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GUTHRIE THEATER RECEIVES MSAB ARTS ACCESS GRANT AND JOYCE FOUNDATION AWARD

Grants advance ongoing collaboration and development of work with the Twin Cities Native community as well as Larissa FastHorse and Ty Defoe of Indigenous Direction

(Minneapolis/St. Paul) — The Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, artistic director) announced that it is the recipient of two funding awards: a Minnesota State Arts Board Arts Access grant to advance ongoing community collaboration and art-making with the local Native community and an award from The Joyce Foundation which will allow the Guthrie to commission nationally recognized artists **Larissa FastHorse** and **Ty Defoe** of **Indigenous Direction** to create a new theater production that centers around Twin Cities Native stories, specifically that of the Dakota and Anishinaabe-Ojibwe people. Collectively, these

two awards allow the Guthrie and the Twin Cities Native community to continue a journey of intentional partnership and collaboration that began three years ago.

In summer 2017, the Guthrie collaborated with FastHorse and Defoe to produce *Water Is Sacred* — a performance that blended ceremony, music, text, dance and discussion to celebrate water and acknowledge how water has been threatened on Indigenous lands. *Stories From the Drum*, a three-part project that launched in September 2018, built on that important work. The project culminated in three performances in summer 2019 that were created from the Native-led workshops, also titled *Stories From the Drum*.

“Creating space for diverse voices is an important part of one of the Guthrie’s core values of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion,” shared Artistic Director Joseph Haj of the Guthrie Theater. “Receiving just one of these grants would have been an important piece in continuing our collaboration with the Native community. To receive both means that our work can reflect holistic engagement with the Native community — working together to create a new Native-focused play in addition to offering a breadth of activity that responds to past participants’ stated interests.”

The MSAB Arts Access grant will allow the Guthrie, in partnership with Turtle Theater Collective, to continue to collaborate with members of the Native community through:

- Free acting and playwriting classes for the Native community, hosted at the Guthrie
- Paid fellowships in Directing, Stage Management and Theater Management to three Native artists
- Curation of two Native markets to be hosted in the Guthrie’s lobby
- Free tickets for the Native community to see Guthrie productions and intentional opportunities for Guthrie staff to see and engage with Native work
- Monthly meetings of Native stakeholders at the Guthrie who will assist in guiding the grant activities
- Two free, community-wide workshops taught by FastHorse and Defoe for arts and culture leaders looking to decolonize and indigenize their spaces and processes

The Guthrie is one of four recipients of the 2020 Joyce Foundation Award, which honors collaborations between artists of color and arts and cultural organizations throughout the Great Lakes region. The grant provides for the commission of FastHorse and Defoe to create a new theater production that centers on the stories and experiences of the Twin Cities Native community, in particular, the Dakota and Anishinaabe-Ojibwe people.

The new work is an extension of the 2019 production, *Stories From the Drum*, and will continue to amplify Native voices through community engagement and art-making to create a scripted, multidisciplinary performance piece with music and dance. Artist interaction with the local Native community will address issues such as displacement, visibility and the current affordable housing crisis.

Larissa FastHorse (Sicangu Lakota) and **Ty Defoe** (Haudenosaunee, Six Nations/Anishinaabe Nation), co-founders of **Indigenous Direction**, are artists and consultants from the upper Midwest who serve as leaders in the national conversation about Indigenous performance. Indigenous Direction uses cultural protocols and ways of looking at the world to guide theater, filmmaking and writing. FastHorse is an award-winning playwright and choreographer whose work has been produced at Playwrights Horizons, Cornerstone Theater Company, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Children’s Theatre Company and History Theatre (upcoming). Defoe is a two-spirit/trans activist, cultural pioneer, writer and Grammy Award-winning musician. He was a Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Artist in Residence at the Yale Institute for Music Theatre and has worked with Indigenous populations at the Alaska Native Heritage Center and Hawaiian Playwrights Initiative.

Download photos of *Stories From the Drum* [here](#). Photos: Jessica Kray Martin

THE GUTHRIE THEATER (Joseph Haj, artistic director) was founded by Sir Tyrone Guthrie in 1963 and is an American center for theater performance, production, education and professional training, dedicated to producing the great works of dramatic literature and cultivating the next generation of theater artists. Under Haj’s leadership, the Guthrie is guided by four core values: Artistic Excellence; Community; Equity,

Diversity and Inclusion; and Fiscal Responsibility. The Guthrie produces a mix of classic and contemporary plays on three stages and continues to set a national standard for excellence in theatrical production and performance, serving more than 350,000 patrons annually. In 2006, the Guthrie opened a new home, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, located on the banks of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Open to the public year-round, it houses three state-of-the-art stages, production facilities, classrooms, full-service restaurants and dramatic public lobbies.
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