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## **MetLife Foundation and Theatre Communications Group Announce Seventh Round Recipients of the A-ha! Program**

New York, NY – MetLife Foundation and Theatre Communications Group (TCG) announce the seventh round recipients of the **MetLife/TCG A-ha! Program: Think It, Do It**, which empowers TCG Member Theatres to take groundbreaking approaches to artistic, managerial, production and/or technological challenges and opportunities. Six theatres were awarded grants totaling \$200,000 to either research and develop new ideas, or experiment and implement innovative concepts.

The **A-ha! Program** has two components: **Think It** grants (\$25,000), which give theatre professionals the time and space for research and development and **Do It** grants (\$50,000), which support the implementation and testing of new ideas. The projects supported by the **A-ha! Program** will not only impact the recipient theatres, but also serve as models for theatre and arts professionals across the country.

“Theatres are filled with entrepreneurial and creative minds that rarely have access to the risk capital needed to conceive and test out new ideas,” said Teresa Eyring, executive director of TCG. “This round of the **A-ha! Program** will empower innovative idea development, prototypes and action in areas like cultivating diverse groups of artists and administrators and engaging passersby in outdoor spaces.”

“The recipients of the seventh round of the **A-ha! Program** exemplify MetLife Foundation’s commitment to building strong communities through the arts,” said Dennis White, president and CEO, MetLife Foundation. “TCG is a great partner and this program has been a wonderful way to support the creativity and risk-taking that are essential to the growth of the not-for-profit theatre field.”

The 2014 **MetLife/TCG A-ha! Program** recipients are:

### **THINK IT**

- **Chicago Shakespeare Theater (Chicago, IL)**  
Serving as the artistic anchor of Chicago’s Navy Pier, which attracts more than nine million visitors annually, Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST) will partner with experts in the fields of architecture and communications to explore how to optimize the principles of creative placemaking to develop new audiences for a cultural institution. Partnering with Charcoalblue, a leader in innovative architectural design, CST will explore the expansion of their space through the use of temporary architecture design and transform an underutilized tent into a permanent all-season venue with design modularity allowing for over 10 theatrical configurations. CST will also partner with Arc Worldwide/Leo Burnett, a worldwide advertising agency, to investigate pedestrian intersection points and the “shopper journey” to stimulate arts engagement and build brand awareness.
- **Southern Rep Theatre (New Orleans, LA)**  
Currently producing its third season without access to a regular venue, Southern Rep Theatre is distinctly situated to understand the difficulties unique to producing 'on the road,' and utilizing unorthodox spaces to stage professional theatre works. To address the ongoing marketing challenges faced by theatres without a permanent space, Southern Rep Theatre will research and develop a prototype mobile application for theatres to provide pertinent information to both local audience members and tourists interested in experiencing theatre during their travels.

- **The Old Globe (San Diego, CA)**

Located in Balboa Park, The Old Globe is one of 27 diverse arts, cultural, and science institutions housed in the nation's largest urban cultural park. An estimated 10 million visitors come to Balboa Park each year to engage in a variety of activities. The Old Globe will develop and test a plan to reimagine Copley Plaza, the outdoor lobby for their three theatres, as a platform for learning about the Globe's work and the process of making theatre. The Globe plans to experiment with a combination of interactive high tech and low tech methods designed to activate the plaza in ways that will attract passing Balboa Park visitors into the theatre's outdoor space and engage patrons waiting for a performance.

- **Manhattan Theatre Club (New York, NY)**

In 2013, Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC) set up a committee of staff members to address the need for more diversity in their staff. A key idea stood out—to help diversify the staff, the company should strive to diversify its intern classes and by extension the pool of applicants from which the interns are chosen. MTC consistently promotes interns to fill staff vacancies and virtually every department at MTC has a staff member who was once an intern. To better understand how to create a deeper investment in the diversity through their internship pool, MTC will contract a consultant within this area of expertise, and will research how to attract more diverse candidates in the application process.

### **DO IT**

- **Youth Speaks Theatre Company (San Francisco, CA)**

Committed to producing performances relevant to our time and changing demographics across the country, Youth Speaks will explore how to best construct support systems for the young people currently being mentored into the theatre and performance world so that there are artistic pathways for them to thrive in and engage. Under the artistic direction of Sean San José, Youth Speaks will develop *The Emerging Artists Fellowship*, which will nurture and challenge two emerging playwrights resulting in the commission and presentation of new theatrical work. This three-year fellowship will afford a long-term investment and engagement with developing artists by providing them a stipend, dedicated space and resources for their development process.

- **Borderlands Theater (Tucson, AZ)**

Located in a community where Latinos make up 30% of the population, Borderlands Theater is seeking new and dynamic ways to cultivate this growing demographic to become active theatre-goers, and in the process, strengthen their ties to the community. They will achieve this by working with residents of Tucson's West Side barrios, high school students, ethnographers, and professional theatre-makers to create a site specific performance to preserve neighborhood identity. These narratives will be theatricalized by three award-winning playwrights, including Virginia Grise, Martín Zimmerman and Elaine Romero, and performed at locations within West Side neighborhoods. Borderlands will develop this work through community partnerships with local neighborhood associations, the University of Arizona's Department of Anthropology and Prescott College's Tucson campus, which offers free Mexican American Studies classes to high school seniors for college credit.

For more information about the program and previous recipients, visit:

[http://www.tcg.org/grants/aha/aha\\_recipients.cfm](http://www.tcg.org/grants/aha/aha_recipients.cfm). To read reports from the seventh round of recipients, visit: <http://www.tcgcircle.org/category/metlifetcg-a-ha-think-it>.

The grant applications were reviewed by an independent national panel of theatre professionals comprised of **Adrian Budhu**, Managing Director, The Theater Offensive; **Chip Walton**, Producing Artistic Director, Curious Theatre Company; **Maggie Villegas**, Producing Director, EMP Collective; **Brigitte Pribnow Moore**, Executive Director, Young Playwrights' Theater; and **Steven Woolf**, Artistic Director, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis.

**MetLife Foundation** was established in 1976 to continue MetLife's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. We are committed to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has provided more than \$600 million in grants and \$100 million in program-related investments to nonprofit organizations. For more information about the Foundation, visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).

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).

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