



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Pasadena Playhouse Selected for Wallace Foundation Audience-Building Initiative

\$460,000 Awarded to The Playhouse for Preliminary Audience Research Plus First Cycle of Work to Develop Asian American and Pacific Islander Audiences in the Southern California Region

PASADENA, CA, April 15, 2015 – The Pasadena Playhouse 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. The Playhouse will receive \$460,000 for the first cycle of work plus additional support from the Wallace Foundation for preliminary audience research. As part of the Wallace initiative, The Pasadena Playhouse seeks to develop stronger ties to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders of the Southern California region through the production of main stage performances that resonate with these communities, and through the cultivation of meaningful relationships within each community.

“I am tremendously thrilled and honored to receive this generous grant from The Wallace Foundation for many personal and professional reasons. Expanding the scope of the programming, reaching new audiences and building stronger relationships with our community have all been at the center of our mission for many years,” said Sheldon Epps, artistic director of The Pasadena Playhouse. “This grant recognizes and celebrates our success and leadership in that vitally important endeavor. It will enable us to further extend this initiative to the API community in our immediate area and throughout Southern California, allowing this community to also think of The Pasadena Playhouse as their theatrical home.”

The Pasadena Playhouse 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 our 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.”

The Pasadena Playhouse will receive grant support from Wallace to fund at least two “continuous learning cycles” of work. Over the course of four years, The Pasadena Playhouse will receive funds to conduct initial audience research into their target audiences, develop and implement a new audience-building program (first cycle), conduct additional audience research, study the results and then use the findings to adapt and implement a second cycle of programs. This grant covers preliminary audience research plus the first cycle of work. Next phases of work will be funded through subsequent grants.

“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,” said Teresa Eyring, executive director of Theatre Communications Group.

About The Pasadena Playhouse

Founded in 1917, The Pasadena Playhouse is one of the first two original regional theatres in the nation. Its School of Theatrical Arts laid the footprints for later MFA programs, and in 1937 it was designated the State Theatre of California. The Playhouse is committed to engaging traditional and non-traditional theatergoers, empowering young people through student performances and arts education programs, and cultivating a diverse array of talented artists through new play development and main stage productions.

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, 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.

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