



Statement on the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts Round 2 Grantees Announced and Round 3 Request for Proposals Issued

New York City, March 27, 2009—Children’s Theatre Company (CTC), HERE Arts Center, Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts have been selected to participate in the second round of the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts, a program open to producing and presenting organizations in theatre, dance, and jazz that supports the design and prototyping of innovations that address major challenges. Designed and managed by EmcArts with a generous \$1.5-million grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF), the Innovation Lab was created specifically to address the new, urgent priorities that have arisen in conjunction with major shifts in the operating and funding environment for the arts, challenges that cannot be resolved by business-as-usual practices. The partnership with DDCF provides funding for three Lab Cohorts, each comprised of four participating organizations. *The application deadline for the third round is Thursday, May 7, 2009. Information may be found below and in the RFP at www.EmcArts.org.*

Cohort 2 Innovation Lab Grantees–Project Descriptions

The projects proposed by the Cohort 2 Innovation Lab grantees focus on activities that facilitate dialogue and reshape relationships – between organizations and their audiences and between internal constituents:

Tony Award-winning **Children’s Theatre Company (CTC)**, based in Minneapolis, creates theatre experiences that educate, challenge, and inspire young people. CTC plans to use the Lab to transform audiences from passive observers to active participants. The goals are to produce better art, inspire creativity, demystify the artistic process, build an appreciation for new works, and foster community. The project will focus on expanding pre- and post-performance access points for audiences through activities such as youth focus groups and advisory councils, the commissioning of community-based work, and reading discussion groups. Post-performance activities will include dialogues with actors, interfaith talks led by religious leaders, and online opportunities such as blogs and chat rooms that will extend the post-production conversation.

HERE Arts Center is developing *HERE: On Demand!*, a technology and media-driven marketing strategy geared to harness the Web’s power to bring HERE’s award-winning programming to an expanded community. Based in New York City, HERE produces and presents over 40 artist presentations annually – new hybrid performance works that combine artistic disciplines (theatre, dance, music, puppetry, and media art) in a cutting-edge arts space. Unlike many of its producing counterparts, HERE’s core audience is young and ethnically diverse. The first phase of HERE’s project will focus on website and data management infrastructure improvements; the second phase will involve the expansion of the website’s social media capacities – possible additions include artist interviews, rehearsal and performance footage, live feeds, Facebook and YouTube updates, and daily Twitter updates – and the integration of donor, attendance, and e-communication contacts into one database to enable HERE to identify attendance patterns and giving capacities.

Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), a theatre company based in rural Ashland, Oregon, intends to build and test a democratic, centralized online electronic work space – a virtual collaborative workspace – in which all constituents can post, organize, track, discuss, and archive the design and creation of OSF productions from conception to closing. The project grew out of the OSF’s need to address a growing challenge: its shift from being a company with a large number of local resident artists to a company that now relies more heavily in its



rotating repertory structure on numerous artists who reside all over the world. The expectation is that the online collaborative space will facilitate sustained necessary dialogues between resident staff and offsite OSF artists and mitigate design and conceptual problems early on.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA), a San Francisco-based arts venue that presents diverse contemporary art from the Bay Area and around the world, intends to use the Lab to support *YBCA: INSIDE/OUT*, an innovation project that revolutionizes YBCA's constituency engagement practices. In doing so, the organization hopes to establish a new model for relationships with visitors, one that challenges the traditional relationship between museums, presenting organizations, and audiences. The project is comprised of three broad categories – physical space, cultural practices, and programs – with activities in each area focusing on eliminating conventional barriers that dictate the use of space, audience access and mobility, and methods of art presentation. YBCA will use the Lab to explore the cultural practices component of the program by prototyping ideas that challenge accepted practices of running an arts center, such as the redesigning of gallery hours, the integration of gallery hours with other YBCA events, redesigned ticketing policies, an open-access facility (including offices and backstage areas), and all-night arts events and other self-curated engagements.

About the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts and Round 3 Applications

Most arts institutions operate using constantly stretched resources and consequently struggle to implement truly new ideas. At the same time, however, the capacity of American arts organizations **to innovate – to find new pathways to mission fulfillment that are discontinuous from previous practice and that result from shifts in underlying organizational assumptions** – is and will be a leading indicator of sustained marketplace success and viability. The Innovation Lab was designed to serve as a catalyst for the journey to these new pathways: to help arts organizations challenge core operating assumptions, engage in intense planning on a practical innovation project, create a sense of organization-wide investment in change, and test innovative strategies with grants that help organizations prototype new practices.

Ultimately, the three-phase Innovation Lab provides a strong framework within which new strategies can be explored and prototyped in relatively low-stakes environments before a full launch. The four participating Cohort 3 Lab organizations will each identify a cross-constituent Innovation Team to plan, experiment, and implement their innovation within a year's time. As part of the Innovation Lab, these teams will participate in a five-day Intensive retreat designed to accelerate their projects. Lab participants will receive ongoing facilitation support throughout the program and use \$25,000 of seed grant money to prototype and evaluate their innovative strategy before the final roll-out.

For the first pilot round of Lab grantees, a limited number of proposal requests were solicited. Like Cohort 2, the Cohort 3 round is open to a broader group of professionally managed producing and presenting organizations in theatre, dance, and jazz nationally. *The Round 3 application deadline is Thursday, May 7, 2009.*



EmcArts Inc. is a New York-based nonprofit service organization for learning and innovation in the arts. To learn more about the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts or EmcArts' other innovation services, please visit <www.EmcArts.org> or contact **Melissa Dibble, Director of Client Partnerships**, at <MDibble@EmcArts.org> or (212) 362-8541, ext. 24.

The 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 the prevention of child maltreatment, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke's properties.