An evening length dance performance with a cast of B-boys around questions and perceptions of femininity and its impact on male behavior.

NPN Subsidy: \$12,000

Artist: Samita Sinha — New York, NY

Title: *CIPHER*

Discipline: Vocal Theater

Commissioners: Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR; Atlas Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC; Center for the Arts @ Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA; REDCAT, Los Angeles, CA

Description: CIPHER is a theatricalized music work for solo live voice and electronics composed and performed by Samita Sinha in an interactive landscape of darkness and light designed by Christopher Kuhl. In CIPHER, mythological characters from the margins of the Hindu/Buddhist pantheon lead a journey of exploration through both the loss and creative potential of moments of rupture, deploying light and the body, sound and silence, to rewrite notions of power. CIPHER is new form of vocal theater that ranges from classical Indian music to ritual songs to electronic music; one that is simultaneously abstract and direct, composed and improvised, ancient and innovative.

NPN Subsidy: \$14,000

Artist: Lars Jan / Early Morning Opera — Los Angeles, CA

Title: *The Institute of Memory (TIME)*

Discipline: Multidisciplinary

Commissioners: REDCAT, Los Angeles, CA; Portland Institute for the Contemporary Art, Portland, OR; The Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, Boston, MA; The Adam Mickiewicz, Poland

Description: Early Morning Opera, a performance company directed by Lars Jan, will devise a new multimedia theatre work, *The Institute of Memory (TIME)*, that traces the transformation of archives from physical to digital structures and the corresponding evolution of national and personal remembering and privacy. *TIME* features two performers, real-time 3D laser scans, a single projection screen, original musical compositions, a minimalist LED-lined set structure, and a collage of found and original text.

NPN Subsidy: \$12,000

Artist: Bridgman|Packer Dance — New York, NY

Title: *Shapeshift*

Discipline: Dance

Commissioners: The Yard, Chilmark, MA; Silvermine Arts Center, New Canaan, CT; Stonington Opera House, Stonington, ME

Description: Art Bridgman and Myrna Packer of Bridgman|Packer Dance will expand their integration of live performance and video technology in their new work, "Shapeshift" (working title). They will delve into the changeable nature of experience, form, gender, perception, and identity through interaction with video projections of the performers' images that morph and melt into a mixture of digital re-interpretations of the human body, with the intent of revealing a malleable portrayal of self.

NPN Subsidy: \$12,000

Artist: Chris Schlichting — Minneapolis, MN

Title: *Stripe Tease*

Discipline: Dance

Commissioners: Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; American Dance Institute, Rockville, MD; Legion Arts, Cedar Rapids, IA

Description: Minneapolis-based interdisciplinary dance-theater creator Chris Schlichting will create an ambitious new work in collaboration with avant-rock composer Jeremy Ylvisaker and visual/installation artist Jennifer Davis that will premiere at the Walker Art Center and be adapted for performances in Rockville, MD; Cedar Rapids, IA; and New York City, NY.

NPN Subsidy: \$12,000

Artist: The Hinterlands — Detroit, MI

Title: *The Radicalization Process*

Discipline: Theatre

Commissioners: Legion Arts, Cedar Rapids, IA; Alverno Presents, Milwaukee, WI; Power House Productions, Detroit, MI

Description: *The Radicalization Process* is a two-part theatrical performance exploring radical art, politics, and extremist beliefs in American culture. Structured as two companion pieces performed in two widely divergent aesthetic forms — 'method' based realism as it existed in the 1930s and the avant-garde happenings of the 1960s and 70s — The Hinterlands will use *The Radicalization Process* to examine the paths that leads towards radical action and disruption of social norms.

NPN Subsidy: \$12,000

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DORIS DUKE
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION



Skin Horse Theater Brings the Interstellar to the Stage in New Orleans

by Anna Henschel

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

In the spring of 2008, in the Campus Center at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, five juniors (three theater majors, a gender and sexuality studies major, and a religion major) formally agreed that upon graduation from college they would move to a city that was *not* New York and start a theater company. A year later, in August 2009, with one original work under its belt (created partly to fulfill the theater senior project requirement) Skin Horse Theater's *Curiouser: An Historical Inaccuracy* was accepted by the New Orleans Fringe Festival. The rest, as they say, is history.

Six years later, *Nocturnes (I-III)*, a symphonic exploration of humanity's relationship with space, has been our most challenging and most rewarding work to date. The five members of Skin Horse have always strived to experiment and devise collaboratively to bring big ideas to the stage. With each project, we challenge ourselves with both practical and creative goals, often articulated as questions that guide our devising and creative process. With its premiere in 2013, *Nocturnes* became the most recent product of this process.

We first imagined *Nocturnes* three years ago, during a brainstorming session on future original works. Two broad themes emerged as the ideas on which we wanted to base our next projects. The first, dubbed *Horror Play*, was an exploration of whether theater has the ability to scare the way that film does. Was it possible? We did our research (mostly by watching *The Shining*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, and everything in between) and created *SARAH* for the 2011 New Orleans Fringe Festival that, to our delight, elicited screams from audience members at the climax and was reported to have contributed to at least two nightmares.

The other product of that brainstorming session was known for much of its life as *Space Play*. Born out of a fascination with the night sky and inspired by everyone from Jack Parsons to Gil Scott Heron, we took more than two years to explore how to show outer space on stage. From almost the beginning, *Space Play* existed in three parts, providing three perspectives on humanity's relationship with the cosmos: a view from the ground, life in outer space, and the cosmos itself. In our devising process we played with these perspectives and how each contributed to the overall arc.

As part of Skin Horse's devising practice, we are intentional about not assigning roles (stage manager, director, light designer, actor, etc.) for

the first few months. This gives us the opportunity to create as peers, each taking turns leading rehearsal. Once the play begins to take shape, we discuss who is interested in what responsibilities and move forward from there. During these early stages of devising we try to bring to the table every idea, text, film, material, image, sound, website, or other media that excites us, whether seemingly related or not. Patterns in fabric, sources of light, songs from the 1930s, YouTube videos, and math lectures all become part of our conversation.

We devised, rehearsed, and experimented with *Space Play* for six months before having a work-in-progress showing at the Contemporary Arts Center in May 2013. The feedback from the active NOLA theater community was both supportive and helpfully critical. We went into summer giving the piece space to breathe and to figure out what we needed from it, and it from us.

We picked up the mantle again in August, with performance dates set for four weekends in November. With the help of our incredible cast (Shannon Flaherty, Matt Standley, Rebecca Elizabeth Hollingsworth and Owen Ever), we pushed our ideas further for each of the three acts. Now called *Nocturnes (I-III)*, the first act showed the history, culture, and context for humanity's perceptions of the cosmos. The act was framed by the transcript of preparations for Yuri Gagarin's first space flight, and then explored poets and songwriters alongside political speeches, the writings of Carl Sagan, and a job posting from an asteroid mining company. Act II imagined life in a space station and explored how to show zero gravity on stage. The result was part narrative, part dance, and almost silent throughout. Finally, in Act III, we drew inspiration from theatre artist Romeo Castellucci and visual artist James Turrell, among others, and strove to explore our ultimate challenge: could outer space be depicted on stage? Challenge met.

Nocturnes began and ended with a man, standing alone on a platform, who looks up and finds solace in the stars. We found this connection to the viewer, inspired by Olaf Stapledon's novel *Star Maker*, to be a clear entry point for our audiences, as well as a way to leave and bring ourselves back to Earth.

Nocturnes (I-III) opened November 7, 2013 and ran for four weeks, through the 2013 New Orleans Fringe Festival, at a repurposed warehouse on St. Claude Avenue, part of a fledgling arts district in New Orleans. The sound, capturing everything from the ambient noise of a space station to the cosmos itself, was designed by Brendan Connelly, the lights were designed by Skin Horse member Evan Spigelman, and the sets of the train station, mission control, and space station were designed and built by Phil Cramer. *Nocturnes* won two Big Easy Awards: Best Original Work (Devised) and Best Lighting Design.