



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PRESS CONTACT:**

Gus Schulenburg | [gschulenburg@tcg.org](mailto:gschulenburg@tcg.org) | 212.609.5941

## **TCG's Veterans & Theatre Institute Launches Arizona Program *Introducing Military Personnel to Playwriting in Mesa and Tucson***

*New York, NY* – The **Veterans & Theatre Institute** (VTI), a pilot program to empower veterans and military personnel to experience, study, and create theatre is thrilled to announce its partnership with **Arizona Theatre Company** and **Mesa Arts Center**. Initiated by Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization of the theatre, and supported by Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Building Demand for the Arts grants program, the Arizona program will build on VTI's existing partnerships with Trinity Rep Company in Providence, RI; Cape Fear Regional Theatre in Fayetteville, NC; and La Jolla Playhouse in La Jolla, CA. VTI will offer programming at the Mesa Arts Center Contemporary Arts Building and at the Temple of Music and Art in Tucson.

"We've learned so much from the first iterations of the Veterans & Theatre Institute," said **Teresa Eyring**, executive director, TCG. "In Arizona, we'll work in two different cities simultaneously for the first time, expanding our reach and deepening our knowledge on how best to engage veterans in potential careers in the theatre."

In Tucson the free playwriting workshops will be taught by master playwright mentor **Elaine Romero**, playwright-in-residence at Arizona Theatre Company and professor at University of Arizona; **Jasmine Roth**, education associate at Arizona Theatre Company; and **Alfred Griffin**, playwright, teacher, and founder of Amazing Wretches. In Mesa the free playwriting workshops will be taught by master playwright mentor **Dwayne Hartford**, artistic director of Childsplay; and by **Holly Garner**, education associate at Arizona Theatre Company. Throughout the spring, participants will be exposed to play analysis and ever-more advanced storytelling and playwriting concepts and techniques. They will also write their own plays which will get rehearsal support and a staged reading in late spring 2018. For enrollment information in Mesa, interested parties should contact Holly Garner at 602-757-6289 or [hgarner@aztc.org](mailto:hgarner@aztc.org). For enrollment information in Tucson, interested parties should contact Jasmine Roth at 520- 884-8210 or [Jroth@arizonatheatre.org](mailto:Jroth@arizonatheatre.org).

"We are so excited to grow VTI with Arizona Theatre Company and Mesa Arts Center. Each new site, gives us the chance to bring new groups of military personnel and veterans together to share with them the joy of making theatre," said **Maurice Decaul**, former Marine and TCG artist-in-residence. "We are proud to partner with Arizona Theatre Company and Mesa Arts Center to make VTI available to our vital military and veteran communities throughout Arizona, a state uniquely familiar with the triumphs and challenges of military service."

"Our veterans are essential to our community and therefore will always be front and center at the Arizona Theatre Company" said **David Ivers**, artistic director, Arizona Theatre Company. "We are grateful to partner with TCG in this exciting initiative."

"The art of playwriting is a unique and powerful vehicle through which to explore our veterans' powerful stories – stories that have shaped our country," said **Israel Jimenez**, director of learning & education, Arizona Theatre Company. "Arizona Theatre Company's education program has created a curriculum that will allow our veterans to share their incredible experiences. Connecting with our veteran communities

through playwriting will allow us to give voice to their oft untold stories. Our participants will have an opportunity to develop their stories with seasoned playwrights and mentors.”

“The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is pleased to see that our grant support, beginning in 2015, for TCG and Maurice Decaul’s partnership and the creation of VTI continues to grow and reach its goals through new collaborations,” said **Maurine Knighton**, program director for the arts, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. “This new partnership between Arizona Theatre Company, Mesa Arts Center and VTI will engage active duty personnel and veterans with contemporary theatre in ways that extend far beyond attending performances. Whether harnessing the power of story to share their experiences or working behind the scenes to bring stage performances to life, participants can potentially make great contributions to the theatre landscape. We commend these forward-thinking partners for this initiative and look forward to its positive impact among the military personnel and communities in Mesa and Tucson.”

**DDCF’s Building Demand for the Arts** program launched in 2013 and supports partnerships between artists and arts organizations focused on using the performing arts in unique ways to develop meaningful connections with targeted audiences. Implementation grants support organizations to work with artists for 90 days over a period of three years, to implement previously crafted initiatives and projects that have strong potential to spark demand for the arts in their communities. Each grant also includes an extra \$5,000 dedicated specifically to evaluation of the funded project.

**Maurice Emerson Decaul**, a former Marine, is a poet, essayist, and playwright, whose writing has been featured in the *New York Times*, *The Daily Beast*, *Sierra Magazine*, *Epiphany*, *Callaloo*, *Narrative*, *The Common* and others. His poems have been translated into French and Arabic and his theatre pieces have been produced at New York City’s Harlem Stage, Poetic License Festival in New York City, Washington DC’s Atlas INTERSECTIONS FESTIVAL in 2013 and 2014, l’Odéon-Théâtre de l’Europe in Paris, The Paris Banlieues Bleues Festival, The Middelhein Jazz Festival in Antwerp, The Avignon Theatre Festival in France and Détours de Babel, The Grenoble Festival, Grenoble France, Arizona State University Gammage Memorial Auditorium, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, The David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center and the Park Avenue Armory in NYC. Forthcoming productions include The Mary L Welch Theatre at Lycoming College in Pennsylvania, The Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Brown University. His album,  *Holding it Down*, a collaboration with Vijay Iyer and Mike Ladd was The LA Times Jazz Album of the year in 2013. Maurice, a Callaloo and Cave Canem Fellow, is a graduate of Columbia University [BA], New York University [MFA] and an MFA Candidate in playwriting at Brown University.

**Doris Duke Charitable Foundation’s** mission is to improve the quality of people’s lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and child well-being, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke’s properties. The Arts Program of DDCF focuses its support on contemporary dance, jazz and theatre artists, and the organizations that nurture, present and produce them. For more information, please visit [ddcf.org](http://ddcf.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 15 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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