



Holcombe Waller's *Wayfinders* at MCA, Chicago. Photo courtesy of MCA Chicago

## Holcombe Waller's *Wayfinders* Makes a Way in Chicago

Cameron Heinze, Manager of Performance Programs for Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, reports on the critical difference that a Forth Fund award made on their capacity to work most effectively with Holcombe Waller.

The Forth Fund is supported by the Andrew Mellon Foundation.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 02

## NPN Awards Encourage Deep Community Engagement

Five NPN Partners recently received a total of \$18,000 to enhance in-depth community engagement activities through the Community Fund, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and the MetLife Foundation. From Lewiston, Maine to Denver, Colorado, artists will be able to travel in advance of their residency to prepare for a more meaningful visit, or return after their residency for follow-up activities.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 02

## "Curator Camp" Generates Big Questions

Michèle Steinwald enrolled in the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance at Wesleyan University, supported by a grant from NPN's Mentorship & Leadership Initiative (MLI). MLI is funded in part by Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, American Express, MetLife and the National Endowment for the Arts.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 03

## FY14 Winter Community Fund Awards

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

**Asian Arts Initiative** — Philadelphia, PA  
[www.asianartsinitiative.org](http://www.asianartsinitiative.org)  
*National Asian American Theater Festival Artists' Exchange and Showcase*

Local artists will engage with a diverse ensemble of solo artists, organized by Art2Action, to participate in a process to generate new work for the National Asian American Theater Festival and Conference in Philadelphia, October 8-12, 2014.

NPN Subsidy: \$3,000

**Bates Dance Festival** — Lewiston, ME  
[www.batesdancefestival.org](http://www.batesdancefestival.org)  
*The Missing Generation and the Source of Joy*

Artist Sean Dorsey will conduct 2 one-week residencies (fall 2014 & spring 2015) to engage with members of the Maine LGBT and HIV/AIDS community and Bates College students to build connections among LGBT youth and adults, exchange knowledge and experiences, build a larger LGBT audience for BDF's performance series. The residencies will also contribute to Sean's research for "The Missing Generation and the Source of Joy."

NPN Subsidy: \$4,500

**Fusebox** — Austin, TX  
[www.fuseboxfestival.com](http://www.fuseboxfestival.com)  
Karen Sherman: Inspiration Research Project

During two trips to Austin before the Fusebox Festival, Karen Sherman will work with local artists (all disciplines) to explore the city in search of places where inspiration is made, physically and literally. The team of artists will visit Austin factories, co-ops, and studios in industries like technology, woodworking, and food to make observations, field recordings, and generate new thinking and ideas on the sources of inspiration.

NPN Subsidy: \$3,000

**Su Teatro** — Denver, CO  
[www.suteatro.org](http://www.suteatro.org)  
PLACAS

Paul S. Flores will work with a small cohort of local youth who are either involved in gangs, transitioning out of gang affiliations or at-risk for gang activity. The project will support extended, intimate engagement and artistic exchange.

NPN Subsidy: \$4,500

**Tigertail Productions** — Miami, FL  
[www.tigertail.org](http://www.tigertail.org)  
*Imminent*

Tigertail Productions will offer a series of workshops for inner city teens that deal with pressing current issues in South Florida, particularly immigrant justice and climate change. Following these workshops teens will write and perform works in public presentations based on these two themes.

NPN Subsidy: \$3,000

The Community Fund is made possible in part by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency), the MetLife Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation, and the Nathan Cummings Foundation.



Joan Mitchell Foundation



MetLife Foundation

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## This Revolution will be CrowdSourced

by Michèle Steinwald

← CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

Last year I received an NPN Mentorship and Leadership Initiative award to support my participation at the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance (ICPP) [www.wesleyan.edu/cfa/icpp/](http://www.wesleyan.edu/cfa/icpp/) at Wesleyan University, or “curator camp” as my classmates and I called it.

It is rare to write a grant proposal for yourself as an administrator. Artists however do it all the time. They defend themselves, their work, and upcoming projects and partnerships, considering the values in their proposed outcomes, in order to find funds and move their work forward. Putting down on paper why I deserved five thousand dollars to pay tuition and travel to better myself, build new skills, contribute to the field, etc. was a watershed moment for me. The act of asking makes you accountable to others. In the granting systems that make our work possible, I recognize we ask a lot of artists. Now, having been through it personally, on top of a master's level course load, the process gave me more that I could have imagined a year ago.

By describing my opportunities at work and my desire to study in Connecticut to further those, I put an arbitrary milestone in the continuum of my thinking process and career. I wanted to expand my abilities and reflect on what is to come, what is my position in it all, and what do I want to focus on in the future? My day-to-day at that point was busy doing administrative tasks, producing events, and making the most of the museum environment on behalf of performing artists and their works. I noted that as my curatorial elders, the baby boomers in performing arts, plan to leave their posts for retirement, the world of presenting contemporary performance will be a very different place from when they started decades ago. Will their jobs even exist after their departures? I had to prepare myself and consider a field in flux.

In 2004, before ICPP existed, I lived in Seattle and made a trip to New York City to interview the pioneering managers from the Dance Co-op. The Dance Co-op, which no longer exists, was a pick-up group of freelance agents and independent choreographers who got together during Arts Presenters to make visible the work of experimental dance artists during the January conference. I had just worked on a pilot program for the National Dance Project called the Regional Dance Development Initiative, [www.nefa.org/grants\\_programs/programs/national\\_dance\\_project\\_regional\\_dance\\_development\\_initiative](http://www.nefa.org/grants_programs/programs/national_dance_project_regional_dance_development_initiative)



contributing to its curriculum for emerging choreographers to identify their artistic strengths and define their unique career opportunities. There hadn't been the equivalent for me as a young curator even though I had the same questions and confusions as an independent dance artist trying to make her way in this field. What I learned from Dance Co-op founders, Tricia Pierson, Barbara Bryan, Janet Stapleton, and Carla Peterson, is that you do what you are good at, what comes naturally. Since there is too much work to be done by any one person, it is best to start with the aspects and artists that you align with through your own working methods and artistic tendencies.

I have tried over the years to become a true renaissance woman, with multiple hats and abilities in all areas of arts administration, but I

always come back to rest on the fact that one person can't be all things to all people and my talents are different from others' talents and that we all complement each other, so the more the merrier, working together, amen.

While at ICPP in 2013, it became impossible for me to create a curatorial rationale around a proposed live event (our final assignment), because the more I thought about my priorities, I no longer felt comfortable with moving a performance idea forward without first reconsidering the conditions on which we continue to rely to make it all happen. Ticketing, marketing, scheduling, all within a template – these are in need of investigation in order to identify their corollary attributes and stretch them for relevant variations and alternatives, in order to better suit a specific artistic experience and desired outcome. Every possible presentation combination (8 p.m. show on a Friday after a work week versus 2 p.m. matinee on a Sunday) has values built into it. I needed time to slow down and consider how they are ingrained in our work before subjecting these to an artistic perspective or specific production. The artists I admire most already intuitively reposition these constraints in ways to create inclusivity within the proscenium hierarchy, so I wanted to follow their lead and find where I can be more flexible and aware of the means and innate behaviors for myself.

As a result, my final project for ICPP was more manifesto in the form of a thesis <http://blogs.walkerart.org/performingarts/2013/06/10/noticing-the-feedback-a-proposal-to-the-contemporary-dance-field-and-or-this-revolution-will-be-crowdsourced/> than a potential programming plan. This document is now a handbook for my artistic practice as an administrator and reminder to do what comes naturally. It is also an offering to those who are questioning and considering alternatives within their practice. Since ICPP, I know that I enjoy writing

and want to get better at it, want to make a difference in how we present experimental dance, and promise to start every initiative with artists as the prioritizing voices at the table.

In April 2014, I presented this perspective at *Envisioning the Practice: Montréal International Symposium on Curating the Performing Arts*, the first of its kind in North America. [www.acaq.ca](http://www.acaq.ca). We don't always have time to get perspective in our job situations. School forced it on me at the right time. I am careful of what I wish for but am glad that I did.

*Since retiring as a dancer and choreographer, Steinwald has managed performing arts projects and professional development programs for On the Boards (Seattle), New England Foundation for the Arts/National Dance Project (Boston), DanceUSA (DC), and the Deborah Hay Dance Company (Austin). She joined the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis) in October of 2006 as Assistant Curator for the Performing Arts and remained in that role until summer of 2013. She recently graduated from the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance at Wesleyan University (thanks to MLI) and is currently an independent curator and dance producer. ■*

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





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# Forth Fund Helps Holcombe Waller & MCA Find a Way with *Wayfinders*

by Cameron Heinze, Manager of Performance Programs for Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago



Holcombe Waller's *Wayfinders* discussion at MCA, Chicago. Photo courtesy of MCA Chicago  
Pictured: Elise Blatchford, Leander Star, Ellen McSweeney

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

*I think every presenter longs for an opportunity to have more time with an artist. We all work incredibly hard to support work we believe in, which is valuable and commendable, but for me, there's an ever present twinkling of dissatisfaction when a show sweeps in and out like the Black Rock City "Leave No Trace" principle. I'm sure others share the feeling, but committing additional time and resources to this deepened involvement is tricky; that's why the Forth Fund is so valuable. The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Chicago recently had an exemplary experience with the program as the venue partner for a developmental residency of Holcombe Waller's Creation Fund project "Wayfinders." It was an overwhelmingly positive experience, specifically because the Forth Fund works so well.*



Holcombe Waller's *Wayfinders* at MCA, Chicago  
Photos courtesy of MCA Chicago



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First, the program is just very practical and useful. Beyond the obvious (and incredibly valuable) financial support, it fosters familiarity, something that quick-turnaround presenters relish (because we so rarely experience it). *Wayfinders* has now lived on our stage, fitted for MCA's particular space in a very tangible way. The technicians and designers are familiar with our theater's equipment and grid, the performers know how to find the dressing rooms, and everyone already has their favorite lunch spot. This means that when Holcombe and his team return for their performance residency, we can skip all of the tiresome orientations and get straight to work, which is enormously helpful and important to presenting the best work possible.

A similarly critical result of the Forth Fund residency is personal (and personnel!) familiarity. I think my favorite moment of the entire week was a casually planned breakfast that we held in the theater before work began for the day. MCA staff had the pleasure of actually getting to know each visiting artist, to discuss art and histories and relationships, not just production logistics or box office reports. I learned how various people joined Holcombe's eclectic group and even shared some of my own independent projects, finding common interests and experiences. In my opinion, this is developing a true relationship with an artist, something beyond just following the growth of their art making.

But speaking of content, a Forth Fund residency clearly provides an ideal platform for helping an artist continue to develop and promote their work. I so enjoyed walking into the theater periodically each day to see what had been added, edited and sometimes scrapped. We discussed these content changes in real time and got a clear sense of the team's creation and editing process. I'm embarrassed by the

number of times I asked Holcombe to introduce and describe his work to new people, either through face-to-face meetings or video interviews. That said, *Wayfinders* deals in a fair amount of abstraction and I'd like to think that by forcing Holcombe to speak about his work so many times, it helped him achieve further clarity and articulation in how he describes it. And by listening, MCA staff similarly became better at explaining the work to our colleagues and audiences, all of which will contribute to the success of the final presentation in November 2014.

There's also something important to be said about NPN's presence from creation to presentation. They function like a guide and provide valuable feedback at critical stages of the process. Admittedly, I am especially fond of the Forth Fund model and selfishly wish that many more projects that cross our stage over a season could be part of the program. Certainly, we're thankful that *Wayfinders* was. ■



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## NPN Receives Grant from National Endowment for the Arts

On April 16th National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Acting Chairman Joan Shigekawa announced that NPN is one of 886 nonprofit organizations nationwide to receive an NEA Art Works grant. NPN was awarded a \$65,000 grant to support NPN's national programs including Creation Fund, the Forth Fund, Annual Meeting, Performance Residencies, Freight Fund and Community Fund.

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## Duke Foundation Recognizes National Artists

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) and Creative Capital are pleased to announce the first-ever recipients of the Doris Duke Impact Awards and the third group of individuals to receive Doris Duke Artist Awards, many of whom have NPN connections. Both awards are part of the Doris Duke Performing Artist Awards, a special ten-year initiative of DDCF, in partnership with Creative Capital, that empowers, invests in and celebrates artists by offering flexible, multi-year funding in response to financial challenges that are specific to the performing arts. The 2014 award recipients can be downloaded here as a PDF:

[www.ddcf.org/Global/Arts/2014%20DDPAA%20Media%20Announcement.pdf](http://www.ddcf.org/Global/Arts/2014%20DDPAA%20Media%20Announcement.pdf)

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## Last Stop for Workshop

NPN's popular *Doin' It on the Road* session holds its last 2014 workshop, designed for touring artists, new or experienced. On June 5, the free workshop will be at Tricklock Performance Laboratory, Albuquerque, NM, from 4-6:30 pm. The McCune Charitable Foundation awarded NPN support for this workshop and the West Regional Mid-Year Meeting held concurrently.

To register, contact Tom Guralnick at [tguralnick@comcast.net](mailto:tguralnick@comcast.net).