



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 1, 2009

CONTACT: Linda Jacobs
212.609.5955
ljacobs@tcg.org

MetLife/TCG *A-ha! Program: Think It, Do It* Second Round Recipients Announced

"Having the opportunity to realize [film-like] trailers of new plays has opened up a new way for playwrights to connect with theatres. As a result of the project, we have received more script requests and more people have visited our website and are learning about the work that we do. We are grateful for the *A-ha! Program*, which has enabled us to take a risk in order to promote new work in the American theatre."

---Hayley Finn, Resident Director and Lab Producer at the Playwrights' Center

New York – Theatre Communications Group (TCG) announces the second round of recipients for the MetLife/TCG *A-ha! Program: Think it, Do It*. From a highly competitive group of applicants, a panel of noteworthy judges awarded grants to five theatres totaling \$150,000.

From the private sector to the public sector, from engineering to the environment, and from the arts to the sciences, the need for innovation and creativity is necessary to advance a project, a field or a country. Unfortunately support for new ideas and experimentation for theatre practitioners has not been readily available. To fill that void in the professional, not-for-profit theatre field, MetLife Foundation and TCG partnered last year to create the *A-ha! Program*. It is designed to foster creative thinking and action among TCG member theatres.

"It is important that MetLife Foundation is giving our field an opportunity to support risk regardless of the outcome because often we learn as much, if not more, from our failures as our successes," said Teresa Eyring, TCG's executive director. In this time of economic instability and changing demographics, it is vital for theatres to seek new ways to create work that not only informs but strengthens bonds among diverse communities.

The *A-ha! Program*, has two components (and theatres can only apply to one). *Think It* grants (up to \$25,000) give theatre professionals the time and space for research and development; and *Do It* grants (up to \$50,000) support the implementation and testing of new ideas. The program supports risk-taking, reflection, experimentation and the development of creative strategies. It is hoped that the larger field will benefit from new best practices that emerge from the program.

"MetLife Foundation is proud to partner with TCG to support new ideas, creative thinking and innovation in theatres," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "We believe the *A-ha! Program* will strengthen the field, be a catalyst for new models and promote best practices."

The Round Two **Think It** recipients are **East West Players**, Los Angeles, CA; **Childsplay, Inc.**, Tempe, AZ; **Book-It Repertory Theatre**, Seattle, WA; and **Salvage Vanguard Theater**, Austin, TX. The Round Two **Do It** recipient is **Clubbed Thumb**, New York, NY.

The 2009 A-ha! projects are:

East West Players proposes to develop an artist talent agency and diversity advocacy prototype, leveraging our theatre as a resource for performing opportunities and artistic career development.

Childsplay, Inc. will convene experts from theatre design, manufacturing, recycling and sustainability to explore in depth strategies for implementing green initiatives (renew/reuse/recycle) in stagecraft.

Book-It Repertory will investigate the feasibility of a long-term partnership between Book-It and other non-profits to create a literacy-based theatre arts complex that nourishes our whole community.

Salvage Vanguard Theater will use an exploratory process to develop and test a business plan for a production element co-op (scenic, lighting, costume) for small to mid-size companies in the Austin theater community.

Clubbed Thumb seeks to partner with a larger theater for co-curation and co-production. The two theaters will mutually choose, staff and cast a play to be developed, rehearsed and presented in a one week run in our June festival and then in a longer run at the larger theater. Theaters interested in discussing a potential collaboration should contact Clubbed Thumb.

The process and progress of these recipients will be chronicled on the TCG website, www.tcg.org and the A-ha! blog, aha.tcg.org.

Panel members were **Paige Evans**, director of LCT3, Lincoln Center Theatre; **Jeffrey Herrmann**, managing director, Woolly Mammoth Theatre; **Michael Rohd**, artistic director, Sojourn Theatre; **Janet Stanford**, artistic director, Imagination Stage; **Chi-wang Yang**, director.

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife to continue the company's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation supports programs that improve education, promote health, encourage parental involvement and family engagement, and help revitalize neighborhoods and stress accessibility and inclusion. In recent years, a focus on Alzheimer's and aging issues has been added. MetLife Foundation stresses education in all its programs. Recognizing the vital role the arts play in building communities and educating young people, the Foundation contributes to arts and cultural organizations across the United States, with an emphasis on increasing opportunities for young people, reaching broad audiences through inclusive programming, and making arts more accessible for all people.

Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, exists to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. Its programs serve nearly 700 member theatres and affiliate organizations and more than 12,000 individuals nationwide. As the US Center of the International Theatre Institute, TCG connects its constituents to the global theatre community. TCG is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. www.tcg.org.

###