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Media Contact: Irene Green  
igreen@northernstage.org  
802.296.7000 x126

## **Northern Stage Announces First Cohort of the BOLD Theater Women's Leadership Circle**

### **\$1.25 Million Gifted to Support Present and Future of Women in American Theater**

(White River Junction, VT – Feb 1, 2018) – Northern Stage today announced the winners of an unprecedented new grant to support women artistic directors in professional theaters across the United States. The BOLD Theater Women's Leadership Circle, led by Carol Dunne, Producing Artistic Director of Northern Stage, will provide \$1.25 million of support for Northern Stage and four other theaters run by female artistic directors during the 2018-2019 season. Each theater will receive a \$250,000 grant.

**The BOLD Circle's mission is to create a network of women artistic directors in professional theaters across the United States and empower them to address the issues preventing women from advancing in theater leadership.** The BOLD Circle will offer major support of artistic initiatives focused on women artists and will create a formal mentorship program to train and prepare future women artistic directors to lead, create, innovate, and deepen the impact of theater on American culture.

The first cohort of the BOLD Theater Women's Leadership Circle includes **Susan V. Booth** (The Alliance Theatre, Atlanta, GA), **Eileen Morris** (The Ensemble Theatre, Houston, TX), **Sarah Rasmussen** (Jungle Theater, Minneapolis, MN), **Lisa McNulty** (WP Theater, New York, NY), and BOLD founder **Carol Dunne** (Northern Stage, White River Junction, VT).

Each of the artistic directors chosen for the BOLD Circle has demonstrated artistic excellence and a deep impact on community. The leaders have also demonstrated a strong history of mentoring and will work together to elevate the next generation of artistic directors.

"We were overwhelmed by the applicants for the BOLD Circle," said Dunne, who noted that the BOLD Circle received over 40 applications. "The stories that our country's women artistic directors had to tell should be required reading for anyone interested in why women hold such a small percentage of leadership positions in the American theater. I am confident that this first cohort of visionary artistic directors will pave the way for countless others."

The BOLD Theater Women's Leadership Circle was created to address the small percentage of women artistic directors in the American theater. A recent study by Wellesley Centers for Women, commissioned by American Conservatory Theater Artistic Director Carey Perloff and former Executive Director Ellen Richard, revealed that women hold only 20% of artistic leadership positions in the American regional theater, and that the dearth of female theater leaders is not due to a lack of candidates but rather to a

clearly observed glass ceiling preventing women from assuming the artistic helm of professional theaters. The study points to a lack of trust from boards of directors as they interview women candidates, a lack of mentorship focused on women leaders, a complicated work-life balance that can dissuade women from pursuing leadership positions, and a lack of fundraising and producing experience.

"In this time of turmoil and change, the BOLD Artistic Leadership grant feels like a beacon in the wilderness," said BOLD winner Lisa McNulty, Producing Artistic Director of the WP Theater. "I am honored to join these indomitable women in fostering the next generation of female artistic leadership in the theater, and in shattering glass ceilings across the nation."

Along with the \$250,000 grant, the BOLD Circle will provide leadership resources for women artistic directors and networking opportunities in semiannual meetings. It also provides for a woman Associate Director position designed to train the artistic directors of the future. The BOLD Circle is made possible through generous support from the Pussycat Foundation. For more information, visit <https://northernstage.org/2017/09/18/boldcircle/>

### **About the recipients:**

*Northern Stage (northernstage.org) is a regional non-profit LORT-D professional theater company with a mission to change lives, one story at a time. Located in White River Junction, VT, Northern Stage actively involves its audiences with ambitious productions and expansive educational programs in its new home, the Barrette Center for the Arts. Founded in 1997, the company has offered more than 120 high-quality professional productions of new works, classics, and musicals. The company is now in its 21<sup>st</sup> season and annual attendance is over 35,000. Five years ago, the company launched a new play festival that has cultivated four world premiere productions, and two Off-Broadway transfers. A robust education program focuses on professional training in a nurturing and supportive environment for student ages 10 and up. Yearlong acting ensembles, by-audition summer musical theatre productions, a regional theater in the schools program, and a Dartmouth College Experiential Learning Term (accredited by Actor's Equity) are hallmarks of the education offerings.*

*Founded in 1968, the Alliance Theatre (alliancetheatre.org) is the leading producing theater in the Southeast, reaching more than 165,000 patrons annually. Under the leadership of Susan V. Booth, Jennings Hertz Artistic Director, the Alliance received the Regional Theatre Tony Award® for sustained excellence in programming, education, and community engagement. Known for its high artistic standards and national role in creating significant theatrical works, the Alliance has premiered more than 100 productions including nine that have transferred to Broadway. The Alliance education department reaches 80,000 students annually through performances, classes, camps, and in-school initiatives with programs including the Alliance Theatre Institute, Palefsky Collision Project, Kathy & Ken Bernhardt Theatre for the Very Young, and Alliance@Work. The Alliance nurtures the careers of artists through developmental programs including the Alliance/Kendeda National Graduate Playwriting Competition, producing a premiere for the winner, and the Reiser Atlanta Artists Lab, providing resources for projects devised by local artists.*

*The Ensemble Theatre (ensemblehouston.com) is the oldest and largest professional African-American theatre in the Southwest. The Ensemble was founded in 1976 by the late George Hawkins with the mission to preserve African-American artistic expression, and enlighten, entertain and enrich a diverse community. Artistic Director Eileen J. Morris has helped guide the artistic vision of The Ensemble Theatre for 28 years, and has been integral to the fulfillment of its mission. Under Eileen's leadership, The Ensemble Theatre has enjoyed national recognition, and become well known as Houston's premiere African-American performing arts institution and the anchoring arts organization of the city's Midtown Management District. The Ensemble is an AUDELCO award winner, one of the only professional theatres in the region dedicated to producing works portraying the African-American experience, and holds the distinction of being one of the nation's largest*

*African-American theatres, owning and operating its facility and producing in-house. The Ensemble Theatre continues to create innovative Education and Training programs, serve diverse communities, and bring high quality African-American theatre to over 65,000 audience members annually.*

*The Jungle Theater ([jungletheater.org](http://jungletheater.org)) produces imaginative work in an intimate setting that is deeply rooted in the Lyn-Lake neighborhood of Minneapolis. In her third season as Artistic Director, Sarah Rasmussen has significantly increased the representation of women, both on and off stage, and has renewed the Jungle's commitment to producing and commissioning new work. The Jungle is also passionate about supporting new generations of theater makers through such program as Jungle Writes, a free playwriting course and mentorship program for teenage girls. A flagship example of the transformational power of the performing arts, the Jungle plays a vital role in the economic and cultural development of its neighborhood. The Jungle was founded in 1991 by Bain Boehlke and counts among its credits a dozen Ivey Awards and numerous top production awards from critics.*

*WP Theater (Formerly known as Women's Project Theater/[wptheater.org](http://wptheater.org)) is the nation's oldest and largest theater company dedicated to developing, producing and promoting the work of female-identified and trans theater artists at every stage in their careers. For nearly four decades we have served as leaders at the forefront of a global movement towards gender parity. WP empowers female-identified artists to reach their full potential and, in doing so, challenges preconceptions about the kinds of plays women write and the stories they tell. WP artists work regularly on and off Broadway, and collectively, have won all of the awards currently given for achievement in the field, including multiple Tony, Lortel, OBIE, Drama Desk, Drama League, Lilly, and Whiting Awards; an Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama; and multiple Pulitzer Prizes. WP was founded in 1978 by visionary producer, Julia Miles, to address the significant under-representation of women in theater.*

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