



Theatre
Communications
Group

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Theatre Communications Group Announces Recipients of Rising Leaders of Color Program

Cohort of ten St. Louis and New York City-based leaders includes an arts journalist

New York, NY – Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for theatre, is pleased to announce the participants in the third round of the **Rising Leaders of Color (RLC) Program**, supported by the **Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC)**, **The Howard Gilman Foundation**, and **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**. Building on learnings from the 2016 Washington, DC and 2017 Portland, OR programs, the third round of RLC will focus on early-career leaders who are based in St. Louis City/County and New York City, including a theatre criticism/journalism track. This cohort will be featured in programming at the June 2018 TCG National Conference in St. Louis and participate in a year-long curriculum designed to provide professional development and networking opportunities. RLC is part of TCG's commitment to changing the face of the theatre field by nurturing and supporting an intergenerational network of leaders of color at various stages in their careers.

"The members of this new cohort bring a diverse set of experiences and a shared commitment to equity at the heart of arts leadership," said **Teresa Eyring**, executive director of TCG. "We look forward supporting their individual journeys, as well as amplifying their collective impact as part of an ever-growing intergenerational network of leaders of color."

Sophie Ancival is the outgoing producing fellow at Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC), having worked on Broadway and Off-Broadway productions including *Saint Joan*, *In the Body of the World*, and *Sugar in our Wounds*. A producer of Afro-Caribbean descent, Sophie's work focuses on giving theatre access to a larger audience, caring especially for equity, diversity, and inclusion. Sophie holds a MBA from the Baruch College at the City University of New York and has a background in marketing. Following her fellowship at MTC, Sophie is transferring to the American Repertory Theater as their new assistant producer.

Rosalind Early is the associate editor for Washington University's alumni magazine. After earning her bachelor's degree, she traveled to Austria to teach English. She later earned a master's degree in German literature from the University of Konstanz in Germany. She worked on staff at *St. Louis Magazine* for three years before joining the staff at Washington University. She has also written for *American Theatre*, *Humanities: The Magazine for the National Endowment for the Humanities*, and *The Cambridge Companion to Boxing* (forthcoming). She is currently working on a book with her dad about gentrification in Philadelphia.

Ariel Estrada is an actor, arts advocate, and founder/producing artistic director of Leviathan Lab, a NYC-based creative studio for Asian American theatre artists. As an actor, Ariel has performed in television, film, commercials, industrials, digital media, and on, Off-, and Off-Off Broadway. As an arts advocate, he is the outgoing manager of communications and community engagement and interim manager of public programs for the Asian American Arts Alliance, and the incoming communications associate for The Tank NYC, as well as the 2018 marketing director for Planet Connections Theatre Festivity. He is also an accomplished grant writer and professional graphic designer. www.ariellestrada.com

Bryce Goodloe is an interdisciplinary artist focusing on the African diaspora, LGBTQ identity, and community activism. He currently works as the Analytics and Engagement Assistant for Shakespeare Festival Saint Louis. He holds degrees in Theatres Studies & Dramaturgy (B.A.) and Business Administration (B.S.) from Webster University. He is also a graduate of the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission's Community Arts Training Institute (CAT).

Pia Haddad is a Lebanese-American producer and actor focusing on new work reflecting the diversity of our world. She is the founder of 3K² Productions, a NY-based theatre and film production company dedicated to new projects created by multicultural artists. She has produced in NYC at HERE and is the associate producer of the interdisciplinary solo show *Hope* which premieres at the Wild Project this fall. She is currently working on a documentary on the inclusion of LBGTQ in Catholicism and is developing a female-centric project based in Lebanon.

Peter J. Kuo is a New York-based director, producer, and writer focusing on raising the visibility of marginalized communities. Artistically, he's worked at East West Players, South Coast Repertory, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and The Play Company, among others. His work advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion includes: founding NSD: Affinity Groups, teaching *Acting Beyond Marginalization* at HB Studio, and coordinating the Asian American Directors List. He is a co-founder of Artists at Play and recipient of a Drama League First Stage Residency. This summer, he is Directing Corps for Williamstown Theatre Festival and assisting Rachel Chavkin on *Lempicka*, a world premiere. MFA: The New School For Drama www.peterjkuo.com

Carl Overly, Jr. hails from Maysville, Ky and received his BA in Theater from Eastern Kentucky University. He was an intern with The Black Rep from 2005 to 2007. Carl was a co-producer for The Every 28 Hour Play Festival. Some of his favorite roles include Lennie in SATE Ensemble's *Of Mice and Men* (Best Actor in a Drama nominee- 2018 St. Louis Theater Circle Awards) and MacDuff in ERA's *Trash Macbeth*. Carl's directing credits include *'night, Mother* and Prime's 24 Hour Play Festival. Carl has worked with numerous companies including Shakespeare Festival-STL, Theatre Nuevo, Upstream Theatre, Actor's Studio, Unity Theater Ensemble, and is also a teaching artist with Prison Performing Arts.

Anna Skidis Vargas is the founder and artistic director of Theatre Nuevo. She holds a BA in Performance from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and is currently earning a Directing MFA at University of Texas - Austin. She has produced and directed *This is Not Funny*, *Orgullo*, *Acronyms*, and *HELL*, all with Theatre Nuevo and *Luchadora!* with Mustard Seed Theatre in collaboration with Theatre Nuevo. As an actor and singer, Anna has performed with several companies in Saint Louis, receiving two STL Theatre Circle Awards for outstanding performances in *Lizzie* (Lizzie Borden) with New Line and *Spring Awakening* (Ilse) with Stray Dog.

Gabe Taylor currently serves as the associate artistic director for both Theatre Nuevo and Equally Represented Arts (ERA). He's stage managed, acted, and directed with ERA, YoungLiars, Theatre Nuevo, New Line Theatre, among others. He most recently directed "twelfth period" and played Hubert in *Snow White* (ERA); designed lighting and sound for Theatre Nuevo's *HELL*; and served as stage manager for YoungLiars *Titus Androgynous*. He's currently the assistant director and stage manager for the regional premier of *Luchadora!* with Theatre Nuevo and Mustard Seed Theater, and is directing a devised piece this fall as part of the 2018 Faustival, *whither should I fly*.

Jacqueline Thompson is an actor/director passionate about creating art that intersects racial equity and community engagement. In March, the St. Louis Post Dispatch recognized her as one of six women shaping St. Louis Arts and entertainment. She was also noted as one of St. Louis'

most versatile performers. This year she received a St. Louis Theater Circle Award for Outstanding Actress in a Drama as well as a fellowship from the Regional Arts Commission. Thompson holds an M.F.A. from the University of Louisville and a B.A. from Clark Atlanta University. She is a proud member of Actors Equity Association. jacquelinethompson.com

This RLC cohort will take part in an orientation meeting and attend all professional development workshops and events in St. Louis from June 11-17, where they will be highlighted as part of Spotlight On activities. The program will then offer a year-long professional development curriculum designed to strengthen their leadership skills. Participants will explore concepts of equity, diversity and inclusion, engage in dialogues about the state of the field and the next generation of theatre leadership, and create a personal strategic plan. RLC is a part of TCG's multi-year, six-point Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Initiative to transform the theatre field into a more equitable, inclusive, and diverse community. Learn more about the Rising Leaders of Color program [here](#), and the EDI Initiative [here](#).

“As a local arts funder and supporter of this year’s annual conference and Rising Leaders of Color, the Regional Arts Commission understands the critical importance of investing in our young professionals who seek to further explore their careers as working artists,” said **Felicia Shaw**, executive director, Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis. “Encouraging creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship along with sustained commitment not only helps the artist and the respective discipline but can also help lift a community.”

“TCG's tremendous dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion has had a profound impact on the field,” said **Emily Sproch**, program officer of the Howard Gilman Foundation. “The Howard Gilman Foundation is thrilled to support the New York City Rising Leaders of Color cohort, which will provide opportunities for exceptionally promising theatre leaders of color to harness their collective power and broadcast it nationwide.”

“We are proud to announce the participants in the third round of the Rising Leaders of Color program.” said **Emilya Cachapero**, director of artistic & international programs. “Each year I am so excited and energized by these exceptional early-career leaders. The wealth of talent and perspectives within the cohorts reflects a new order in the theatre field that must be nurtured and supported. There are now twenty-six RLC participants across the country, including two journalists/theatre critics. Each of them ensuring the vitality of the field through their commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.”

After its successful inaugural year with Portland-based writer TJ Acena, the RLC’s theatre criticism and journalism continues with Rosalind Early. This track, designed to help widen and deepen the talent pool of voices documenting, reflecting, and challenging the field, has already succeeded in diversifying the coverage in *American Theatre*, and has cultivated an exciting new voice in Acena, who began writing about theatre for other publications concurrently with his RLC term. “TJ’s year working with us has exceeded our highest expectations,” said **Rob Weinert-Kendt**, the magazine’s editor-in-chief. “And the selection of Rosalind as our next Rising Leader is fortuitous, as she has already covered St. Louis theatre in our pages. We look forward to working with her in a new capacity as part of RLC.”

RLC builds on the learnings and momentum of the Young Leaders of Color Program (YLC) and the SPARK Leadership Programs. From 2008-2013, YLC brought 79 leaders of color to TCG National Conferences. RLC expands and re-envision that community as part of an ongoing national network of leaders of color. From 2014-15, the SPARK Leadership Program assembled a cohort of ten leaders of color for a focused, year-long professional development curriculum. Through RLC and SPARK, TCG will support a variety of professional development and networking programs to meet the diverse needs of theatre leaders of color at various stages of their career. Learn more about SPARK [here](#) and YLC [here](#).

To learn more about the program, please visit:

<https://www.tcg.org/Grants/GrantsAtAGlance/RisingLeadersofColor/Description.aspx>

The **Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC)** is at the forefront of efforts to transform St. Louis into a more vibrant, creative and economically thriving community by elevating the vitality, value and visibility of the arts. It is the largest annual funder of non-profit arts in the region, and since its inception in 1985, RAC has awarded more than 7,000 grants totaling over \$100 million to support nonprofit arts, individual artists, cultural organizations, consortiums and programs. Directed by a board of 15 commissioners appointed by the chief executives of St. Louis City and St. Louis County, RAC is a pivotal force in the continuing development and marketing of the arts in the region. Visit www.racstl.org for more information.

Howard Gilman believed in the power of the arts to transform lives. The **Howard Gilman Foundation** honors his legacy by supporting the most robust, innovative, and promising performing arts organizations in New York City. www.howardgilmanfoundation.org

Founded in 1969, **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** endeavors to strengthen, promote, and, where necessary, defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies by supporting exemplary institutions of higher education and culture as they renew and provide access to an invaluable heritage of ambitious, path-breaking work. www.mellon.org.

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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