



## *Intercultural Conversations – Conversations interculturelles*

Encouraging theatrical dialogue between the various cultures in Montreal

**Twenty local companies awarded indispensable grants for their upcoming seasons**

MONTREAL, March 2016 - The **Cole Foundation** is pleased to announce the latest grant winners for the *Intercultural Conversations-Conversations Interculturelles (IC-CI)* 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, explains: "Our belief is that these financial awards animate change of theatre practice to include intercultural conversation as part of mainstream theatrical society." There are three types of intercultural dialogue considered: plays with more than one cultural community in dialogue; plays with only one cultural community- in this case the dialogue is with the audience; and plays that show the uniqueness of the French or English Quebec communities translated into the other language.

It's heartening that intercultural dialogue is a hot topic. Of note is the ongoing 'black face' discussion sparked by Théâtre Rideau Vert, along with conferences on racism (Centre des Auteurs Dramatiques) and diversity (Conseil du theatre Québécois). Awareness and momentum continues with sizeable, established theatre companies submitting requests, including Centaur Theatre and Duceppe, promoting the cause on a considerable scale. As well, there are ever-increasing numbers of new applicant companies and those that specialize in theatre for young audiences.

### **This year's awarded companies**

As theatre holds a mirror to society, the *IC-CI* granting program has reflected the varying cultural landscape over the years, marking our artistically sensitive evolution. New works this year explore the effects of radicalization, racial profiling, feminist dialogue between Christians and Muslims, sex-selective abortion, and little known circumpolar communities, among other topics. Lauded returning applicants strengthen the message: playwright Sarah Berthiaume continues to offer hard-hitting, poignant stories, Annabel Soutar addresses headlines we can't ignore and Marcus Youssef engages and enlightens children. Cole is especially encouraged seeing requests from theatres for young audiences, "This kind of support has lasting benefits, impressing important values on children and offering productions that return to schools for multiple

years." He also appreciates following the arc of an important, intercultural piece, "The Foundation supported the commission of Porte Parole's play about Fredy Villanueva and I'm looking forward to see the resulting production."

**COMMISSIONING grants** include: **Black Theatre Workshop**- *A Tale of Two Islands* by Christine Rodrigues; **Geordie Productions**- *Radical* by Marcus Youssef; **Mise au Jeu**- *La pour rester*, collective creation; **Teesri Duniya Theatre**- *Missing Girl* by Rahul Varma and **Théâtre Bluff**- *Antioche* by Sarah Berthiaume.

**PRODUCTION grant** awards go to: **L'Acteur en Marche**- *Karma* by Mohsen El Gharbi; **Black Theatre Workshop**- *Angélique* by Lorena Gale, and *Bluenose* by Emil Sher; **Centaur Theatre**- *You Will Remember Me* by François Archambault; **Duceppe**- *Race* by David Mamet; **Geordie Productions**- *Jabber* by Marcus Youssef; **Imago Theatre**- *Donna* by Stefano Massini (also translation grant); **Mise au Jeu**- *Féministe et Croyante* by Alice Pascual; **Nouveau Théâtre**- *Ai-je du sang de dictateur?* by Didier Lucien; **Porte Parole**- *Fredy* by Annabel Soutar; **Productions Menuentakuan**- *Muliats*, collective creation; **Productions Onishka-Tsekan**, collective creation; **Talisman Theatre**- *Yukonstyle* by Sarah Berthiaume; **Théâtre de l'Opis**- *J'appelle mes frères* by Jonas Hassen Khemiri; **Théâtre Incliné**- *Nordicité/Walking on the Circle* by José Babin; **Théâtre I.N.K.**- *File d'attente* by Marilyn Perreault (also commissioning grant); **Théâtre La Chapelle**- *The Agokwe Collective* by Waawaate Fobister; **Théâtre Motus**- *Rêves* by Izumi Ashizawa & Marco Collin (also commissioning grant) and **Volte 21**- *Les Électres des Amériques Les Phares de la Mémoire* by Hanna Abd El Nur.

### **Wide range of theatre companies concur on the need for intercultural dialogue**

For **Théâtre Motus'** Marie-France Bruyère, "This important contribution will enable us to achieve an intercultural project that would not have otherwise happened, involving artists from different origins as well as children from here and the Innu community of Mashteuiatsh." For **L'Acteur en Marche's** Mohsen El Gharbi, the Cole Foundation contribution is crucial, "This grant will serve as leverage to obtain the rest of the necessary funding. It shows that we have a common concern for dialogue regardless of our origins and the need to fight the demonization of 'the other'. The Foundation has significantly strengthened **Teesri Duniya Theatre's** mission, according to Artistic Director **Rahul Varma**, "There won't be intercultural conversation if there isn't intercultural creation. Here, support goes to the source—the playwright; we can now create original work that diversifies our literary field, enriches our cultural fabric

and fosters critical understanding.” For **Sarah Chouinard-Poirier** from **Volte 21**, the grant program encourages other partners to invest in daring theatre as necessary for cultural enrichment within a healthy and egalitarian society, “By promoting diversity and providing a forum for artists from various disciplines, generations and cultural backgrounds, the Cole Foundation makes us believe that it is still possible to create art where we can put social issues at the forefront.” **Geordie Productions’** Artistic Director **Dean Fleming** accomplished a successful American showcase of their award-winning *Jabber* as only one of twelve invited international companies. Fleming adds, “On top of this great news, we are excited to continue our ongoing relationship with playwright Marcus Youssef as he probes the world of an isolated teen’s obsession with a radical group.” The Haitian community is the subject of the next show at **Nouveau Théâtre Expérimental** according to GM **Isabelle Gingras**, “We continue our mandate to explore local cultural communities and ensuing healthy and inclusive discussion.” **Michel Dumont**, artistic director for **Duceppe**, was able to offer more than a hundred free tickets to youth from different cultural communities, “This is an opportunity to develop audiences; ensuring theatre remains a place of meeting and exchange.” **Joachim Tanguay** from **Théâtre Bluff** welcomes the invaluable support of the Foundation to commission Sarah Berthiaume’s new text inspired by a Radio-Canada report on Cegep youth who joined the Syrian Jihad. “Here, the story of a Muslim woman and her disillusioned Quebec-born daughter explores with great sensitivity the real causes of indoctrination and perceptions of Western values.”

### Cole by the numbers

The Cole Foundation is the only private foundation in Montreal with an intercultural theatre program, offering companies up to \$25,000 for production grants with the aim to modify public opinion. There is no set limit on the number of companies who can receive funding. Recent grants, totalling a record \$334,000 presented to the highest number of applicants since the program’s creation, went to theatre companies for their 2016-2018 seasons. For this year’s competition, the Foundation received 40 applications from 35 companies - 23 French and 12 English, an 11% increase compared to last year. These figures include 3 First Nations productions; 2 in French and 1 in English. Thirty-four applications were for production grants, 10 requests for commissioning money and 1 for translation. Since its inception, the Foundation has contributed to the costs of commissioning 34 plays, the translation of 32 plays, production costs of 90 plays, plus various workshops and outreach events. A panel of bilingual Montreal theatre professionals adjudicate the applications.

Grants for the next competition relate to shows starting March 1 for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 theatre seasons. The deadline for the next competition of the award is Sept. 30, 2016. 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).

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**If you would like to interview Barry Cole, Cole Foundation president, or any of the theatre companies-  
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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 formerly named Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts in Montreal.