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NEW ENGLAND FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS RECEIVES MAJOR FUNDING TO SUPPORT CONTEMPORARY DANCE PERFORMANCE THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES

2nd year of Support from the MetLife Foundation Widens Reach

(BOSTON) New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) announced today that it has received a \$250,000 award from MetLife Foundation. The funding will support MetLife Community Connections, a component of NEFA's National Dance Project (NDP). This is the second year that NDP has received support from the foundation.

Deemed the "fairy godmother of dance" by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, NDP uses funding and information-sharing to provide a support system for the living, evolving discipline of dance in the United States. During the 2008-09 season, MetLife Community Connections (www.nefa.org/grantprog/ndp/metlife.html) will support 43 engagements that feature six NDP projects (up from 39 engagements and five projects last year) with community engagement activities, including workshops, master classes, and collaborations with local schools.

Said NEFA Executive Director Rebecca Blunk, "MetLife is helping world class dance artists engage deeply with communities being reached by our National Dance Project. We are truly grateful for MetLife's continuing partnership."

"We are proud to renew our partnership with NEFA to provide additional resources to support community programs nationwide in connection with NDP tours," said MetLife Foundation President Sibyl Jacobson. "We commend NEFA for its commitment to connecting choreographers and dance companies to diverse communities across the country."

NDP artists are selected annually from a range of established and emerging talent. NDP's grantmaking supports the creation and touring of regionally and nationally significant dance work whether in modern, ballet, and jazz, or culturally-specific and ethnic dance forms. Often projects combine genres or are interdisciplinary in nature. Many of the projects funded by NDP give voice and visibility to under-represented communities. To date, NDP grants have supported more than 200 new dance works involving more than 300 presenters of dance in 3,700 performances and 6,000 community activities. NDP has reached over 2.2 million audience members and funds tours to an average of thirty-six states annually.

About the MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife to carry on its longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Grants are made to support health, educational, civic and cultural organizations and programs throughout the country. Recognizing the vital role the arts play in building communities and educating young people, MetLife Foundation contributes to the arts and culture by focusing on increasing opportunities for young people, reaching broader audiences through inclusive programming and making arts more accessible for all people. For more information about the Foundation, please visit its web site at www.metlife.org.

About New England Foundation for the Arts

NEFA creatively supports the movement of people, ideas, and resources in the arts within New England and beyond, makes vital connections between artists and audiences, and builds the strength, knowledge, and leadership of the region's creative sector. NEFA is a 501 (c) 3 that operates with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New England state arts agencies, and from corporations, foundations and individuals.

NEFA administers ten grant-making programs that support the performing arts, public art, and Native arts. NEFA is also actively involved in ten projects and initiatives, ranging from the research and analysis of the impact of the creative economy to the creation and administration of resources and online tools, which link and advance the regional, national, and international cultural community. For more information, please visit www.nefa.org or call [617] 951-0010.

Additional funds for NDP are provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Australia Council for the Arts.

About the Grantees

The featured artists for the MetLife Community Connections program are David Rousseve/REALITY (Los Angeles, CA); Ragamala Music and Dance Theater (Minneapolis); PHILADANCO (Philadelphia); Joe Goode Performance Group (San Francisco); Pat Graney Company (Seattle); and Gesel Mason Performance Projects (Washington, D.C.). Project descriptions, with outreach components, are described below.

1. David Rousseve/REALITY

REALITY, based in Los Angeles, California, was founded in 1989 by David Rousseve to perform his unique blend of dance/theater. **REALITY** is an ethnically and artistically diverse troupe comprised of six to up to a dozen performers. Individual members are distinguished by a wide range of backgrounds, from postmodern to world dance. "Part of my company's artistic agenda is to create a dialogue with as many communities and audiences as possible, both on and off stage by using African American culture to speak on 'universal issues of the heart'" explains Mr. Rousseve. "Rousseve's dancers have modeled themselves on his physical courage, a willingness to push the body to extremes that reveals the ache of a restless soul" (The Village Voice).

REALITY's touring engagements have always included company residencies that culminate in performances. Community activities have included a wide range of master classes, workshops, video screening, lectures, open rehearsals, and post-performance discussions for an equally wide range of (often disempowered) communities. The company is thrilled that *Saudade* - in the diversity of a cast that includes practitioners of South Asian, Indonesian, West African, and postmodern forms of movement - offers the opportunity to vastly expand residency offerings and to outreach to an even wider array of communities.

Project Title: *Saudade*

David Rousseve leads a wildly creative cast of seven international performers in a fierce, exuberant dance theater work, *Saudade* - an ode to the idea of "bittersweet." Rousseve's character monologues, told from a uniquely southern, African American perspective, capture perseverance in the face of oppression and conjure images of wonder and flight, the night sky and the deep southern bayou. Traditional and contemporary Fado recordings provide the emotional glue of the work.

6 presenters in CA, IL, MA, MD, NJ

Outreach Components:

Clarice Smith, College Park, MD— The one-week residency includes one to two dialogues with Rousseve and other select scholars, artists and/or activists, three to four special workshops with University of Maryland Dance students in world forms, one to two special workshops with Nyumburu center (African American Student Union Center) and post performance talks.

Peak Performances, Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ— The one-week residency includes a dance workshop with students and collaborations with community partners, as well as pre- and post-performance discussions.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA– The one-week residency includes a community master class, a post-performance conversation, a separate public program in collaboration with museum of the African Diaspora, and a program for professional development for local choreographers.

Columbia Dance Center, Chicago, IL– The one-week residency includes a master class for professional and pre-professional dancers, one to two activities planned with community partners, two to three technique classes for Dance Center students, one lecture/discussion class with Rousseve, and one post-performance discussion.

UCLA Live, Los Angeles, CA– The one-week residency includes a lecture demonstration, workshops, a reception and a post performance discussion.

Jacob's Pillow, Becket, MA– The four-day residency includes a reception, as well as pre- and post-performance discussions.

2. Ragamala Music and Dance Theater

Minneapolis-based Ragamala Music and Dance Theater's work provides a bridge between cultures both ancient and modern, exploring a unique style of living poetry for the stage. Rooted in Bharatanatyam, a classical dance form from southern India, Ragamala blends dance, music, and poetry. Old forms are used in new ways to retain the past, enhance the present, and inspire the future. The company offers one of the most respected and sought-after residency programs in the country. Artistic Director Raneer Ramaswamy has gained a national reputation for offering a diverse range of community and school programs that encourage students and community members to explore the arts and culture of India while inspiring them to respect diversity.

Project Title: *Sva (Vital Force)*

Six dancers and four drummers converge on stage to embody the rhythm and flow of life and the primordial sound that unites all of creation—the sacred and the profane, the animate and the inanimate. The title work of a repertory evening, *Sva* brings the thundering percussion and stunning physicality of Wadaiko Ensemble Tokara of Nagano, Japan, into conversation with Ragamala's complex rhythmic structures and dynamic athleticism. Choreographers Raneer Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy join forces with virtuoso composer/drummer Art Lee, inspired by the spiritual and philosophical kinships between Japanese Taiko and Bharatanatyam, a classical dance form from southern India.

10 presenters in CA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, OK, PA

Outreach Components:

University of Farmington, Farmington, ME - The eleven-day residency includes nine dance classes, two lecture-demonstrations, and eight workshops, including Poetry and Dance, Myth and Dance, The Idea of Synthesis in the Arts, Storytelling for Children, Indian Culture, Theater Abhinaya, Indian Home Cooking, Tokara, and Tokara/Ragamala.

Montgomery Community College, Blue Bell, PA– a lecture-demonstration and a work-in-progress showing

St. Anselm College, Manchester, NH– a lecture-demonstration, a workshop, a reception, and a panel

Westchester Community College, Valhalla, NY– a reception and a question and answer session

Monmouth University, West Long Branch, NJ– a lecture demonstration, a workshop, a reception and two panels

Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA– a lecture-demonstration

Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK– a lecture-demonstration and a reception

California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, CA– a question and answer session

Poway Center for the Performing Arts, Poway, CA – to-be-determined outreach activities focused on the Asian community

Performances to Grow On, Ojai, CA – a lecture-demonstration

3. PHILADANCO

Philadelphia-based **PHILADANCO** has grown since 1970 from a community arts organization based in West Philadelphia to a dance company celebrated throughout the world. Founder and Executive Artistic Director Joan Myers Brown and her 18 dancers are famed for innovative choreography, blending African American-based dance with ballet, jazz, and modern. Philadanco's repertoire includes works by Talley Beatty, Ronald K. Brown, Donald Byrd, George Faison, and Gene Hill Sagan, among others. The company premieres new productions each year and performs nationally and internationally, approximately 40 weeks each year.

Project Title: *In the Black Tradition*

Christopher Huggins will create a bold new work for PHILADANCO to be toured in 08-09 as part of a larger program titled *In the Black Tradition*. PHILADANCO has a tradition of presenting the work of choreographers from across a broad spectrum and has had several highly successful collaborations with Mr. Huggins in recent seasons. The company prepares for its historic 40th anniversary season (09-10) with this exciting new project that also includes repertoire by Talley Beatty and Hinton Battle among others.

9 presenters in AZ, CO, DE, MA, NC, PA, VA

Outreach Components:

Lincoln Center, Fort Collins, CO– a workshop with Black Alliance and Black Student services

CU Artist series, Boulder, CO– a master class with collaborators United Black Women of Boulder County and the Institute for African American Leadership

Lakewood Heritage Culture and Arts, Lakewood, CO – a workshop

World Music, Inc., Boston, MA– two community workshops/master classes, pre-performance talks with dance scholar and post performance question and answer session

Grand Opera House, Wilmington, DE– The three-week residency includes three master classes with community partners and a lecture-demonstration for youth.

Center for the Arts-George Mason University, Fairfax, VA– one workshop

UA Presents, Tucson, AZ – a workshop and an open rehearsal

Pasquerilla Arts Center, Johnstown, PA - a question and answer session and a lecture demonstration

East Carolina University, Greenville, NC – two lecture-demonstrations (one for middle school and one for community) a master class for high school students, a pre-performance lecture and a post-performance discussion.

4. Joe Goode Performance Group

Based in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Joe Goode Performance Group promotes understanding, compassion and tolerance among people through the innovative use of dance and theater, as interpreted by the artistic vision and work of Joe Goode.

Project Title: *Wonderboy*

Joe Goode Performance Group, renowned American dance theater company from San Francisco, collides text and song with deeply physical, high velocity dancing. In this new collaboration with master puppeteer Basil Twist, Goode integrates yet another art form into his innovative cross-disciplinary work. *Wonderboy* is an unexpected tale of a peculiar superhero isolated by his gift of super sensitivity. Twist's fragile puppet becomes the embodiment of "the other," and the puppeteering becomes part of the dance itself. With music by Carla Kihlstedt of Tin Hat Trio.

8 presenters in CA, IN, MA, MD, MO, NY, TX, WY

Outreach Components:

Irvine Barclay Theater, Irvine, CA– one workshop

Edison Theater, St. Louis, MO– The three-day residency includes three workshops, two panels and two question and answer sessions.

Dancers Workshop, Jackson, WY– The one week residency includes a lecture demonstration with Teton County schools district, a puppet and puppet making workshop, open rehearsals and four to five community workshops.

Society for the Performing Arts, Houston, TX– The one-week residency includes a lecture demonstration, a seven day workshop and a question and answer session.

Northeastern University Center for the Arts, Boston, MA– The five-day residency includes six workshops, three open rehearsals, and a question and answer session.

Fort Wayne Dance Collective, Fort Wayne, IN– two workshops and one question and answer session

The Joyce Theater, New York, NY– a reception, a question and answer session, and a podcast/blog

Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, College Park, MD– The five-day residency includes creative dialogues with Joe Goode, post-performance talks with Goode and Basil Twist, one to two workshops for dance students, a classroom visit with students in LGBT Studies, and a workshop or classroom visit with Basil Twist.

5. Pat Graney

The mission of the Seattle-based Pat Graney Company is to create and perform new dance/performance works and to conduct arts education programming. The Pat Graney Company commits itself to performing original dance works regionally, nationally, and internationally, as well as creating programs that work with students, incarcerated women/girls and other special populations. Community involvement is a central aspect of the company's work.

Project Title: *House of Mind*

House of Mind invites the public to view performance in an environment created in exacting detail in a 6-10,000 square foot warehouse. The work takes the viewer into the nature of how one conceives of memory – through sound, movement, smell & visuals. Modular units (walls of separate rooms) will be shipped to each locale, and performances will take place onsite. The touring group consists of 6 performers and 4 technicians, with 25 performers to be selected on-site from the community. Found objects and materials are used; an old warehouse space is ideal. The build-out and rehearsal period is one month with performances over two to four weekends.

3 presenters in NY, TX, and FL

Outreach Components (including casting of 25 local performers):

Dance Theater Workshop/Manhattan Cultural Council, New York, NY– a three-week residency of a site-specific work that will be installed in collaboration with the Manhattan Cultural Council as part of the River to River Festival 2009

DiverseWorks, Houston, TX– a three-week residency of a site-specific work that will be installed in Houston

Miami Light Project, Miami, FL– a month-long residency in Miami, FL

6. Gesel Mason

Based in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, **Gesel Mason Performance Projects** (GMPP) creates dance theater works that "move her audience to tears and laughter" (Washington Post). **Gesel Mason** has performed nationally and internationally with Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company, Repertory Dance Theatre of Utah, Jacek Luminski of Silesian Dance Theatre, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, and Ralph Lemon. She was selected Emerging Choreographer by the Bates Dance Festival in 2000, received 2 Metro DC Dance Awards for *NO BOUNDARIES* and a 2007 Millennium Stage Local Dance Commissioning Project from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Project Title: *NO BOUNDARIES: Dancing the Visions of Contemporary Black Choreographers*

NO BOUNDARIES: Dancing the Visions of Contemporary Black Choreographers, celebrates the diversity of work by, for and about African-Americans. Several of the nation's leading contemporary choreographers, including Bebe Miller, Donald McKayle, Reggie Wilson, Andrea Woods, David Rousseve, and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar set original and historical works on soloist Gesel Mason for this unique project. *NO BOUNDARIES* captures several decades of choreographic vision in one evening, while video segments, seamlessly integrated between the solos, offer an intimate dialogue with the artists and their work.

7 presenters in DC, GA, OH, PA, TX, VA

Outreach Components:

Pro-Arts Collective, Austin, TX – one open dress rehearsal, one post performance question and answer session, and one reception.

Painted Bride, Philadelphia, PA – two workshops and one question and answer session

South Dallas Cultural Center, Dallas, TX– The three-day residency includes one lecture demonstration and two workshops.

Contemporary Dance Theater, Cincinnati, OH – The five-day residency includes a lecture demonstration, two workshops, three open rehearsals, a question and answer session, and a reception.

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA – The three-day residency includes a dance master class, a movement for actors workshop, and a culture and identity through art lecture demonstration.

Dance Place, Washington, DC – The three-day residency includes a master class, a school time lecture demonstration, and a question and answer session.

National Black Arts Festival, Atlanta, GA – The three-day residency includes a lecture demonstration, a workshop, a panel, a reception, and a podcast/blog

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