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Company One Theatre Receives \$15,000 Art Work Award from the National Endowment for the Arts

[Boston, MA]—In its first 50 years, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awarded more than \$5 billion in grants to recipients in every state and U.S. jurisdiction, the only arts funder in the nation to do so. Today, the NEA announced awards totaling more than \$27.6 million in its first funding round of fiscal year 2016, including an Art Works award of \$15,000 to *Company One Theatre* to develop the World Premiere of *The Bill Russell Project* (working title) by Kristoffer Diaz. *The Bill Russell Project* was commissioned as part of Oregon Shakespeare Festival's American Revolutions, a cycle of 50 plays by America's most compelling playwrights addressing the history of the country.

The Art Works category supports the creation of work and presentation of both new and existing work, lifelong learning in the arts, and public engagement with the arts through 13 arts disciplines or fields.

NEA Chairman Jane Chu said, “The arts are part of our everyday lives – no matter who you are or where you live – they have the power to transform individuals, spark economic vibrancy in communities, and transcend the boundaries across diverse sectors of society. Supporting projects like the one from Company One Theatre offers more opportunities to engage in the arts every day.”

The NEA’s funding will make possible the second collaboration of Diaz and Company One. In 2012, C1 Artistic Director Shawn LaCount directed the Boston Premiere of Diaz’s Pulitzer Prize Finalist and Obie Award Winner, *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity*. LaCount will direct the proposed new project, as well.

The Bill Russell Project, a play by nationally-renowned playwright Kristoffer Diaz, will use the platform of sports, specifically the story of the epic rivalry between Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlain, two of the greatest athletes in American history, to highlight issues of race, class, segregation and labor that Boston is still dealing with today.

“The most exciting thing about using pop culture to explore culture at large,” says LaCount, “is that people care deeply about sports. Millions of people watch every game, and the issues within the sporting world touch every aspect of our social and political lives. By using theater to investigate sports, Diaz and Company One will have the chance to reach new audiences, exposing them to the magic of the form. The work of development and production will not be confined to the stage, but will be focused in and between the neighborhoods of Boston, where the play will be a spark for conversation.”

The Bill Russell Project is expected to kick-off Company One Theatre's 19th Season in the fall of 2018.

>> About Company One Theatre

Consistently dubbed Best Of Boston, Company One Theatre is Boston's theatre for the people. Founded in 1999, Company One's mission is to change the face of Boston theatre by uniting the city's diverse communities through socially provocative performance and the development of civically engaged artists. The award-winning company has been instrumental in bringing younger and more diverse audiences to see and participate in socially and politically relevant theatre.

"Company One has... established itself as a home for must-see theater... To attend one of their performances is often to feel yourself immersed in exuberance, with waves of energy pouring from the stage, usually reciprocated by an avidly enthusiastic audience that is far younger and more diverse than the Boston theater norm." — Boston Globe

"You sense, at a Company One production, that the troupe is reaching out to audiences that other theaters aren't, particularly young audiences. And the laughter that you hear... sounds like a new generation learning to love the theater." — WBUR

>> About Kristoffer Diaz

Kristoffer Diaz is a New Dramatists resident playwright, speaker, and educator. His play *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, and has gone on to more than twenty-five productions nationwide. Other full-length titles include *Welcome to Arroyo's*, *#therevolution*, *The Upstairs Concierge*, and *The Unfortunates*.

His work has been produced, commissioned, and developed at The Public Theater, Dallas Theater Center, Geffen Playhouse, ACT, Center Theatre Group, The Goodman, Second Stage, Victory Gardens, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Theater Company, The Atlantic, InterAct, Mixed Blood, The Orchard Project, Hip-Hop Theater Festival, The Lark, Summer Play Festival, Donmar Warehouse, and South Coast Repertory, among many others. Awards include the Guggenheim, Jerome, Van Lier, NYFA, and Gail Merrifield Papp Fellowships; New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award; Lucille Lortel, Equity Jeff, and OBIE Awards; and the Future Aesthetics Artist Regrant, among others. As a screenwriter, he has developed original television pilots for HBO and FX. Kristoffer holds a BA from New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, an MFA from NYU's Department of Dramatic Writing, and an MFA from Brooklyn College's Performing Arts Management program. He teaches playwriting at New York University.

>> #NEAFALL15

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>> What's Next.

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