



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

25 companies | 28 vital grants awarded | \$375,000 injected into local multicultural theatre

MONTREAL, March 17, 2017 - The **Cole Foundation** is pleased to announce the latest grant winners for the [*Intercultural Conversations-Conversations Interculturelles*](#) (*IC-CI*) programme, initiated to encourage greater understanding of Montreal's cultural mosaic by having audiences enjoy professional plays that present stories and issues of cultural minorities on stage. Focusing on intercultural and multicultural conversation for their community initiatives, over the past eight years the Cole Foundation has cultivated and strengthened a canon of theatrical work incorporating these themes. A number of companies, both established and independent, have nurtured shows through the various funding opportunities: commissioning/creation grants, productions grants, and translation grants; sharing works among companies, showing others' histories on stage, enabling plays to be presented to new audiences and encouraging dialogue along the way. Companies immersed in this crossover include Centaur Theatre, Talisman Theatre, Théâtre I.N.K., Geordie Productions, Théâtre Aux Écuries, Productions Ondinnok, Teesri Duniya Theatre, and Volte 21, to name but a few. Coupled with the *IC-CI* programme is the Cole Foundation's support for emerging translators and a translation residency, in conjunction with Playwrights' Workshop Montréal, as well as sponsoring a translation award for the Quebec Writers Federation.

This year, **\$375, 000** was awarded, the highest amount of grant money since the *IC-CI* programme's inception. **Barry Cole**, president and chairman of the Cole Foundation, is pleased with the ever-increasing number of Francophone companies applying for the *Conversations Interculturelles* grant. He explains, "This places diversity front and centre to a higher percentage of the Montreal population and can only have positive repercussions. More than ever, the greater political climate accents the need for presenting diversity in a non-confrontational manner." Creating a perfect storm, a number of prominent arts organisations including CEAD, [CQT](#) and [CALO](#) have featured conferences, seminars and symposiums on diversity and racism.

For the grants, 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.

This year's awarded shows

The catalyst for *Intercultural Conversations* was the 2008 [Bouchard-Taylor Commission](#)'s report, which recognized the multicultures of Montreal and the need to increase the intercultural dialogue between citizens. The report is [back in the news](#), with Charles Taylor's letter to [La Presse](#) citing that limiting religious clothing "stigmatizes minorities". The *IC-CI* programme also seeks to adjust and evolve with a changing Quebec cultural landscape. The number of 2016 applications increased by 10%, indicating the growing interest in presenting plays on the subject of cultural diversity. The plays encompass a widespread range of cultures and the varied communities within them, including: First Nations, Asian, Black, Jewish, Muslim, Ukrainian and South American. Anticipated works examine Islamic youth indoctrination, immigrant parents raising children in an unfamiliar society, women's stories, Martin Luther King's imagined final night, queer adolescence, Japanese WWII internment, a range of theatre for young audiences, Indian Residential Schools, docu-theatre created from Montreal neighbourhoods, tales of immigrants' first Christmas, and 100 citizens on stage embodying the entire multicultural Montreal population. Audiences are set to travel the world in darkened theatres!

COMMISSIONING grants include: **Black Theatre Workshop**- *Black and Blue Matters* by Omari Newton; **Geordie Productions**- *Shade* by Kalale Dalton-Lutale, and *Starlight* by Donna-Michelle St. Bernard; **Imago Theatre**- *Commonwall* by Arianna Bardesono; **Théâtre Urbi et Orbi**- *Urban Tales- First Christmas in Montreal*, multiple authors (also translation grant); **Théâtre de l'Avant-pays**- *Fils de quoi?* by Marie-Christine Lê-Huu; **Odd Stumble**- *Elsewhere* by Joy Ross-Jones; and **Le Trunk Collectif**- *Le fabuleux voyage de Pepito l'original* by Lynne Cooper & Zach Fraser.

PRODUCTION grant awards go to: **Black Theatre Workshop**- *The Mountaintop* by Katori Hall; **Centaur Theatre**- *The Baklava Recipe* by Pascale Rafie; **DynamO Théâtre**- *Ceux qui n'existent pas* by Pascal Brullemans (also commissioning grant); **Imago Theatre**- *Skim* by Mariko Tamaki; **Talisman Theatre**- *Me and You* by Talia Hallmona; **Théâtre I.N.K.**- *Lignedebus* by Marilyn Perreault; **Tashme**- *The Tashme Project- The Living Archives* by Julie Tamiko Manning & Matt Miwa; **Théâtre Bluff**- *Antioche* by Sarah Berthiaume; **Jamais Lu**- *Jusqu'ou te mènera Montréal*, multiple authors; **Joe Jack and John**- *Dis merci* by Penelope Bourque (also commissioning grant); **Lara Kramer Dance**- *Windigo* by Lara Kramer; **Les productions HÔTEL-MOTEL**- *Dehors* by Gilles Poulin-Denis; **Productions Ondinnok**- *El buen vestir/llakentli* by Laticia Vera & Carlos Rivera; **Mise au jeu**- *Par Toutes* by Hynda Benabdallah; **Segal Centre**- *Kim's Convenience* by Ins Choi; **Teesri Duniya Theatre**- *Birthmark* by Stephen Orlov; and **Volte 21**- *Safar. Voyages. City of Dreams* by Hanna Abd El Nour.

TRANSLATION grants are: **Festival TransAmérique**- *100% Montréal* by Rimini Protokoll; and **Les Filles électriques**- *Comment j'ai appris à parler aux oiseaux* by D. Kimm. A **grant was also awarded for a series of activities** around **Usine C's Conversations Australiennes** moderated by Danièle De Fontenay.

Theatre companies embrace need to discuss diversity on stage

From **Philippe Ducros**, artistic director of **HÔTEL-MOTEL**, "In this era of building walls instead of building bridges, the Cole Foundation's mission of intercultural dialogue is more urgent than ever. Because of this grant, we were able to meet people from other provinces, breaking the solitude that too often divides Canada." For **Talisman Theatre's** Artistic Director **Lyne Paquette**, the *IC-CI* programme allowed the company to explore the complexity of ethnic and racial identities in Quebec, "In travelling this road, we discovered that not only do the arts have the power to address these sensitive issues head-on in a way that can make an important contribution to intercultural dialogue – but this interchange makes for compelling theatre." Through the Cole Foundation, the issue of diversity has taken a major place in **Volte 21's** vision, approach, and programming, according to **Hanna Abd El Nour**, "Artists of diversity are increasingly numerous in the shows we produce. They approach socio-cultural issues with originality and audacity, and contribute to the enrichment of our culture." **Harry Stanjofski** is the director and curator for **Urbi et Orbi's** *Urban Tales' First Christmas in Montreal*, "This is the company's first foray in specifically looking at tales from diverse communities, and it will not be our last, thanks to the Cole Foundation's encouragement to tell stories from the newest threads in the fabric of our city." With the support offered by the *Intercultural Conversations* grant, **Geordie Productions** is able to move forward in developing relevant and enchanting work that encourages discourse among communities, cultures and all ages. **Kathryn Westoll**, general manager of the company, affirms, "The Cole Foundation encourages us to ensure our work remains not only provocative but impactful to our city, province, and abroad. It is without question that it is a leading force in realizing so much of what we aspire to do." The **Segal Centre's** artistic director, **Lisa Rubin**, believes audiences may be surprised at how much they relate to the hard-working Korean-Canadian family in *Kim's Convenience*. She acknowledges, "We hope this production will be the beginning of many intercultural conversations that work to strengthen community, celebrate diversity and recognize the incredible sacrifices and contributions made by new Canadians." The Foundations' *IC-CI* initiative supports **DynamO Théâtre's** projects for families and young audiences, which address cultural diversity in Quebec society. **Yves Simard**, artistic co-director, explains, "In conjunction with creative work, the company facilitates exchanges within our borough, one of the most multi-ethnic in the city. This latest creation continues the theme of exile and immigration."

Thirty-eight companies applied, with 28 grants awarded to 25 companies; a much higher proportion than in provincial/federal arts funding. Grants for the next competition relate to shows starting March 1 for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 theatre seasons. The deadline for the next competition of the award is Sept. 29, 2017. Theatre companies interested in applying for a grant will be able to download the necessary application forms and information from the Cole Foundation's web site at: www.colefoundation.ca/community/competition-forms.

If you would like to interview Barry Cole, Cole Foundation president, or any of the theatre companies-
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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.