FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NET awards $10,000 NET/TEN Continuation Grant to Working Narratives & M.U.G.A.B.E.E

Network of Ensemble Theaters (NET) is pleased to award a $10,000 NET/TEN Continuation Grant to M.U.G.A.B.E.E. and Working Narratives to continue the work they started in 2012-13 by launching a public performance project titled, Black Man, Running. The NET/TEN Continuation Grant is a pilot program to expand Network of Ensemble Theaters’ Travel and Exchange Network (NET/TEN). The purpose of the Continuation Grant award is to sustain and move forward relationships previously funded by NET/TEN Exchange Grants.

The NET/TEN program is supported by lead funding from the The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. In the past three years of the program, NET has received approximately 400 applications for Travel and Exchange Grants. NET has awarded $345,000 to 76 projects to support relationship building and knowledge sharing between NET members and project partners. The awarded projects have occurred in 28 states and 12 countries.

“Nearly all of the recipients of NET/TEN grants in the first year of the program have indicated a desire to continue the work that they have started with their project partners,” shares Park Cofield, NET Field Resources Manager. “It is our hope that the Continuation Grant award will allow previous grantees to put the new knowledge, methods, and practices to work and ultimately strengthen the art making.”

NET is excited to award the first NET/TEN Continuation grant to M.U.G.A.B.E.E. of Utica, MS and Working Narratives of Wilmington, NC. The two organizations are closely linked and aligned in their missions and methods of using storytelling to build powerful social justice movements. You can read more about their previous work together funded by a 2012-13 Exchange Grant in the NET/TEN Shareback Library, or listen to an “audio artifact” from their work together here.

ABOUT THE FUNDED PROJECT

Their new project is titled, Black Man, Running (BMR), a series of performances and public runs (i.e. a jog or a footrace) that address issues of race, public space, safety, and democracy. Working Narratives and M.U.G.A.B.E.E. started the process by asking dozens of black civil-rights leaders, artists, academics, and community members to draw a map of where they might feel comfortable running in their respective communities. They asked them to think of which way they would turn and when; where they would or would not go; what boundaries they would observe; and whether they’d run alone. Using these maps to inform the work, several ‘courses,’ including one traveling through the hometown of Working Narratives, were created.

The $10,000 award will allow the two companies to bring the project to scale and collaborate on community engagement, administration, and management, as well as engaging dozens of local and national artists. The project will premiere in Wilmington, NC in the fall of 2015. Working Narratives will focus on BMR’s organizing and outreach, communication and management, and Carlton Turner of M.U.G.A.B.E.E. will facilitate and
provide pedagogical guidance to the team of national and local artists, helping to hone the performative aspects of BMR. Together they will build a learning community that reflects, evaluates, and builds the model for future BMR runs. You can follow the project at: www.blackmanrunning.org

ABOUT THE RECIPIENTS

Working Narratives (Wilmington, N.C.) - www.workingnarratives.org

Working Narratives’ mission is to advance the use of storytelling to build the power of grassroots social justice movements. They believe that stories are a fundamental cultural form, and their use — whether as performance, radio, video, new media, or other forms — enables movements to build community power, envision new democratic possibilities, and change culture and policy. The organization has always strived to harness the power of the arts, and to build the grassroots base of directly impacted people to win victories through the power of narrative campaigns. This can include the passing local, state, and federal legislation. They are based in southeastern North Carolina where they work at the intersection of art, organizing, and social justice.

M.U.G.A.B.E.E. (Utica, M.S.) - www.turnerworldarounds.org

Men Under Guidance Acting Before Early Extinction (M.U.G.A.B.E.E.) is a group of gifted creators of original jazz based hip-hop and spoken word performance. Their experience is uniquely rural with an urban sensibility and reaches the hearts of audiences across ethnic, class, gender, age, and educational levels. Their work is rooted in the belief that art is a universal language that when grounded in community and wielded with the right intentions can yield the type of transformation that dreams are made of.

ABOUT NETWORK OF ENSEMBLE THEATERS

A national coalition of ensembles created by and for artists, the Network of Ensemble Theaters (NET) exists to propel ensemble theater practice to the forefront of American culture and society. NET links a diverse array of ensembles and practitioners to one another and the performing arts field, encouraging collaborations and knowledge building and dissemination. NET is committed to the advancement of the ensemble form and strives to bring about change in the world beyond ourselves through the transformative power of collaborative theater. We support bold artistic and civic experiments and aim to heighten the impact and excellence of ensemble theater. For more information about becoming a NET member, please visit: www.ensembletheaters.net.

The peer panel for the pilot round of Continuation Grants included Ashley Walden Davis, Alternate ROOTS, Programs Director (Atlanta, GA); Dan Froot, Producer and Performance Artist (Los Angeles, CA); and Casandra Hernandez, Arizona Commission on the Arts, Artist Programs Coordinator (Phoenix, AZ).

The NET/TEN grant program is supported by lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

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