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## Launch of *The Hatchery* to Offer Specialized Development Support for Music, Movement-Driven Theatermakers

**Independent theater company, Many Hats Collaboration, to receive \$10,000 grant from the National Endowment of the Arts**

**January 24, 2024 – Portland, OR** – Many Hats Collaboration, a Portland, OR theater company founded in 2005, announces it will launch a new works development program supporting theatermakers who center music and movement as part of their theater practice. The inaugural year of *The Hatchery* is partially funded by a \$10,000 award from the National Endowment of the Arts Challenge America grant. Many Hats was selected for this prestigious federal grant due to *The Hatchery*'s purpose to serve historically underrepresented playwrights/ensembles. Two weeklong workshops of new theater works will run simultaneously August 20-25 of this year, with public performances on August 25th, 2024, at *The Judy* (Judy Kafoury Center for Youth Arts) in downtown Portland.

“The NEA grant is a huge vote of confidence for starting a new works festival,” said Many Hats Artistic Director Jessica Wallenfels. “There’s a recognized need to reinvent our process in order to create the compelling new works that will bring revitalized audiences back to the theater, and I’m convinced it involves music, song, dance and the full breadth of expression that is available to us as theatermakers.”

Total funding for *The Hatchery* currently totals \$30,000, which represents the sum of the NEA grant, as well as the support of individual donations.

*The Hatchery* represents a nontraditional new works development model to serve creators who incorporate music and movement as an integral part of the storytelling and audience

experience. Whereas many new play festivals offer a short rehearsal process that focuses on the script and playwright's process, those that offer support for the composer and choreographer's place in the artistic process are nearly unheard of, and are usually reserved for workshopping musical theater. Filling this gap, The Hatchery provides a unique process to support the incorporation of music and movement with collaboration from award-winning artists trained specifically in choreography, movement, music, and sound.

In line with its mission, Many Hats' programming during the pandemic largely focused on workshopping new plays that incorporate music and movement. The Hatchery is an extension of this work, and will serve historically underrepresented playwrights/ensembles as well as local, regional, and national artists.

Many Hats will present two projects with The Hatchery program in 2024. The first is *WHY and HOW Are Not in the Picture*, by Monique Holt. Holt's piece is written in American Sign Language for a cast of d/Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing actors. It also features sound and lighting components, as well as open captions, that will increase the accessibility and dimensionality of the piece for a mixed audience of Deaf, Hearing, and Hard-of-Hearing people. Holt's script received a preliminary virtual workshop in November 2023.

The second new work featured in The Hatchery will be selected from proposals submitted by emerging theater artists currently within Many Hats' network of collaborators citywide. In 2025, an application will be available online for any qualifying artists to apply. Preproduction for both projects will begin in the first quarter of this year, providing dramaturgical, technical, design, and peer support designed to meet artists' specific creative and access needs as they test their visions, and develop work.

"This is a learning year for us," said Wallenfels. "We're treating this first Hatchery as a pilot, and plan to learn a lot about refining our process for the coming years. Next year, we'll open the net even wider to submissions."

The Hatchery offers its projects a 30-hour workshop with paid stipends to all collaborators. At the end of the six-day exploratory rehearsal process, audiences are invited to two work-in-progress showings at The Judy (the new home of Northwest Children's Theater and School), which introduce the projects to local artistic directors, presenters and community collaborators, as well as audiences hungry for new work. Audience and peer feedback are invaluable at this pivotal stage of development.

Ticketing and registration details have not yet been finalized, but The Hatchery's work in progress performances will be free and open to the public, with donations encouraged.

The Hatchery aligns with other new works festivals in the area including the Fertile Ground Festival, the Risk/Reward Festival, the JAW Festival and theater 33's Summer Festival. The Hatchery aims to be a stimulus to the contemporary theater canon and attract theatermakers to

the Pacific Northwest while providing support for artists creating in collaborative ensembles or outside a strictly script-based model.

“The ‘hot house’ support The Hatchery provides to music and movement-oriented theatermakers, is tremendously exciting,” said Nicole Lane, Fertile Ground Festival of New Works Director Emerita. “To have professionals at the ready to assist in new works development of this nature is a game-changer—for the works of Fertile Ground, and far beyond to the artistic generativity of the Pacific Northwest.”

With the post-pandemic closure of major national new works festivals such as the decades-old Humana Festival in Louisville, KY and the Lark Play Development Center in New York City, Wallenfels felt it incumbent upon smaller arts organizations to pick up the slack, elsewhere in the US.

Many Hats’ formation of a new works program to support historically underserved playwrights flows naturally out of the [5 in 5 Initiative](#), which focused on supporting the creation of innovative new projects from independent artists of color and other historically underrepresented backgrounds. Many Hats recently completed the ambitious five year program, the 5 in 5 initiative, which culminated in the development of seven new works across as many mediums, including [video](#), workshops, a [mainstage co-production with Portland Playhouse](#), and educational programming.

Many Hats plans to grow The Hatchery to support up to four projects over a multi-week period in the coming several years.

### **Performance Details**

- **What:** A new works festival featuring work in progress showings of two brand new theater performances, including *WHY and HOW Are Not in the Picture*, and a to-be-announced original work
- **Where:** The Judy (Judy Kafoury Center for Youth Arts), 1000 SW Broadway, T-100, Portland, OR 97205
- **When:** August 20-25 with public performances on August 25, performance times TBD
- **Tickets:** Registration information TBD - see [manyhatscollaboration.org](https://www.manyhatscollaboration.org) for details in the coming months

Online info available at: <https://www.manyhatscollaboration.org/>

### **About Many Hats Collaboration**

Many Hats Collaboration creates theater performances which reimagine music and movement onstage. Since 2005, Many Hats has created 10 original, genre defying performances spanning theater, music, site-specific movement, and film. With the belief that arts are vital to life, Many Hats brings artists and audiences together for shared experiences that foster connection. Our work has been co-presented by CoHo Productions, Portland Center Stage, and Bag &

Baggage, among others, received multiple Drammy Awards including Best Production of a Play, and been called “utterly charming” (Willamette Week) and “inspired” (The Oregonian).

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