



PRESS CONTACT: Claudie Fisher  
503.445.3765  
claudief@pcs.org

## M E D I A R E L E A S E

### **Portland Center Stage Among 26 Arts Organizations Selected for Wallace Foundation Audience-Building Initiative**

**\$770,000 awarded to PCS to build new audiences through enhanced community programs and newly commissioned plays based on Northwest history and culture**

**April 15, 2015 – PORTLAND, OR.** Portland Center Stage has been selected for the New York-based Wallace Foundation’s **Building Audiences for Sustainability** effort – a new, six-year, \$52-million initiative aimed at developing practical insights into how exemplary performing arts organizations can successfully expand their audiences, the foundation announced today. PCS will receive \$770,000 in the first two years of the grant to deepen relationships with current audiences and attract greater numbers of 25-40 year-olds with newly commissioned plays, based on Northwest history and culture, along with related educational and social activities. “We are thrilled to be part of The Wallace Foundation’s new initiative,” said PCS Artistic Director Chris Coleman. “Not only because of the exciting new activities it will allow us to launch—especially our *Northwest Stories* commissioning program—but because of the structure of the initiative. The learning cohort we will join with our peer grantees means we will benefit not only from our own grant activities, but from the results of the entire group. It’s a very progressive way to address the challenges we all share, and we are extremely grateful to the Foundation.”

Portland Center Stage was one of 26 arts organizations from around the country that were selected to be a part of the **Building Audiences for Sustainability** initiative and noted by the foundation for their artistic excellence. Each organization will design and implement programs to attract new audiences while retaining current ones, measuring whether and how this contributes to their overall financial sustainability. In addition to theater, the organizations represent a spectrum of artistic disciplines, from dance and opera

companies to orchestras and multidisciplinary arts institutions. The selected partners will receive financial and technical support from the foundation to develop, implement, analyze, and learn from their audience-building work. The evidence gathered from the work will be documented and analyzed by a Wallace-commissioned independent team of researchers, providing valuable insights, ideas, and information for the entire field.

“The arts are essential on both a personal level, providing us with experiences that open us to new perspectives, and on a community level, helping us to find common ground,” said Will Miller, president of The Wallace Foundation. “However, attracting and engaging new audiences is challenging for arts organizations because, even as the number of arts groups has grown, national rates of participation in the arts have declined, arts education has waned, and competition for ways to spend leisure time has increased. We are confident that the 26 organizations selected from a pool of more than 300 identified by leaders in the arts nationwide will provide new insights that will benefit the field at large, helping to bring the arts to a broader and more diverse group of people.”

Portland Center Stage will receive grant support from The Wallace Foundation to fund at least two “continuous learning cycles” of work. Over the course of two years, PCS will receive \$770,000 to develop and implement a new audience-building program (first cycle), study the results, and then use the findings to implement a second cycle of programs, which will receive additional funding through the initiative, amount to be determined. PCS will also receive funding for audience research to inform the work. Some of the funding will support a new commissioning program, *Northwest Stories*, created to bring stories about the Northwest and/or by Northwest writers to the stage; and a further investment in *PlayMaker*, a new web portal designed to increase audience interaction with PCS. Development of *PlayMaker* was launched through funding from Theatre Communications Group’s Audience (R)evolution Program, and the Wallace support will allow a more robust build out of this new product. PCS is working with Portland strategic design firm [Watson Creative](#) on *PlayMaker*.

“Building audiences is one of the most pressing challenges facing arts leaders today, but many organizations lack the resources and information they need to generate new and innovative practices,” said

Daniel Windham, The Wallace Foundation's director of arts. "Over the past 25 years, we have consistently supported initiatives and commissioned research to build a resource of replicable methods for audience building. The work of these 26 organizations will build on the knowledge we've already gained, adding to the resources that we share with the field."

Teresa Eyring, executive director of Theatre Communications Group, the national service organization for American nonprofit theaters, remarked, "The Wallace Foundation is addressing the vitally important issue of audience building in a way that will help us learn from the knowledge that is gained. Our member theaters, as well as other performing arts organizations, are seeking reliable, evidence-based information on effective practices that can be adapted to the strengths of their organizations and needs of their own communities. The entire sector will benefit from this initiative."

### **About The Wallace Foundation**

Based in New York City, The Wallace Foundation is an independent national philanthropy dedicated to fostering improvements in learning and enrichment for disadvantaged children and the vitality of the arts for everyone. It seeks to catalyze broad impact by supporting the development, testing, and sharing of new solutions and effective practices. At [www.wallacefoundation.org](http://www.wallacefoundation.org), the Foundation maintains an online library about what it has learned, including knowledge from its current efforts aimed at: strengthening education leadership to improve student achievement, helping selected cities make good afterschool programs available to more children, expanding arts learning opportunities for children and teens, providing high-quality summer learning programs to disadvantaged children and enriching and expanding the school day in ways that benefit students, and helping arts organizations build their audiences.

### **The Wallace Foundation Press Contacts:**

Jessica Schwartz: 212-251-9711, [jschwartz@wallacefoundation.org](mailto:jschwartz@wallacefoundation.org)

Emily Viemeister: 212-671-5177, [eviemeister@resnicow.com](mailto:eviemeister@resnicow.com)

### **About Portland Center Stage**

[Portland Center Stage](#) inspires its community by bringing stories to life in unexpected ways. Founded in

1988, PCS is the city's leading professional theater and one of the top 20 largest regional theater companies in the U.S. PCS attracts more than 150,000 theatergoers annually with its blend of classical, contemporary and world premiere works, along with its summer playwrights festival, JAW. PCS also offers a variety of education and community programs tailored for patrons of all ages.

[The Gerding Theater at the Armory](#) is the home of PCS, housing the 590-seat U.S. Bank Main Stage and the 190-seat black box Ellyn Bye Studio. It was the first building on the National Register of Historic Places – and the first performing arts venue – to achieve a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification. The Gerding Theater at the Armory opened to the public on Oct. 1, 2006.

[Portland Center Stage's 2014-2015 season](#) is funded in part by Season Superstars Tim and Mary Boyle and Lead Corporate Champion Umpqua Bank; Season Sponsors the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, Oregon Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Regional Arts and Culture Council, Work for Art, Oregonian Media Group and Season Supporting Sponsor KINK FM. The Mark Spencer Hotel is PCS's official hotel partner. PCS is a participant in the Audience (R)Evolution Program, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the professional not-for-profit American theater.

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

###