



## Cole Foundation infuses important grant money into Montreal theatre companies

### *Intercultural Conversations*

*An original theatre project to encourage dialogue between the various cultures in Montreal*

#### Eight local companies thrilled with grants awarded

**MONTREAL, May 2009** - **The Cole Foundation** is proud to announce grants totalling \$160,120 to professional theatre companies in Montreal for the 2009 - 2010 season in the first competition under the *Intercultural Conversations* programme.

Montreal is a vibrant city made up of many vital cultures. The *Intercultural Conversations* programme has been established to encourage the production of plays, translations, and writing of commissioned new works that show the multi-cultures of Montreal in dialogue with each other. Productions such as these lead to greater social awareness, understanding and harmony by audiences, with the hopes of changing social attitudes. Priority was given to producing, writing and translating plays that give voice to those cultural communities, represented in Quebec, but in need of access to a wider audience. Plays are to be performed in English and/or French.

#### **About the *Intercultural Conversations* programme**

To encourage theatre of varied heritages and social realities, the Cole Foundation provided crucial grants to professional theatre companies to present existing works and create new ones about cultural/ethnic diversity that will inform and stimulate audiences, engage them in a dialogue to improve understanding and assist in breaking down barriers between the many cultures that exist in Montreal. Theatre companies that cater to young audiences and/or adult audiences were equally eligible.

**Barry Cole**, President of the Cole Foundation, was very pleased with the number of applications submitted, "This means that this social and cultural issue resonates with a large number of theatre professionals. We look forward to another competition this fall with the anticipation of funding more fine theatre in Montreal on this same theme." He continues, "It will be an even greater pleasure to see the productions in next season's theatres."

#### **And the winners are....**

Eight theatre companies are the inaugural recipients of this valuable grant: **Infinithéâtre**- *Elephants*, by Jaspreet Singh; **Geordie Productions**- *Once Upon a Home; From You To Us To You*, by Amanda Kellock; **Théâtre Momentum**- *2010*, by Kena Molina and Marcelo Arroyo; **Théâtre I. N. K.** - *La robe de Gulnara*, by Isabelle Hubert; **Pigeons International**- *Boa Goa*, by Paula de Vasconcelos et Roger Sinha; **Le Théâtre de Quartier**- *Je t'aime - N'HABBEK*, par Louis-Dominique Lavigne; **Singulier Pluriel**- *Le Porteur de la Gare Windsor*, by Julie Vincent; **Talisman Theatre** - *Rock, Paper, Jackknife*, by Marilyn Perreault; **The Other Theatre**- *Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare; **Black Theatre Workshop**- operational grant; and **Teesri Duniya Theatre**- operational grant.

**Stacey Christodoulou**, Artistic Director of The Other Theatre, states, "Montreal's rich cultural diversity is its collective strength. Setting *Macbeth* in Haiti came about from my desire to see the cultural richness that we see in Montreal's Metro reflected on its stages- to make a wonderful new hybrid from the variety of languages and theatre practices." **Dean Fleming**, Artistic Director of Geordie Productions, a theatre company for young audiences, adds, "The grant from the Cole Foundation has allowed our company to take the show to the next level. We were able to send a writer, director and designers to five different culturally diverse schools and are in the midst of creating a play that will use the writings of over 150 children. Because of Barry Cole and the

Cole Foundation over 60,000 kids will get to see a play written by kids for kids.” Talisman Theatre’s Artistic Director **Lyne Paquette**, *Rock, Paper, Jackknife* continues, “Our play reflects the social realities experienced in many isolated 'invisible' communities and sub-cultures and in our isolated northern communities who form a significant part of the population of Quebec and are rarely heard from within Montreal.” For **Guy Sprung**, Infitheatre’s Artistic Director, “This initiative of the Cole Foundation is very important. Much of our work consists of school conversations with the artists, the writer and the director after the show and I am personally fascinated at the efficacy of live theatre to capture and stimulate the Google/YouTube/Myspace generation. When you do theatre for this audience you inevitably end up with intercultural conversations because it is the schools that reflect the real world of Montreal.”

### **About the Cole Foundation**

The Cole Foundation is a private family foundation based in Montreal. It supports research in pediatric leukemia and related diseases, as well as a programme of support for community initiatives. *Intercultural Conversations* is one of its community initiatives. The Foundation was initiated in 1980 by J. N. (Jack) Cole, a Montreal businessman and philanthropist.

Montreal is a multicultural city, open to the world, welcoming people of all ethnic origins. The Cole Foundation wants Montrealers to have a greater awareness of the voices and stories from its diverse cultures and communities. The Foundation understands that theatre has the ability to foster this intercultural dialogue through the presentation of other cultures’ stories on stage. The catalyst for this initiative was the Bouchard Taylor Commission, which recognized the multicultures of Montreal and the need to increase the intercultural dialogue between these communities.

Upcoming grants apply for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasons and applications will be available mid-June. The deadline for applications is October 9, 2009. The Cole Foundation gratefully acknowledges the assistance of le Conseil des arts de Montreal and other theatre related service organizations (Diversité Artistique Montreal, Quebec Drama Federation, Centre des auteurs dramatiques, Playwrights Workshop Montreal) in publicizing this programme. Theatre companies interested in applying for a grant should contact the Cole Foundation, attention Barry Cole, at [barrycole@videotron.ca](mailto:barrycole@videotron.ca).

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***If you would like to interview Barry Cole, Cole Foundation President-  
Media Relations:*** Janis Kirshner, (514) 287-8912, [jkirshner@sympatico.ca](mailto:jkirshner@sympatico.ca).

### **Barry Cole- President, Cole Foundation**

Barry Cole has had a 30-year career in the management of the performing arts, with an emphasis on classical music. He has been the Director of the Performing Arts Office at Queen’s University at Kingston, Ontario, designing a cultural programme for both the city and the university communities, a Grants Officer in the Music Section of the Canada Council in Ottawa, the Managing Director of the Kitchener Waterloo Symphony Orchestra in Ontario, the Executive Director of the Royal and McPherson Theatres Society in Victoria, British Columbia and the Manager of the theatre programme at the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts in Montreal.

A member of the Board of the Cole Foundation for the past 9 years, he has led the transformation of the Cole Foundation as the responsibilities for it have been passed down to the second generation of the family. Through his leadership, the support for research in pediatric leukemia and related diseases has become focused with programmes developed in conjunction with the Université de Montreal, McGill University, and the Institut Armand-Frappier of the Université du Québec. The *Intercultural Conversations* programme (*Conversations Interculturelles*) has been developed to increase the social and cultural awareness of Montrealers to the richness of the multi-cultural community as a whole through the presentation of professional theatre showing these communities in dialogue with each other.