



CONTINUATION GRANTS



Network of Ensemble Theaters Awards \$10,000 NET/TEN Continuation Grant to Borderlands Theater and Spoken Futures

PORTLAND, OR -- Network of Ensemble Theaters (NET) is pleased to award a \$10,000 NET/TEN Continuation Grant to [Borderlands Theater](#) (Tucson, AZ) and [Spoken Futures](#) (Tucson, AZ). The two partners will offer writing and performance workshops to queer and trans youth at Pueblo High School in South Tucson, Arizona. The collaboration culminates in a touring youth production that will establish the foundation for a permanent youth ensemble. The NET/TEN Continuation Grant is part of Network of Ensemble Theaters' Travel and Exchange Network (NET/TEN), and is designed to sustain and move forward relationships previously funded by NET/TEN Exchange Grants.

The NET/TEN program is supported by lead funding from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**. In the past six years of the program, NET has received approximately 880 applications for Travel and Exchange Grants, and has awarded nearly \$800,000 to NET members to support relationship building and knowledge sharing between NET members and project partners.

"The NET/TEN program is designed to prioritize relationships and knowledge sharing rather than final products," shares Park Cofield, NET Field Resources Manager. "The Continuation Grant is a culminating award designed to allow previous Exchange Grant recipients to embark on a joint project, production or tour. We hope that the previous time spent developing the relationship and understanding each other's processes will ultimately strengthen the art making and open up conversations about the nature of ensemble practice."

The 2018 NET/TEN Continuation Grant recipients -- **Borderlands Theater** and **Spoken Futures** -- will continue a relationship that started last year as part of a 2016-17 NET/TEN Exchange Grant. Their previous activities resulted in the *Barrio Stories Project*, an immersive walking tour showcasing the history and heritage of Tucson's historic Barrio Anita. Archival research and intergenerational oral histories from Barrio Anita elders, current residents, and youth were transformed into multi-media video projections, spoken word performances, shadow puppetry, and reenactments. In addition to many artistic and

civic outcomes, the project planted the idea for Borderlands and Spoken Futures to start a touring youth ensemble.



Barrio Stories Project, photo by Kyla Kemp-Rischar

More information about their previous collaboration can be found in the NET Shareback Library in the article [“How to Change the Name of a Municipal Building,”](#) which came out of their work together. The NET Shareback Library is a compilation of articles, videos, recordings, exercises, and other resources provided by grantees following their NET/TEN grant activities. It is available at: www.ensembletheaters.net/sharebacks.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The \$10,000 Continuation Grant will support a series of workshops intended for queer and trans youth at Pueblo High School in South Tucson over a period of six months. The work sessions primarily target students in the IAMME group (an organization formed in 2016 to bring together youth who identify within the LGBTQ+ spectrum to create a safe space to gather and be themselves), but is also open to all students at the school. Approximately

twenty youth participants will meet weekly using spoken word poetry to explore and process their experiences as queer youth of color, sharing their own stories of strength and resilience as a means of empowerment. Concurrently they will be introduced to core performance skills of voice, movement, and acting, honing their physical instrument to maximize their storytelling ability.

Lead artists from Spoken Futures and Borderlands Theater will jointly create a curriculum that combines key elements of Spoken Futures' trademark Liberation Lyrics curriculum, rooted in the critical analysis of power with special attention to best practices for working with youth from vulnerable communities, with Borderlands Theater artists' vocal and physical training, and Stanislavski-based acting exercises. Spoken Futures will recruit two teaching artist apprentices, coordinate with Pueblo High School, and draw on their existing relationships with Tucson schools and LGBTQ supporting organizations to book touring engagements. Borderlands will oversee marketing of the final performance, as well as all technical aspects of the final production and tour management.

Borderlands Theater and Spoken Futures will work in a deeper, more structured way than in the previous Exchange Grant where the Spoken Futures youth component was one of many artistic elements by multiple partners. Most importantly, the workshop series will result in the creation of a youth performing ensemble, a crucial first step towards the ultimate goal of establishing a long-term youth performance ensemble that will be administered jointly by both organizations.

ABOUT THE RECIPIENTS

Borderlands Theater (Tucson, AZ) - <http://www.borderlandstheater.org>



Founded in 1986, Borderlands has mounted more than 125 productions, including many bi-lingual or alternating Spanish/English productions. Their work has often explored socio-political issues. Since the hiring of new Artistic Director Marc Pinate in 2013, the company has created and developed productions by ensemble members, such as *Mas*, a play about the community's struggle to restore Tucson Unified School District's Mexican American Studies program, and the *Barrio Stories* projects which utilize cross-sector partnerships, creative placemaking principles, and heritage preservation ideals to create

large, outdoor, spectacle-based events that are free to the public. Borderlands' artistic programming is increasingly focused on Tucson's history and the border culture that has so steadily informed that history for centuries. Much of their current work is site-specific.

Spoken Futures (Tucson, AZ) - <http://www.spokenfutures.org/>



Spoken Futures, Inc. widens access to the literary arts and community engagement for young people across Southern Arizona. Co-directors Sarah Gonzales and Logan Phillips work with an all-youth team to produce the Tucson Youth Poetry Slam and Liberation Lyrics programs. Since 2010 the Tucson Youth Poetry Slam (TYPS) has provided an open and welcoming forum for writers aged nine to nineteen to express their "words and dreams, applause and screams." The monthly, audience-judged performance poetry competitions draw audiences of over 200 people and are organized and hosted by youth, with support from adult artist allies. TYPS holds frequent "spark performances," reaching thousands of students yearly by sending teaching artists into schools for assemblies and workshops. Spoken Futures' second program is Liberation Lyrics, an innovative social justice after-school program which uses spoken word poetry as a tool to help participants better recognize and understand the systems at work in their communities.

ABOUT NETWORK OF ENSEMBLE THEATERS (NET)

A national community of artists and arts organizations dedicated to collaborative creation, Network of Ensemble Theaters (NET) exists to propel ensemble theater practice to the forefront of 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/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 and ensemble practice. Programs and activities focused on field building, field convenings, and field professional development/resources serve to connect, nurture, and sustain NET's 350+ organizational and individual members throughout the United States.

#

The peer review panel for the 2017-18 NET/TEN Continuation Grant included: Jonathan Clark, Executive Support Manager, The Carpetbag Theatre (Knoxville, TN); Thomas Pasculli, Artistic Director, Walkabout Theater Company & Adjunct Lecturer, School of Theatre & Music, University of Illinois at Chicago (Chicago, IL); Fern Renville, Theatre Artist & CEO, SNAG Productions (Seattle, WA).

The NET/TEN grant program is supported by lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.



Contact: Park Cofield, Field Resources Manager
pcofield@ensembletheaters.net / 323.638.4870