



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Theatre Communications Group Announces National Conference Awards:  
*Mac, Schulfer, Tommy and Ward among Recipients*  
*Full Conference Programming Announced***

New York, NY – Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for theatre, proudly announces that at the 24<sup>th</sup> TCG National Conference: *Crossing Borders* in San Diego from June 19-21, the following awards will be presented:

- Alan Schneider Director Award: **Liesl Tommy**, Director
- National Funder Award: **New England Foundation for the Arts**
- Peter Zeisler Memorial Award: **Taylor Mac**, Performance Artist
- Regional Funder Award: **The City of San Diego**
- Theatre Practitioner Award: **Douglas Turner Ward**, Playwright, Actor, Director, Founder of Negro Ensemble Company
- Visionary Leadership Award: **Roche Schulfer**, Executive Director, Goodman Theatre

“The TCG National Conference is an opportunity to honor the next generation of theatre leaders, as well as the visionary leaders who paved the way,” said Teresa Eyring, executive director of TCG. “We’re also looking forward to honoring two funders whose transformative impact has been felt at both the regional and national level.”

TCG’s 2014 National Conference in San Diego from June 19-21 is called *Crossing Borders*, inspired in part by a literal border crossing into Tijuana, Mexico for two Pre-Conferences (TCG’s Diversity & Inclusion Institute and the International Artistic Collaboration Forum). The Conference will feature four border-crossing programmatic arcs—{Art | People}, {Conflict | Confluence}, {Survive | Thrive} and {Theatre | Technology}—to provide a deeper dive into key areas of inquiry. Conference programming includes over 100 events, including breakout sessions, affinity groups, performances and trend workshops. The featured plenary sessions are:

- **To The Mountaintop**: As we continue to take action on advancing diversity and inclusion, it’s time to take in the big picture and ask: How do we define success? Featuring manifestos from **Peter Brosius**, Artistic Director, Children’s Theatre Company; **Kristoffer Diaz**, Playwright; **Naomi Iizuka**, Playwright; and **Matika Wilbur**, Photographer, Project 562; moderated by **Sarah Bellamy**, Co-Artistic Director, Penumbra Theatre Company.
- **Game Design and Theatre**: Featuring world-renowned game designer, **Jane McGonigal**, the inventor of *SuperBetter* and author of the New York Times bestseller *Reality Is Broken*.
- **A Conversation with Taylor Mac & Craig Lucas**: A candid and wide-ranging conversation between **Taylor Mac**, “one of the most exciting theatre artists of our time” (*Time Out New York*), and Obie Award-winning playwright and director, **Craig Lucas**.
- **Towards An Ideal Theatre**: The moving closing plenary session will feature current theatre leaders reading the manifestos, letters and essays collected in *An Ideal Theater: Founding Visions for a New American Art*, published by **Todd London**.

The Conference will also feature special performances, including: *Mercy Killers*, winner of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe “Fringe First Award”; *Witness Uganda*, the acclaimed musical that recently premiered at A.R.T.; and *BASETRACK*, a multi-media documentary performance based on the lives of Marines in Afghanistan and their families that will premiere at BAM in the fall. For more information the Conference, visit <http://www.tcb.org/events/conference/2014/about.cfm>.

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**The Alan Schneider Director Award** was created in memory of Alan Schneider, a prolific director and mentor responsible for over one hundred productions in the American theatre. He introduced American audiences to Samuel Beckett—directing the 1956 American premiere of *Waiting for Godot*—as well as many others including Edward Albee, Michael Weller, Harold Pinter and Bertolt Brecht. This award was established in honor of Alan Schneider's significant contribution to the American theatre and his lifelong concern for the development of career opportunities for freelance directors. The award is designed to identify and assist exceptional directors whose talent has been demonstrated through work in specific regions, but who are not known nationally.

**Liesl Tommy's** credits include *Appropriate* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins (Woolly Mammoth, Signature Theater) and *Party People* by Universes (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). Liesl is Associate Director at Berkeley Rep, Program Associate at Sundance Institute Theatre Program, and an Artist Trustee with the Sundance Institute's Board of Trustees. She was awarded the Susan Stroman Directing Award, the NEA/TCG Career Development Program grant, and the New York Theatre Workshop Casting/Directing Fellowship. She is a native of Cape Town, South Africa.

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**The National Funder Award** recognizes a small, midsize or large company or foundation that has evidenced leadership and provided outstanding sustained national support of theatre in America.

**New England Foundation for the Arts' (NEFA)** mission is to build connections among artists, arts organizations, and funders, powering the arts to energize communities in New England, the nation, and the world. Founded in 1976, NEFA is one of six regional arts organizations established with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts to strengthen the national arts infrastructure by cultivating the arts on a regional level. Today, NEFA's programs are regional, national, and international in scope, and support artists and communities through grants and other opportunities in dance, music, theater, and public art. All aim to provide access to high quality arts experiences for the underserved, including projects that feature artistic expressions from diverse cultures and geographies. Each program and project that is brought to life at NEFA is created with the underlying goal of building a stronger and more dynamic infrastructure for the arts. Convenings, network building, online tools, and a 30+ year history of data-driven research on the economic impact of the arts are essential complements to NEFA's grantmaking.

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**The Peter Zeisler Memorial Award** recognizes an individual or organization whose work reflects and promotes the ingenuity and artistic integrity that Peter Zeisler, late executive director of TCG, prized. The honorees exemplify pioneering practices in theatre, are dedicated to the freedom of expression and are unafraid of taking risks for the advancement of the art form. In honor of Peter's uncanny ability to introduce talent to the rest of the field, the nominees have not been recognized nationally for their work.

**Taylor Mac** is a theatre artist (who uses the gender pronoun, judy), which means judy's a playwright, actor, singer-songwriter, cabaret performer, performance artist, director and producer. *Time Out New York* has called Mac "One of the most exciting theatre artists of our time," naming judy the best cabaret performer in New York in 2012, and a future theatre legend. *American Theatre* wrote "Mac is one of this country's most heroic and disarmingly funny playwrights." *The New Yorker* says (of Mac's acting in the title role of Brecht's *Good Person of Szechwan*), "One of contemporary theatre's more unforgettable performances," and *The New York Times* says of Mac in general, "Fabulousness can come in many forms, and Taylor Mac seems intent on assuming each and every one of them." Judy's work has been performed at New York City's Lincoln Center Theater and The Public Theater, the Sydney Opera House, American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.), Stockholm's Södra Teatern, the Spoleto Festival USA, Dublin's Project Arts Centre, London's Soho Theatre, and hundreds of other theatres, museums, music halls, cabarets, and festivals around the globe.

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**The Regional Funder Award** recognizes a local funding organization that has evidenced leadership and has provided outstanding sustained support of theatres in the region in which the conference is being held.

**The City of San Diego** annually funds arts and culture organizations through the Commission for Arts and Culture. The Commission serves in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and City Council on promoting, encouraging and increasing support for the region's artistic and cultural assets, integrating arts and culture into community life and showcasing San Diego as an international tourist destination. The Commission is composed of 15 volunteers appointed by the Mayor and is supported by a staff of professional arts administrators.

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**The Theatre Practitioner Award** recognizes a living individual—artist or administrator, institutionally affiliated or unaffiliated—whose work in the American theatre has evidenced exemplary achievement over time and who has contributed significantly to the development of the larger field.

**Douglas Turner Ward** began his off-Broadway career in 1956 as an actor in Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, and went on to perform in *A Raisin In The Sun*. In 1965, Ward, Robert Hooks, and Gerald Krone formed the Negro Ensemble Company, and he made his playwriting debut that same year with the oft-produced *Happy Ending/Day of Absence*. In 1967, the Negro Ensemble Company was officially opened with Ward serving as artistic director; some of its notable productions include *A Soldier's Play* and *The River Niger*, which became the company's first play to go to Broadway. *The River Niger* eventually won a Tony Award for Best Play. Ward went on to write other plays, including *The Reckoning* and *Brotherhood*. The Negro Ensemble Company went on to produce more than two hundred plays and foster many great actors, such as Louis Gossett, Jr., Phylicia Rashad and Sherman Hemsley.

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**The TCG Visionary Leadership Award** is given to an individual who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to advance the theatre field as a whole, nationally and/or internationally. Recipients of this award are individuals who regularly think beyond their day-to-day work in order to implement practices, new models, advocacy efforts, etc. on behalf of the field.

A "theater leader known for forward-thinking strategies" (Chicago Tribune), **Roche Edward Schulfer's** "love for the theater is palpable" (*Chicago Sun-Times*). As chief executive officer of Chicago's internationally-recognized Goodman Theatre for 34 of his 40 years—a rarely-exceeded tenure at a single American theater—Schulfer has overseen more than 335 productions, including nearly 130 world premieres. He has championed cultural diversity and gender equality on and off the stage, and his entrepreneurial and strategic initiatives have made theater accessible to all. Schulfer's 27-year producing partnership with artistic director Robert Falls—one of the longest in the industry—has transformed the Goodman into a leading American theater with a strong organizational and financial infrastructure. In addition, he has negotiated the presentation of Goodman productions at national and international venues, and established the annual *A Christmas Carol* as Chicago's leading holiday arts tradition for 36 years and the entry-point to theater for thousands of young people. He coordinated the development of the \$46 million new Goodman Theatre complex from 1998 - 2000, which served as a catalyst for Chicago's Theater District. Under Schulfer and Falls, the Goodman's attendance has averaged 90% capacity; sales revenue has grown from \$2.5 million to \$11.5 million; and public support has grown from \$2 million to \$6.6 million. The Goodman was the first theater to produce August Wilson's 20th Century Cycle and has received numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage (2009); "Best Regional Theater in the United States" by *Time* magazine (2003); the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater (1992) plus multiple Tony's for *Death of a Salesman* and several other productions; and numerous Joseph Jefferson awards for outstanding achievement in Chicago-area theater. Schulfer is a founder and two-time chairman of the League of Chicago Theatres; a founding member, past chair and current board member of Arts Alliance Illinois; and one of the only practitioners in the American theater elected to separate terms on TCG's board of directors, working with Peter Zeisler and every succeeding director of the organization. In addition, he has served in leadership roles with the Performing Arts Alliance and the League of Resident Theatres.

For over 50 years, **Theatre Communications Group** (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, has existed to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. TCG's constituency has grown from a handful of groundbreaking theatres to nearly 700 member theatres and affiliate organizations and more than 12,000 individuals nationwide. TCG offers its members networking and knowledge-building opportunities through conferences, events, research and communications; awards grants, approximately \$2 million per year, to theatre companies and individual artists; advocates on the federal level; and serves as the U.S. Center of the International Theatre Institute, connecting its constituents to the global theatre community. TCG is North America's largest independent publisher of dramatic literature, with 13 Pulitzer Prizes for Best Play on the TCG booklist. It also publishes the award-winning AMERICAN THEATRE magazine and ARTSEARCH®, the essential source for a career in the arts. In all of its endeavors, TCG seeks to increase the organizational efficiency of its member theatres, cultivate and celebrate the artistic talent and achievements of the field and promote a larger public understanding of, and appreciation for, the theatre. [www.tcg.org](http://www.tcg.org).