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Theatre Communications Group Announces Inaugural Cohort of Rising Leaders of Color Program

New York, NY – Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for theatre, is pleased to announce the inaugural cohort of the Rising Leaders of Color (RLC) Program. Supported by The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation and Walt Disney Imagineering Creative Entertainment, the RLC program will form a cohort of ten exceptionally talented early-career leaders of color from the DC, Baltimore, and Northern Virginia areas, and provide them with professional development and networking opportunities at the 2016 TCG National Conference and beyond. The RLC Program is an expansion and re-envisioning of TCG’s Young Leaders of Color Program that was launched in 2008. Alongside TCG’s SPARK Leadership Program, the RLC Program will change the face of the theatre field by nurturing and supporting an intergenerational network of leaders of color at various stages in their careers.

“Watching the profound impact of the Young Leaders of Color and SPARK Leaders on the TCG National Conference over the past eight years has been inspiring,” said Teresa Eyring, executive director of TCG. “Their collective leadership has rippled out to transform our field, and we’re excited to welcome ten new leaders into that growing community of change-makers.”

“These ten early-career leaders are helping to shape a more progressive future for the theatre field through their commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion,” said Emilyya Cachapero, director of artistic & international programs. “Their potential to impact the field is undeniable, and TCG is proud to nurture and support these exceptionally talented leaders of color. RLC along with the SPARK Leadership Program will form an intergenerational network of support and sharing that will empower participants to continue and expand the movement towards a more equitable theatre field for the future.”

The ten inaugural Rising Leaders of Color are:

Annalisa Dias, Producing Playwright, The Welders, Washington, DC

Annalisa Dias is a performer, director, and playwright. She is an incoming producing playwright with The Welders, a DC playwright’s collective; and co-founder of the DC Coalition for Theatre and Social Justice. Her plays include *Servant of the Wind*, *One Word More*, *To Defend Freedom*, and others. Her work has been staged in Washington DC, New York, London, and Glasgow. Most recently she has created new work with the Mead Theatre Lab Program, Signature Theatre, and the Atlas Intersections Festival. Annalisa also frequently speaks and teaches on coloniality, oppression, and the persistence of racism in the United States.

Paige Hernandez, Performer, Playwright, and Educator, B-FLY ENTERTAINMENT, Capitol Heights, MD

Paige Hernandez is a multidisciplinary artist who is critically acclaimed as a performer, director, choreographer, and playwright. As an AEA actress, Paige has performed on many stages throughout the country and internationally. She has received an Individual Artist Award from the Maryland State Arts Council, as well as two Helen Hayes nominations for choreography and performance. She has also been recognized as a “Classroom Hero” by The Huffington Post. Most recently she was named a Citizen Artist Fellow at the Kennedy Center. With her company B-FLY ENTERTAINMENT, Paige continues to develop and tour original work internationally.

Amelia Powell, Artistic Associate & Casting Director, Arena Stage, Washington, DC

Amelia Powell is currently the artistic associate & casting director in residence at Arena Stage in Washington, DC. She is also a freelance producer, director, and casting director, and a member of the Casting Society of America. She is a regular teaching artist at The Growing Studio NYC, and has given master classes at Brown University/Trinity Rep, Catholic University, Howard, American, Messiah College, and Montgomery College. She holds her bachelor's degree in Theatre and Performance Studies and her master's degree in Spanish Linguistics from Georgetown University. She is a proud alumna of the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship.

Bryan Joseph Lee, Director of Marketing & Communications, Round House Theatre, Bethesda, MD

Bryan Joseph Lee is the director of marketing & communications at Round House Theatre, a 400-seat LORT D regional theater in Bethesda, MD, where he oversees earned revenue, institutional branding and audience development. He has a specific interest in building diverse audiences through authentic relationship-building and targeted cultivation strategies. In 2016, he was awarded a fellowship with the DeVos Institute of Arts Management. He has previously worked with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and Source Festival. Bryan is a graduate of Dartmouth College, and holds a degree in Latin American Studies and Theatre.

Ronee Penoi, Creative Producer (Incoming), The Welders, Washington, DC

Ronee Penoi is the (incoming) creative producer for The Welders and the founder of Theatre from the District. Ronee was previously the National New Play Network producer-in-residence at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and part of the inaugural class of New Play Producing Fellows at the American Voices New Play Institute at Arena Stage, where she produced a national convening on devised work. Ronee was the assistant stage manager for Anna Deavere Smith's national tour of *Let Me Down Easy*, the directing fellow for Arena Stage, and the artistic fellow for The Shakespeare Theatre. Ronee is currently writing a musical about Carlisle Indian School. She received her B.A. from Princeton University.

Shayla Roland, Special Programming Manager, Ford's Theatre, Arlington, VA

Shayla Roland is the special programming manager for Ford's Theatre where she has implemented and maintained innovative programming to further engagement with theatrical audiences, and encourages millennial participation. She assists in casting, dramaturgy, and works extensively with Ford's Theatre's director on correspondence for special events, including the Ford's Theatre Annual Gala. Shayla coordinated the 150th Anniversary of the Lincoln Assassination commemoration, serving as a key contributor to the conception of the events, and working with partner organizations to execute 36 hours of programming. She's an assistant producer for the Source Festival in Washington, DC.

Sadiqua Iman, Director/Producer, College Park, MD

Sadiqua Iman is an interdisciplinary artist and activist who challenges preconceived notions of marginalized identities through theatre, as well as dance workshops and productions. She launched her youth arts program Sister Stories in 2015 with the support of her National Arts Strategist Community Arts Fellowship. In 2011, she founded her not-for-profit, Earth Pearl Collective, a queer womyn of color social justice arts organization. Sadiqua believes the arts are an imperative part of healing communities. "That unruly curl. That shapely, textured, shift of consciousness springing forward with bounce, giving non linear expression to unspoken boundaries." -Sadiqua Iman

Kristen Jackson, Connectivity Director, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Washington, DC

Kristen Jackson is currently the connectivity director at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in

Washington, DC. She earned her M.A. from University of Texas at Austin in Performance as Public Practice. Kristen has also worked on- and off-Broadway for Ostar Productions and Playwrights Horizons in the areas of producing and casting; and as a teaching artist and performer for the regional theatres Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and Actors Theatre of Louisville. Outside of theatre, she provided administrative and programming support for Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance. Kristen holds a B.A. in Theatre Studies and English from Duke University.

Ouida Maedel, Grants Manager, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Washington, DC

Ouida Maedel joined Woolly Mammoth as grants manager in the summer of 2015. Previously, she led artistic producing efforts for Dance Exchange, a dance/theatre company known for devising innovative performance projects that engage communities and partners across wide-ranging disciplines. Specializing in experimental theatre and performance art, she has produced and performed in DC and New York City. Ouida has also worked in numerous applied theatre capacities at the intersection of theatre and social change in Ghana, Zambia, and the U.S. She holds a B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College, and an M.A. in International Communication and Arts Management from American University.

Stephanie Rolland, Artistic Administrator, Center Stage, Baltimore, MD

Stephanie Rolland is the artistic administrator at Center Stage. Before arriving in Baltimore, Stephanie was the assistant managing director of Yale School of Drama and Special Events at Yale Repertory Theatre, the project manager for the first 'Krymov Lab at Yale' led by Dmitry Krymov, and the event manager of the first 'Inspiring Yale' (an evening of TEDx style talks delivered by elected Yale professors). Stephanie has also served as assistant managing director of Yale Repertory Theatre and associate managing director of the Yale Cabaret. She is a member of the LORT Recruitment sub-committee, part of the LORT Diversity Initiative. She received her MFA from the Yale School of Drama, and her B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania.

The Rising Leaders of Color program selection panel included **Emilya Cachapero**, director of artistic & international programs, TCG, New York, NY; **Elena Chang**, associate director of equity, diversity & inclusion, TCG, New York, NY; **LaTeshia Ellerson**, development director, True Colors Theatre Company and SPARK Leader; **Nelson Eusebio**, director and SPARK Leader, New York, NY; **Michael Francis**, senior artistic programs associate, TCG, New York, NY; **Francine T. Reynolds**, artistic director, New Stage Theatre, Jackson, MS; and **August Schulenburg**, director of communications & community engagement, TCG, New York, NY.

To learn more about the program, please visit <http://www.tcg.org/grants/rlc/index.cfm>.

The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation is the largest private, independent, local foundation focused exclusively on the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The Foundation is the legacy of Morris Cafritz, one of Washington's leading commercial and residential builders from the early 1920's to the mid-60's. An outstanding civic leader known for his generosity, Morris Cafritz established the Foundation in 1948. His wife, Gwendolyn, one of Washington's leading hostesses in the post World War II years, was President of the Foundation from 1964 to 1988. In December 1988, Calvin Cafritz was elected to the Board of Directors of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation and since February 1989, has served as Board Chairman. In July 1993, he was elected President and CEO of the Foundation. Since 1970, when electronic record keeping was initiated, awards totaling more than \$447 million have been granted. In the last 10 years, \$185 million has been awarded to more than 961 organizations in the areas of Community Services, Arts and Humanities, Education, Health and the Environment. Since Mr. Cafritz's leadership began, the Foundation has awarded more than \$393 million to 8,736 projects. The Foundation is committed to improving the quality of life for residents of the Washington, DC area. <http://www.cafritzfoundation.org/>

For over 50 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 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 14 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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