



*Life is a Dream*, Teatro de Ciertos Habitantes, 2013-2014 Creative Exchange Project

## Money to Move!

NPN is pleased to announce the request for proposals for the Performing Americas Creative Exchange Program. Creative Exchange will fund residencies of 2-5 weeks at a Latin American, Caribbean or U.S. host site. Creative Exchange also supports travel abroad to meet with a potential host or artist to develop a future Creative Exchange residency or international cultural exchange project. Application deadline is September 15, 2014 for projects happening between October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015.

Please follow the link below for full guidelines and application instructions. For the 2014-2015 grant cycle, NPN is working in partnership with the Miami Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs to provide matching funds for projects involving artists based in Miami Dade County or host sites located in Miami Dade County. For more details, consult the program guidelines, or contact Elizabeth Doud at [edoud@nnpweb.org](mailto:edoud@nnpweb.org) or 305.851.3342.

Guidelines & Application:

<http://nnpweb.org/whatwedo/international-program/performing-americas/creative-exchanges/>



### **“...intention over time becomes character”**

Last month's issue featured a quick note from Abe Rybeck, NPN's incoming board chair and founder and executive artistic director of The Theater Offensive in Boston. This month, we delve a little deeper into Abe's long-term relationship with NPN in an interview with Kathie deNobriga, e-news editor.

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# Interview with Abe Rybeck

by Kathie deNobriga

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Kathie:

Let's start by finding out more about your early involvement in NPN. How did you learn about NPN?

Abe:

In the early '90s, when The Theater Offensive (TTO) was doing a massive amount of programming, we featured Brian Freeman and the Pomo Afro Homos. He told me a little about NPN, and then I heard a little bit more when we presented Paul Bonin-Rodriguez. He and his director Steve Bailey [now Chief Operating Officer of NPN] thought we would be a 'good fit' with NPN. I wasn't really sure what they were talking about, but we were invited to the 1999 Annual Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, and I went anyway.

Kathie:

And what did you think when you finally attended?

Abe:

I was really impressed by the amazing array of presenters, but I think we weren't quite ready to join, plus NPN wasn't taking new Partners at that time. But three years later, we were invited to apply, and we attended the meeting in Chicago as a full-fledged Partner in 2003.

Kathie

Give us a little context about your presenting work during that time.

Abe:

We are the only NPN Partner that is specifically devoted to showing queer work, particularly by people of color. A journalist did some research lately and reported that in 25 years, TTO had presented 200 works by queer (gay/lesbian/transgendered) artists, of which 126 were people of color. I'm really proud of that record!

Kathie:

Talk a little about how your experience within NPN has changed over time — TTO has been an NPN Partner now for 11 years. Has anything shifted for you?

Abe:

Yes, in a couple of ways. First of all, Eve Alpern started coming to the meetings with me, and she also attended the Mid-Year Meetings, which move around the regions. As she became more active — she eventually served as the Regional Desk for a couple of years — she served as another voice and viewpoint about the importance of NPN. It wasn't just me raving to the staff, her enthusiasm helped spread the vision within TTO itself. Now Evelyn Francis, Nick Bazo and others at TTO have stepped up.

I also noticed some changes within NPN. The Providence Annual Meeting was right after NPN became an independent organization, cutting the apron strings from Dance Theatre Workshop. Over time I began to notice more collaboration and less competition. There was more widespread, genuine respect. It was less about 'being in the club,' and more about filling our role in the cultural ecology.

Kathie:

Why do you think this transition occurred?

Abe:

I think maybe it was the measured, reasonable expansion, with great attention to geographic mix and diversity. There was more a sense of not fighting over crumbs, but sticking together to get a seat at the table, where we could fight for more equity in the field. I think the diversity had a lot to do with that — hearing from rural presenters or ones facing urban challenges or organizations of color struggling for recognition — everyone's struggles became more of a tapestry than separate threads, and we could see how we were connected.

Also, I believe that intention over years becomes character. I've seen NPN display an attentive intention around equity issues — not just race, but rural/urban, geography, gender. It's become more "built-in" and is manifested by the respect for artists in their role in creating AND presenting work. I think NPN's deep commitment to equity issues is for the long haul — it's not just the flavor of the month, desiring a certain demographic or trying to build an audience. Equity is clearly mission-driven at NPN.

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Kathie:

TTO's commitment to equity is pretty apparent in your programming, I'd say. But has being in NPN impacted TTO in other ways?

Abe:

The artists we saw at the meetings were right up our alley. It was great to be in community with people around the country facing challenges and sharing their solutions. We learned ways of doing residency work that really resonated with us – I mean, we were already doing intense residency work, especially in the four neighborhoods where we now focus most of our work, but the exposure to other models really amplified our ingenuity and capacity. The Performance Residency contract turned out to be a powerful tool that really benefited artists. Through the Community Fund we were able to expand the work that we'd already been doing for years.

But I guess the greatest impact was being able to bring serious resources to commissioning new work. We had been doing some local commissioning, really on a shoestring, but the Creation Fund really allowed us to step up our commissioning activity. Also, although we haven't participated yet, I'm enormously inspired by the International program.

Kathie:

What else would you like to say about your and TTO's relationship to NPN?

Abe:

I have an absolute passion to see how this network breaks that old pattern of "them that's got shall have," of shaking up the status quo. We can really leverage the network for equity by paying attention to structural support. The first time I saw Rhodessa Jones, one of my heroes, decked out to the nines, dancing at a closing party, I felt so lucky to be part of it. How she welcomed me to the dance floor and we shook our "thangs" together, well that'll live with me forever. When I'm an old codger, sitting in my rocking chair, I'll really treasure the heart-to-heart and cultural connections we've made. We love the culture of NPN and we've had a lot of fun together. ■



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photo by Antoine Tempé

## **Nora Chipaumire Brings the Heat to Kyoto**

In this hottest time of year in Kyoto, Japan Contemporary Dance Network (JCDN), NPN's partner for the U.S./Japan Connection Project, is hard at work to make it even "hotter," with the arrival of Nora Chipaumire, a New York-based choreographer originally from Zimbabwe. Nora will conduct a month-long residency project organized by JCDN, engaging in a series of discussions and workshops with Kyoto-based artists and the community, which will be incorporated into her new work, *Portrait of Myself as My Father*. Nora's Kyoto residency is the fruit of NPN's Japan/U.S. Connection, based on three years of face-to-face discussions and endless streams of e-mail in both Japanese and English.

Read more about Nora's project:  
<http://jus2014.jcdn.org/en/pg41.html>

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