



Intercultural Conversations– Conversations Interculturelles Encouraging theatrical dialogue between the various cultures in Montreal

Nineteen local companies awarded invaluable grants for their upcoming seasons

MONTREAL, March 2015 - The Cole Foundation is proud 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 attainable in this way." These awards, totalling a record \$293,000 presented to the highest number of applicants since the program's creation, were granted to theatre companies for their 2015-2017 seasons.

For this year's competition, the Cole Foundation received 36 applications from 25 companies- 16 French and 9 English, the most realistic representation to date of the province's theatre landscape. As well, larger French theatre companies are now submitting requests. The Foundation was happy to see the continuing submission of applications from First Nations theatre companies, companies that specialize in theatre for young audiences as well as an ever-increasing numbers of new companies and applicants. Eight applications were for commissioned plays, 3 for translations, and 25 for production grants. A panel of Montreal theatre professionals adjudicated the applications.

The Cole Foundation broadens the cultural and social experience of theatre-goers in a non-confrontational, respectful way, and more audiences than before will have the opportunity for that experience. According to Cole, this latest competition was unique, in that out of 25 companies submitting requests, 19 companies were awarded grants. "As an overall note, applications contained realistic budgets relative to the companies' means. This resulted in grant monies being shared among more companies than ever." Over the past 7 years the Foundation has contributed to the costs of commissioning 27 plays, the translation of 31 plays, production costs of 72 plays, and 5 theatrical workshops. Some of these works have also toured the province, other Canadian provinces, the USA, Europe and beyond.

Awarded companies for the seventh year of this grant

Barry Cole is very pleased with the response from the theatre community, "More applications than ever were worthy of being funded. The diversity of cultures on offer is striking." Intercultural themes and projects this year include Jewish/Muslim mother daughter connections, an *in situ* production involving a multicultural neighbourhood, a Haitian version of a British classic, the largest cast of colour on an established theatre's mainstage, an historically-themed puppet show, Palestinian and Jewish Diaspora communities, and marginalized youth minorities.

COMMISSIONING grants include: **Joe Jack & John- Trayvon** by Kevin Williamson; **Productions Onishka- Recompose** by various indigenous artists (translation grant as well); **Projet MŪ- Plaza** by various artists (production grant as well); **Teesri Duniya Theatre- Birthmark** by Stephen Orlov; **Toxique Trottoir- Dié Yo Engragé** by Muriel de Zangroniz; and **Volte 21- Les Electres des Amériques, Les Phares de la mémoire** by Hanna Abd El Nour.

PRODUCTION grant awards go to: **Black Theatre Workshop- Binti's Journey** by Marcia Johnson from the novel *The Heaven Shop* by Deborah Ellis, and *He Said/She Said* by Anne-Marie Woods; **Centaur Theatre- Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God** by Djanet Sears; **Espace Libre- Like Mother, Like Daughter** by Why Not Theatre; **Geordie Productions- Beneath the Banyan Tree** by Emil Sher; **Ondinnok Productions- Un monde qui s'achève - Lolà** par Anne Chapman; **Reverbere Theatre- Guérillas** by Anna Fuerstenberg; **RustWerk Refinery- Louis Riel: a comic-strip stage play** by Chester Brown; **Tableau D'Hote Theatre- Angélique** by Lorena Gale; **Teesri Duniya Theatre- The Refugee Hotel** by Carmen Aguirre; **The Other Theatre- Macbeth** by William Shakespeare; **Théâtre I.N.K.- Lignedebus** by Marilyn Perrault (plus translation grant); **Trois Tristes Tigres- Moi, dans les ruines rouges du siècles** by Olivier Kemeid; and **Voyageurs Immobiliers- Traversée** by Estelle Savasta.

TRANSLATION grant was also given to **Youtheatre- In This World** by Hannah Moscovitch.

Meritorious theatre companies praise the ongoing opportunity for conversation

For **Yves Sioui Durand**, artistic director of **Ondinnok Productions**, "The support of the Cole Foundation allows us to fully explore intercultural work bringing together performers of Mexican, Innu, Huron and Uruguayan Selk'nam Indian origins." **Marilyn Perreault** sees **Théâtre I.N.K.'s Lignedebus (Bus Stops)** as the very DNA of the *Intercultural Conversations* program; the piece is taken from conversations on public transportation and interviews with Montreal immigrants. She is looking forward to sharing it with a new audience, "We now have the opportunity to translate the text into English and present the show at Centaur Theatre." In the same vein, **The Other Theatre's Stacey Christodoulou** believes the people you see in the metro should be seen onstage, and that art mirrors society. "Diversity encourages multiple perspectives and

gives us a more complex vision of the world around us; asking us to step out of the echo chamber of homogeneity to challenge our assumptions and biases, and to expand our empathy and self-awareness.” Artistic Director **Geoffrey Gaquère** from **Espace Libre** is proud to program Why Not Theatre’s unique piece, *Like Mother, Like Daughter*, “This theatrical experience is will open a window on local Jewish and Muslim communities, cultures most of us know little about. The series of curated discussions ends with a shared meal for everyone in attendance.” For **Centaur Theatre’s Roy Surette**, the Cole Foundation grant is a significant support, “With a cast of twenty two performers this is the largest production Centaur has produced in many years; additional funding makes this huge commitment possible.” **Teesri Duniya Theatre’s** mission has been significantly strengthened by the *Intercultural Conversations* program, according to Artistic Director **Rahul Varma**, whose company derives its creative inspiration from multiculturalism. Varma explains, “Our upcoming seasons will bring theatre to wholly new audiences who will see themselves represented front and centre, and where their untold stories will be given life.” As part of Festival TransAmériques and taking place *in situ* in the multi-immigrant neighbourhood of Plaza Cote-des-Neiges, **Projet MŪ’s Plaza** will, according to **Geneviève Therrien**, “explore the issue of integration for newcomers, create respectful exchange between communities and allow for reflection on our common future.” They are honoured to have the Cole Foundation participate in this dialogue with them.

Grants for the next competition relate to shows starting March 1 for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 theatre seasons. The deadline for the eighth competition of the award is September 30, 2015. 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.

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**If you would like to interview Barry Cole, Cole Foundation President -
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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. The catalyst for *Intercultural Conversations* was the Bouchard Taylor Commission, which recognized the multicultures of Montreal and the need to increase the intercultural dialogue between these communities.

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.