

# **THE WALLACE ALEXANDER GERBODE FOUNDATION**

# **THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION**

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## **Six \$75,000 Commissions for Playwright Collaborations Selected By The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation**

**SAN FRANCISCO and MENLO PARK, Calif.**—The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation are pleased to announce six \$75,000 grants for the creation and world premiere of six new plays by leading California playwrights, created in collaboration with another California artist of their choice.

Each grant will be divided into three parts: \$25,000 will be given as a commission fee to a California playwright; \$25,000 will go to a California-based artist who will be a key collaborator on the development and premiere of the script; and the remaining \$25,000 will go to a theater or presenting organization for expenses related to the creation and world premiere of the new play. All of the six commissioned plays will have their world premiere public performances in the Bay Area between December 2010 and December 2012.

These playwright collaboration grants are part of a three-year \$1,350,000 initiative by the Gerbode and Hewlett foundations to support fresh, dynamic collaborations in contemporary dance, theater, and music. In 2008, grants were made for choreographer collaborations, and in 2010, they will be made for composer collaborations.

The recipients of the 2009 Playwright Collaboration Awards Program are:

### **Brava! For Women in the Arts — Cherrie L. Moraga and Conceptual Artist Celia Herrera Rodriguez**

Brava! For Women in the Arts, a professional arts organization located in the heart of the Mission District, will produce, “Mapa Cuauhtinchan No. 2,” a multi-disciplinary, collaborative work created by veteran playwright Cherrie L. Moraga and conceptual artist Celia Herrera, depicting a living portrait of America’s native ancestors in an epic story of Native American culture in the U.S. and California.

**Intersection for the Arts — Sean San Jose and Writer Richard Montoya**

Intersection for the Arts, an innovative arts and cultural space, will produce “New River,” developed by Sean San Jose, in collaboration with playwright Richard Montoya, studying California through the lens of the southeast Mexican border town area alongside the New River through a research and development process that engages urban and rural communities.

**Lorraine Hansberry Theatre — Jeannie Barroga and Choreographer Alleluia Panis**

The Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, the premier African American theater company in California, will produce, “Buffalo’ed,” a theatrical work written by playwright Jeannie Barroga, in collaboration with choreographer Alleluia Panis, which will examine the role of African American Buffalo Soldiers in the U.S. occupation of the Philippines during the Philippine-American War who defected to the Filipino cause.

**ODC Theater — Julie Hebert and Choreographer Deborah Slater**

ODC Theater, an arts center dedicated to the full life-cycle of artistic careers and the creative process since 1976, will produce the first collaboration in many years between playwright Julie Hebert and choreographer Deborah Slater, who together will create “Nightblooms,” a poetic theater-dance piece about women and aging.

**San Francisco Circus Center — Playwright Itamar Moses; Acrobats Sam Payne and Sandra Feusi**

San Francisco Circus Center, founded in 1974 and established as a circus arts training and performance center, will produce an unusual multi-disciplinary collaboration between noted playwright Itamar Moses, and Cirque du Soleil veterans Sam Payne and Sandra Feusi, a seasoned acrobatic duo. The piece will meld Moses’ scripted drama with circus acrobatics resulting in unlimited possibilities.

**The Jewish Theatre San Francisco — Corey Fischer and Filmmaker Sam Ball**

The Jewish Theatre San Francisco, formerly Traveling Jewish Theatre, will produce “In the Maze of Our Own Lives,” a new mixed-media play written by Corey Fischer in collaboration with filmmaker Sam Ball, which will integrate a variety of cinematic elements with live theater to bring to life the powerfully resonant story of The Group Theater, a groundbreaking 1930s ensemble whose work redefined theater in America.

“These grants provide an opportunity to foster the adventuresome creativity of California artists and Bay Area arts organizations through fresh and unique collaborations,” said Gerbode Foundation President Thomas Layton. “The projects funded display an exciting range of cultural diversity and breadth of imagination—from a new play about California border communities co-written by two prominent Latino playwrights, to a performance piece developed by a rising young dramatist and an internationally-recognized acrobatic duo. At a time when the arts can

help bind our society together, such collaborative efforts in the Bay Area’s innovative theater scene are worthy of encouragement and support.”

“We believe it is important to support outstanding artists and arts organizations, especially in this challenging economic environment,” said John E. McGuirk, Performing Arts Program Director at the Hewlett Foundation. “These grant awards will enable dynamic new works to be created locally that will be particularly relevant to diverse community audiences throughout the region.”

The Gerbode and Hewlett foundations were assisted in making these grants by an advisory panel composed of the following nationally respected play experts:

- **Andrea J. Dymond**, a stage director with many regional theater credits, the resident director at the Victory Gardens Theatre in Chicago, and a faculty member at Columbia College in Chicago
- **Mead Hunt**, a playwright, dramaturge, and consultant to Sundance and other prominent play festivals, and formerly the literary/education director at Portland Center Stage and director of literary programs at A.S.K. Theatre in Los Angeles
- **Chris Sumption**, a director and resident dramaturge for the Hedgebrook Women Playwrights Festival on Whidbey Island, WA; a faculty member at Seattle University and Cornish College of the Arts; and a former associate artistic director of Seattle Repertory Theatre
- **Chay Yew**, an internationally known playwright whose works (including “Porcelain,” “Wonderland,” and “Red”) have been widely produced in the U.S. and abroad, an Obie Award-honored director, and the former artistic head of the Asian Theatre Workshop at the Mark Taper Forum

### **About The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation**

[The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation](#) is interested in programs and projects offering potential for significant impact. The primary geographical focus is on the San Francisco Bay Area and Hawaii. The Foundation’s interests generally fall under the categories of arts and culture, environment, reproductive rights and health, citizen participation, building communities, inclusiveness, strength of the philanthropic process and the nonprofit sector, and Foundation-initiated special projects.

### **About the Special Awards Program**

For nearly twenty years, the Gerbode Foundation has made innovative grants through its Special Awards Program to San Francisco Bay Area arts institutions to commission new works from gifted individual artists: playwrights (including Tony Kushner, author of Pulitzer Prize-winning “Angels in America”), choreographers (such as Erika Chong Shuch and Sean Dorsey), composers (including Carla Kihlstedt, John Adams, Paul Dresher, and Tony Williams), as well as visual artists, poets, and multimedia artists.

In a time of cultural shifts and fiscal insecurity in the arts, these coveted, nationally respected awards have helped underwrite culturally and aesthetically diverse, acclaimed new works by prominent artists and emerging ones. The grants have supported artists at critical junctures in

their careers; enabled nonprofit local arts groups to develop and debut substantial, original works; and enriched Bay Area audiences, readers, and viewers by giving them first access to ambitious new creations.

### **About The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation**

[The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#) has been making grants since 1967 to help solve social and environmental problems at home and around the world. The Foundation concentrates its resources on activities in education, the environment, global development, performing arts, philanthropy, and population, and makes grants to support disadvantaged communities in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Foundation's Performing Arts Program is founded on the premise that the experience, understanding, and appreciation of artistic expression give value, meaning, and enjoyment to people's lives. Its goals are to ensure that exceptional works of art are created, performed, and preserved, and to provide more opportunities for participation in arts experiences. The program supports artistic expression and its enjoyment through grantmaking to a wide range of high-quality arts organizations in one of the most culturally diverse regions in the country. The Hewlett Foundation currently supports over 200 organizations throughout the Bay Area. Both the scale of funding and the singular nature of multiyear general operating support have made the Hewlett Foundation a key investor in the cultural life of the Bay Area.

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