



*Intercultural Conversations– Conversations Interculturelles*

Encouraging theatrical dialogue between the various cultures in Montreal

**Together, the Cole Foundation and Montreal theatre companies dispute Charter of Quebec Values**

Sixteen local companies awarded crucial grants for their upcoming seasons

**MONTREAL, February 2014** - The **Cole Foundation** is happy to announce the latest grants for the *Intercultural Conversations-Conversations Interculturelles* program, established to encourage greater understanding of Montreal's cultural mosaic by having audiences enjoy professional plays showing diverse cultures on stage and seeing their stories presented. **Barry Cole**, President and Chairman of the Cole Foundation, notes: "Greater social harmony amongst the various cultural communities of Montreal is achieved through the presentation of French and English language theatre that shows cultures in conversation." These awards, totalling \$250,150, were given to theatre companies in Montreal for their 2014-2016 seasons.

For this season's competition, the Cole Foundation received 40 applications from 27 companies- 10 English and 17 French. The Foundation was delighted to receive two applications from First Nations theatre companies; a first. Applications also came from companies that specialize in theatre for young audiences. Seven applications were for commissioned plays, 3 applications were for translations and 30 production grants were requested. A panel of Montreal theatre professionals adjudicated the applications. As testimony to the competition's success, the board of the Cole Foundation granted an additional \$50,000 to the budget this year, to be allocated to the best productions.

**The Cole Foundation and local theatre companies weigh in on the Charter of Quebec Values**  
The *Intercultural Conversations –Conversations Interculturelles* program was established to promote cultural bridging that fosters knowledge and tolerance of our social and cultural realities. The catalyst for *Intercultural Conversations* was the Bouchard Taylor Commission, which recognized the various cultures of Montreal and the need to increase the intercultural dialogue between these communities and the Francophone and Anglophone communities in Quebec. To this end, the Foundation feels strongly about Bill 60, the Charter of Quebec Values. Barry Cole offers that there is no problem or 'crisis' to be resolved, "The separation of church and state, and the equality of men and women, is currently guaranteed in both the provincial and federal Charters of Rights." He continues, "Measures that negatively highlight cultural differences and exclude minorities do not serve any useful purpose; instead, they lead to social alienation and division rather than cohesion within our society." The Cole Foundation addresses these issues and uses the arts, theatre and literature in particular, to help broaden the cultural and social experience of all citizens in a non-confrontational, respectful way. Over the past 6 years the Foundation has contributed to the costs of commissioning 21 plays, the translation of 30 plays, production costs of 62 plays, and 5 theatrical workshops. Some of these works have also toured the province, other Canadian provinces and to the USA, Europe and South America. Cole adds, "The proposed legislation of Bill 60 is working directly against the social and cultural harmony in Quebec that we are supporting with these programmes, and the theatre companies that inspire audience dialogue."

The proposed Charter of Values is a topic that Montreal theatre companies are vocal about. **Dean Fleming**, artistic director of **Geordie Productions**, was quick to react to the Charter, "Here at Geordie we feel so strongly about it that we are devoting our entire 2014-15 season to a response. The season will be devoted to themes of racism, differences and tolerance/intolerance. The atmosphere that has been created by the proposed Charter has been one that is difficult for young people to understand. There are generations of children that have grown up in an environment that embraces diversity and it is worrisome that the Charter is not only contradicting that, but is actively working against it."

**Julie Tamiko Manning** began *The Tashme Project* in the hopes that generations of Japanese Canadians may heal from the shame experienced due to the government's unjust stripping away of their grandparents' and great-grandparents' rights as human beings. For Manning, it is not difficult to see the similarities between the values of the Quebec government regarding diverse religious communities in Quebec in 2014, and the values of the federal and the BC government, specifically in regards to the Japanese Canadian community around WW2, "The attack on the twin towers gave the western world an excuse to blame and erase the whole of the Islamic community, just like the attack on Pearl Harbour gave British Columbia an excuse to get rid of their 'Japanese problem'. The treatment of the Japanese Canadians in BC during WW2 was institutionalized racism packaged as homeland security. The idea that a government can convince their citizens to believe culturally/racially/religiously intolerant legislature by sweetening it with the word 'value' angers me, knowing that it will not lead to equality, but to intolerance, hatred and hysteria. It has already done so."

**Rahul Varma** and **Teesri Duniya Theatre's** practice and mandate derives its creative inspiration from multiculturalism and sees richness in respecting differences, peculiarities, world-views and beliefs. For Varma, real equality will come from recognizing people for who they are and availing them equal opportunities regardless of what they wear, "The so called equality/neutrality proposed by the Charter is a veil for discrimination. Excluding personal expressions of culture, religion, and spirituality in public institutions prevents people from learning about each other and leads to further stereotyping and exclusion. Cultural minorities have chosen Quebec because they see it as a society committed to equality and mutual respect. Respecting each other — not simply for our common humanity but precisely for our uniqueness — is the way to build a healthy, strong and creative society."

#### Awarded companies

Sixteen theatre companies are recipients of the sixth year of this grant. **Commissioning grants** include: **DynamO Theatre** – *Immigrant de l'intérieur*, by DynamO team (production grant as well); **Freestanding Productions**- *Mr. Vieira's Radio*, by Johanna Nutter; **Geordie Productions**- *Hannukwanzayulemas*, by Marcus Youssef (production grant as well); and **Ondinnok Productions**- *Terre de feu ou un monde qui s'achève*, by Ondinnok team. **Production grant** awards go to: **Black Theatre Workshop**- *Gas Girls*, by Donna-Michelle St. Bernard; **Hôtel-Motel**- *Eden Motel*, by Philippe Ducros; **Imago Theatre**- *Random*, by Debbie Tucker Green; **Persephone Productions**- *The Nisei & The Narnauks* by Paul Van Dyck; **Orange Noyée**- *Trois* by Mani Soleymanlou; **Productions Onishka**- *Tribales*, by Véronique Hébert; **Scapegoat Carnivale**- *Blind*, by Lindsay Wilson; **Talisman Theatre**- *Walk like an Egyptian*, by Mireille Tawfik (plus translation); **Tashme Productions**- *The Tashme Project: The Living Archives*, by Julie Tamiko Manning and Matt Miwa; **Teesri Duniya Theatre**- *State of Denial*, by Rahul Varma; **Théâtre Aux Écuries**- *Moi et l'Autre*, by Talia Hallmona and Pascal Brullemans; and **Théâtre de Fortune**- *Radioscopie: Albert Camus*, by Jean-Marie Papapietro.

## Theatre companies address the importance of funding in order to continue the dialogue

For **Yves Sioui Durand**, artistic director of **Ondinnok Productions**, "The grant will enable us to carry out a series of essential research and creation workshops with actor/dancers from different backgrounds and cultures exploring our ancestors through mask work and puppetry. As First Nations artists, intercultural conversation is an essential part of our process." **Mayi-Eder Inchauspé**, general manager, **Théâtre aux Écuries** finds the support of the Cole Foundation integral, "The funding allows the production of *Moi et l'autre*, along with initiating cultural activities with high school students which sharpens their critical thinking and fosters discussion about art, culture and themes of identity. This from **Micheline Chevrier**, artistic director of **Imago Theatre**: "The support given to the professional theatre community in Montreal by the Cole Foundation is unparalleled. It is indeed one of a kind, not only because of the important size of the grants, but also because of Barry Cole's personal engagement in the community and his genuine dedication to the exchange between cultures through art." **Pierre Leclerc**, general manager of **DynamO Theatre** is extremely honoured by the support of the Cole Foundation for *Immigrant de l'intérieur*, "Besides contributing to the development of a new creation, this financial assistance will facilitate a program of theatrical dialogue with youth in our culturally diverse community of Villeray - Saint-Michel - Parc-Extension." The Cole foundation funded **Scapegoat Carnivale Theatre's** development of their new play *Blind*. Co-Artistic Director **Alison Darcy** notes, "Playwright Lindsay Wilson received commissioning funds to write the script and fly to Tanzania for research. Without the help of the grant, there is little foreseeable way this production, like many in Montreal, could happen."

Grants for the next competition relate to shows starting March 1 for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 theatre seasons. The deadline for the seventh competition of the award is October 3, 2014. Theatre companies interested in applying for a grant will be able to download the necessary application forms from the Cole Foundation's web site at: [www.colefoundation.ca/community/competition-forms](http://www.colefoundation.ca/community/competition-forms).

-30-

**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)

### About the Cole Foundation

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

### Barry Cole- President and Chairman, 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.