

DiverseWorks

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Aaron Landsman's project *City Council Meeting* Wins \$105,000 NEFA Grant through new National Theater Pilot

(Houston, TX, August 13, 2011) – DiverseWorks ArtSpace is pleased to announce that writer, **Aaron Landsman**, has received a **New England Foundation for the Arts Grant** through its **National Theater Pilot** to support the development and touring of his new project, ***City Council Meeting***, which will be presented as part of the DiverseWorks ArtSpace 2012-2013 season.

The National Theater Pilot is a new program exploring a system of support for professional, artist-led collaborative theater. Landsman is one of six writers to receive \$50,000 for the development of devised theater work and will be eligible to \$55,000 to support the touring of his work. Modeled after NEFA's National Dance Project, and with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the pilot is funding two rounds of six projects each to test assumptions about supporting ensemble theater development and touring in the U.S.

"DiverseWorks is excited to be a co-commissioner of such an innovative project," says Artistic Director Sixto Wagan. "These awards are recognition of Aaron's ability to challenge the notion of theater, take audiences participation to a meaningful level and how to utilize theater to catalyze community dialogue. What we will do here in Houston will influence the work that will happen in Arizona, San Francisco and all the subsequent touring sites."

Landsman's *City Council Meeting* is performed participatory democracy, with viewers and actors sharing the roles of council members, activists and bystanders. Borrowing tales from a half dozen cities where Aaron Landsman sat in on government meetings, the piece asks everyone in the room to create a fictional city that exists for a single night. *City Council Meeting* will premiere at HERE in 2012/2013 and travel to DiverseWorks ArtSpace. New excerpts of *City Council Meeting* are on deck this spring at Stanford University, Women Center Stage, and A.R.T.'s Emerging Americas Festival in Boston.

"DiverseWorks has been an early commissioning partner on two [of my] projects and both times, their start-up has helped me build momentum both for the specific pieces we created together and for my career overall," states Landsman. "Their early and enthusiastic role as a commissioning partner on *City Council Meeting* has led directly to the national-level support we are now garnering for the work."

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Aaron Landsman's thought provoking and innovative storytelling was last witnessed by Houston audiences in 2005 with the play, *What You've Done*. DiverseWorks ArtSpace and the National Performance Network, commissioned, *What You've Done*, and co-presented the project with Project Row Houses and Catastrophic Theatre. It was performed in a row house in Houston's Third Ward neighborhood and starred Eleanor Colvin, Autumn Knight, and Troy Shulze

City Council Meeting is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation Fund Project co-commissioned by DiverseWorks ArtSpace in partnership with HERE Art Center (New York), Z-Space (San Francisco) and NPN. The Creation Fund is supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency). For more information: www.npnweb.org.

About Aaron Landsman

Aaron Landsman is a playwright, actor and teacher. Original site-specific performance works include: *Appointment*, an ongoing series of collaborative works created for one audience member, performed in working offices all over the world (so far Oslo, Chicago, Detroit, New York - upcoming in Austin and Berlin); *Open House*, commissioned by The Foundry Theatre in New York and presented in 24 New York City apartments, from a squat in Bushwick to a multimillionaire's loft overlooking the Brooklyn Bridge; *Love Story*, an audio walk and gallery monologue presented at Austin's FuseBox Festival; *What You've Done*, a co-production between Houston's DiverseWorks Art Space and Project Row Houses; and *Desk*, performed in an abandoned midtown office.

Stage works include *Special Tonight*, *Running Away From The One With The Knife*, *Wreckage*, *How To Get By And Be Easily Understood*, and *Red White and Still*, have been presented in New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, San Diego and Minneapolis, and internationally in Sweden and Belarus. My work has been funded by The Jerome Foundation, The Bosssak-Heilbron Foundation, the Vogelstein Foundation, Brooklyn Arts Council and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, as well as by individual donors. Landsman is a current artist in residence at HERE art center, and was recently a member of the P73 writers' group, a finalist for the Yale Drama Series and an artist-in-residence at University Settlement.

Since 2004, Landsman has performed regularly with Elevator Repair Service Theater, appearing in two acclaimed productions, *Gatz* and *The Sound And The Fury*, both of which continue to tour regionally and internationally. He has also appeared in the work of, among other artists, Julia Jarcho, Richard Maxwell, Tory Vazquez, Johanna S. Meyer, and Phil Soltanoff/Mad Dog. He has taught at NYU and The Juilliard School, and guest lectured widely on artistic process, collaboration, and professional development for artists.

Landsman's publication credits include *Contemporary Theatre Review(UK)*, *The Village Voice*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *Hobart* and *Mudfish*. He is currently developing several new projects including an immersive theater work called *Waiting Room* and a big huge experience called *City Council Meeting*.

About DiverseWorks ArtSpace

DiverseWorks is a non-profit art center in Houston, Texas dedicated to presenting new visual, performing, and literary art. DiverseWorks is a place where the process of creating art is valued and where artists can test new ideas in the public arena. By encouraging the investigation of current artistic, cultural and social issues, DiverseWorks builds, educates, and sustains

audiences for contemporary art.

DiverseWorks ArtSpace

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