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Theatre Communications Group Announces Plenary Speakers for 2018 National Conference in St. Louis, MO June 14-16, 2018

Plenary speakers include Naomi Shihab Nye

New York, NY – Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for theatre, proudly announces the plenary speaker line-up for the 28th annual TCG National Conference in St. Louis, MO from June 14 to 16, 2018. The TCG National Conference provides the largest forum for the national theatre community to assemble for artistic and intellectual exchange. The multi-day event draws hundreds of theatre professionals from around the world for meetings, speeches, performances, and opportunities to explore the local theatre community.

The 2018 TCG National Conference plenary speaker line-up includes:

[Naomi Shihab Nye: Award-winning Palestinian-American Poet, Writer, Anthologist, and Educator](#)

Naomi Shihab Nye was born to a Palestinian father and an American mother and grew up in St. Louis, Jerusalem, and San Antonio. Nye is the author and/or editor of more than 30 volumes. She has been a Lannan Fellow, a Guggenheim Fellow, and a Witter Bynner Fellow (Library of Congress). She has received a Lavan Award, the Isabella Gardner Poetry Award, the Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award, the Paterson Poetry Prize, four Pushcart Prizes, the Robert Creeley Prize, and “The Betty Prize” and numerous honors for her children’s literature.

[Jer Thorp: Data Artist, Innovator-In-Residence at the Library of Congress, Former NYT Data Artist In Residence](#)

As a data artist, Jer Thorp shows us the human stories within endless scrolls of information, expressing trends, movements, and economics through vibrant graphics (and public art) seen by hundreds of millions of people. Thorp is the new Innovator-in-Residence at the Library of Congress, a National Geographic Fellow, former Data Artist-in-Residence at The New York Times, and Artist-in-Residence at the Museum of Modern Art. From 2013 to 2017, Thorp operated The Office for Creative Research, where he and his team implemented ingenious projects, including the cross-country “Map Room” series, a project with COCA in St. Louis, which invites people to draw maps of their cities that reflect community history not seen on regular maps.

#MeToo and the American Theatre: A Fieldwide Town Hall

This open community discussion, led by Maria Goyanes, incoming artistic director of Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company and Stephanie Ybarra, director of special artistic projects, The Public Theater, will be the first time the theatre field has come together to address our shared challenges around sexual abuse and misconduct on a national level.

St Louis Onstage: Performances from the Community

This final plenary session will feature excerpts from work by three local, highly acclaimed companies and collectives: *Blow, Winds* (Shakespeare Festival St Louis); *The Gringo* (developed at COCA by Colin Healy of Fly North Music); and *Luchadora!* (Mustard Seed with Theatre Nuevo) followed by a conversation with the creative teams, led by Seth Gordon, associate artistic director, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. The opening plenary will also include a choreopoem performed by youth poets from UrbArts.

“Naomi Shihab Nye and Jer Thorp remind us that artists often become thought leaders through their groundbreaking work and civic visions,” said **Teresa Eyring**, executive director of TCG. “The inspiration and

insight provided by these speakers, paired with the professional development and networking during the rest of the National Conference, will have a transformative impact on our attendees and the communities they serve.”

The local Host Committee contributing to the planning for the National Conference currently includes: Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre, Center of Creative Arts (COCA), Equally Represented Arts, Fontbonne University, Insight Theatre Company, Metro Theater Company, R-S Theatrics, Regional Arts Commission, Saint Louis University, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis, Slightly Askew Theatre Ensemble, Solid Lines Productions, St. Lou Fringe Festival, St. Louis Actors Studio, Stages St. Louis, Stray Dog Theatre, Tennessee Williams Festival, That Uppity Theatre Company, The Black Rep, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, TLT Productions, and University of Missouri - St. Louis, as well as unaffiliated local theatre artists.

Felicia Shaw, executive director of the Regional Arts Commission and funding partner for the event is pleased TCG chose St. Louis for the 2018 National Conference. “We are in the midst of a creative renaissance with some of the best work happening not just in our traditional theaters, but in our neighborhoods, parks, and other unconventional venues. Participants will discover that St. Louis has a commendable presence in the theatre scene, particularly for a region of our size,” said Shaw.

“TCG got it right when they picked St. Louis as the host city for their 2018 national Conference,” said **Chris Hansen**, executive director, Kranzberg Arts Foundation. “St. Louis has a thriving theatre industry, which is home to over 50 professional theatre companies and dozens of venues of different scale that foster and feature hundreds of unique productions a year. The Kranzberg Arts Foundation is proud to serve the St. Louis theatre community by providing essential infrastructure for them to grow their productions, organizations and audiences. St. Louis is poised to be the next Big Theatre city in the country and our local practitioners are leading the way.”

Additional highlights in programming for TCG’s 2018 National Conference in St. Louis include:

- Field trips that will bring attendees to significant local cultural destinations such as The Griot Museum of Black History, Art House, the Old Courthouse, Cherokee Street, and an exclusive tour of Tennessee Williams’ St. Louis haunts;
- *From the Roots: Growing Vibrant TOCS*, a pre-conference of theatres of color (TOC) that will bring together more than 40 representatives from theatres of color to explore similarities and differences in each other’s histories, share strategies for sustainability, and to develop a common language for the value of culturally specific organizations.
- A pre-conference for theatre education staff focused on cultural competencies and leadership skills with a keynote delivered by Karen Hall, superintendent of the Maplewood Richmond Heights School District in St. Louis at Metro Theater Company;
- A meeting of the TCG Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Institute, a peer-learning cohort of theatres going through a three-year curriculum to advance equity,
- Workshops led by local and national artists and thought leaders from the theatre field and beyond, including St. Louis-based social practice designer De Nichols, playwright Robert O’Hara, and Roche Schulfer, executive director of the Goodman Theatre.

Through its convenings, TCG continues to serve as a connector for theatres to share best practices and new business and artistic models with one another. TCG presents plenary speakers, breakout sessions, workshops, and performances throughout the National Conference. Past keynote speakers have included leading artists and thinkers, such as Mona Eltahawy, Anand Giridharadas, Seth Godin, Jane McGonigal, Julie Taymor, and Baratunde Thurston.

TCG is grateful to the following funders and sponsors of the 2018 TCG National Conference in St. Louis, MO: Stephanie Lerner Ansin; Arts Consulting Group; AudienceView; Capacity Interactive; Centene Charitable Foundation; Charcoalblue; DonorSearch; Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; Dramatists Play Service; The Ruth Easton Fund; Edgerton Foundation; Edward Jones; Fisher Dachs Associates; the Howard Gilman Foundation; Kranzberg Arts Foundation; Management Consultants for the Arts; The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Missouri Arts Council; National Endowment for the Arts; PatronManager; Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis; Schuler Shook; Spektrix; Steward Family Foundation; TRG Arts; Vendini; Wells Fargo Advisors; and World Wide

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Visit tcg.org for additional information, including registration and a detailed agenda.

For over 55 years, **Theatre Communications Group** (TCG), the national organization for U.S. theatre, has existed to strengthen, nurture, and promote the professional not-for-profit theatre. TCG's constituency has grown from a handful of groundbreaking theatres to over 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 through the Global Theater Initiative, TCG's partnership with the Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics, serves as the U.S. Center of the International Theatre Institute. TCG is North America's largest independent publisher of dramatic literature, with 16 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

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