April 15, 2016

It’s no secret that the life of a theatre artist is a challenge. Like any career, getting momentum and building a dynamic resume can take years. What makes it especially precarious is that creative, critical success doesn’t always result in a healthy salary and benefits. Theatre makers can easily spend 10 years building a robust portfolio with steady work, and still struggle to pay rent or attain modest financial safety. This sense of uncertainty often forces artists to take fewer creative risks and discontinue training or new learning. The drive to explore, innovate, and dream starts feeling impractical and scary. Suddenly, the very things that made a life in the theatre so appealing – become elusive.

Shotgun has spent the last several years opening its doors and creative process to young people in the early stages of their careers. Many of these artists have emerged with promising artistic contributions to Shotgun and other local and nationally recognized theatres. While we’re proud of these achievements, we’re also coming to grips with the reality that continued support of these seasoned, mature artists is also a necessity. Career artists also require time for exploration and advanced learning, but the realities of paying for childcare and a 2-bedroom apartment can squeeze that out. It’s a common story to see someone spend 15 years hustling to build a career, only to walk away because they couldn’t balance the demands of a rich, personal life with the demands of a rigorous, artistic one.

In an effort to call attention to this crisis, a patron in our community stepped forward with a grant targeted to the unique needs of these mid-career artists. Whether it is voice lessons to prepare for a role, airfare to meet an international collaborator, or actor stipends to explore a devised theatre piece – we know the difference between a dream dashed – or manifested – can be a well-timed grant. To that end, Shotgun Players will be re-granting 25K annually to artists who have worked on at least 2 shows with our company. Theatres communities flourish when artists of all cultures and generations are able to sustain and nourish a spirit of innovation and curiosity. Shotgun has continued to support a core artistic company for nearly 25 years. Our 3-person staff leadership has a combined 50+ years with the company. Creating an “artistic home” for the individuals who have contributed to our legacy is of paramount importance to all of us. Finding a way to "bridge the gap" for these committed, theatre lifers is just another way for us to help make a difference.

Onward!

Patrick Dooley
Founding Artistic Director
Shotgun Players