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American Conservatory Theater Awarded Grants Totaling More Than \$200,000 To Support New Works Under A.C.T.'s New Strands

The four grants were funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the 2016 Edgerton Foundation New Plays Awards, the MAP Fund, and the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation

SAN FRANCISCO (January 17, 2017) – **American Conservatory Theater** (A.C.T.) announced today that it has been awarded four grants totaling more than **\$200,000** to support the commission, development, and production of several new works under A.C.T.'s **New Strands**, including the upcoming world-premiere theatrical adaptation of Khaled Hosseini's international best-selling novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, opening at A.C.T.'s Geary Theater in February 2017.

Says A.C.T. Associate Artistic Director **Andy Donald**: "Since the opening of The Strand Theater in May 2015, A.C.T. has been able to support the development of new theatrical pieces in many more ways—all under one roof. Thanks, in part, to these grants and awards, we are able to make The Strand an artistic home for important local and national artists, and solidify New Strands as a first-class incubator for new work."

A.C.T.'s New Strands offers artists and companies under commission: mentorship, feedback, acting talent, time, and space to work in ways that specifically suit each project, with the goal of seeing their creations on one of A.C.T.'s stages and beyond. From translations and adaptations to original work, A.C.T.'s commissions include interdisciplinary projects, San Francisco-inspired stories, and pieces with an international scope. As part of New Strands, A.C.T. recently announced the inaugural New Strands Residency that gives emerging and established American playwrights the opportunity to create and develop new works in residence at A.C.T.'s state-of-the-art Strand Theater. This year's residency is in partnership with New York's Ma-Yi Theater Company, and will culminate with a free public presentation of its work during A.C.T.'s annual New Strands Festival, now in its second year, taking place May 19–21, 2017.

The four grants were funded by:

- **NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved an **Art Works** grant of **\$50,000** to American Conservatory Theater, one of more than \$30 million in grants as part of the NEA's first major funding announcement for fiscal year 2017. A.C.T.'s Art Works grant will support the upcoming world-premiere theatrical adaptation of Khaled Hosseini's novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, performing at A.C.T.'s Geary Theater February 1–26, 2017. The Art Works category focuses on the creation of art that meets the highest standards of

excellence, public engagement with diverse and excellent art, lifelong learning in the arts, and the strengthening of communities through the arts. For more information on projects included in the NEA grant announcement, visit arts.gov/news.

- **EDGERTON FOUNDATION NEW PLAY AWARDS**

The Edgerton Foundation awarded A.C.T. with \$93,000 to support two weeks of extra rehearsal time for the world-premiere theatrical adaptation of Khaled Hosseini's international best-selling novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The Edgerton Foundation New Play Award allows the production extra time in development and rehearsal with the entire creative team, helping to extend the life of the play after its first run.

Over the last ten years, the Edgerton Foundation has awarded \$9,885,900 to 335 Theatre Communications Group (TCG) Member Theatre productions, enabling many plays to schedule subsequent productions following their world premieres. Eighteen have made it to Broadway, including: *Curtains*, *13*, *Next to Normal*, *33 Variations*, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, *Time Stands Still*, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, *A Free Man of Color*, *Good People*, *Chinglish*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *Bronx Bombers*, *Casa Valentina*, *Outside Mullingar*, *All the Way*, *Eclipsed*, *Bright Star*, and *Hamilton*. Eleven plays were nominated for Tony Awards, with *All the Way*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, and *Hamilton* winning the best play or musical awards. Nine plays were nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, with wins for *Hamilton* (2016), *The Flick* (2014), *Water by the Spoonful* (2012) and *Next to Normal* (2010).

The Edgerton Foundation New Plays Program, directed by Brad and Louise Edgerton, was piloted in 2006 with the Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles by offering two musicals in development an extended rehearsal period for the entire creative team, including the playwrights. The Edgertons launched the program nationally in 2007 and have supported 335 plays to date at over 50 different Art Theatres across the country. The Edgerton Foundation received the 2011 Theatre Communications Group (TCG) National Funder Award, and TCG works with the Foundation to communicate the impact of its work and extend the life of selected plays after their first run.

- **THE MAP FUND**

The MAP Fund proudly announced American Conservatory Theater as a recipient of **\$36,750** in direct support for project development and premiere. The money will be used for the commissioning and development of playwright **Christopher Chen** and composer **Byron Au Yong**'s musical fable *Port City*, which examines the ways in which technology has shaped our mind frames, our emotional states, and the physical spaces we inhabit. The project will question the relationship between humans and technology within the context of a shifting city, as cyberspace increasingly replaces physical space as our go-to sense of landscape.

The MAP Fund is primarily supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, with additional funds from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. www.mapfund.org.

- **THE VIRGINIA B. TOULMIN FOUNDATION PROGRAM FOR COMMISSIONING WOMEN IN THE PERFORMING ARTS**

The **Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation Program for Commissioning Women in the Performing Arts** has awarded A.C.T. **\$25,000** for the commission and development of a new work by playwright **Tracey Scott Wilson**. The program was created with the goal of encouraging and furthering the careers of emerging women playwrights working in the American nonprofit theater. It is the Foundation's hope that the theaters' commissions will result in production, not just development, of the plays.

This program is made possible by funding from the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, created by Mrs. Toulmin several years ago and enlarged considerably upon her death in 2010. Mrs. Toulmin was a passionate supporter of the performing arts and of the advancement of women.

ABOUT A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS

The epic story of three generations of Afghan women and their remarkable resilience, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is set amid the war-torn streets of modern-day Kabul. Beautiful Laila, unmarried and pregnant, is forced to marry her older neighbor when her family and home are torn apart. After forging an extraordinary and unlikely friendship with Mariam, her husband's first wife, the two women find the hope and strength to raise a new generation. A stunning new production featuring live music from renowned composer and saw player David Coulter, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a coproduction with Theatre Calgary.

Adapted for the stage by acclaimed Irish Indian playwright Ursula Rani Sarma, this stunning new production will feature live music from renowned composer and saw player David Coulter (who was last seen at A.C.T. in 2004 as the band leader in the acclaimed *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets*).

A Thousand Splendid Suns will perform at A.C.T.'s Geary Theater February 1–26, 2017.

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