

NTC

national theatre conference

NTC Annual Meeting
January 16 to 18, 2026

Celebrating A Hundred Years

*connecting, supporting, and advocating for
America's theatres since 1925*

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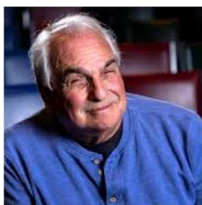
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New Members

This year, we happily welcome fifteen new members, nominated by their peers and approved by the board of trustees.



Kaaron Briscoe is a Brooklyn-based theater artist and creative producer. As an award winning playwright, her work has been featured by various theaters across the US. A classically trained actor, Kaaron often performs in experimental works. She has performed on stages in London and Moscow. During the day, Kaaron is the Artistic Associate at Lincoln Center Theater. A member of AEA, SAG-AFTRA, and the Dramatists Guild, she is a New Orleans native with an MFA from ART/MXAT/IATT at Harvard University.



Aysan Celik is a theater maker and performer. Her New York credits include BAM, The Public, NY City Center, New York Theater Workshop, Soho Rep, 59E59, Classic Stage Company, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, and Theater Row. Regional: Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Cal Shakes, Humana Festival, American Repertory Theater, and multiple US and international tours. Aysan is a longtime Associate Artist of the OBIE Award-winning companies Theater Mitu and The Civilians. She is an Associate Professor at UCSD Department of Theatre and Dance.



Playwright **Erin Courtney** is an Associate Professor in the MFA in Writing for Screen and Stage program at Northwestern University. Her plays include the Obie Award-winning *A Map of Virtue*, *Demon Baby*, *I Will Be Gone* and *Ann, Fran, and Mary Ann*. *The Tattooed Lady*, a musical co-written with Max Vernon premiered at the Philadelphia Theatre Company. She has written two musicals with Elizabeth Swados, *The Nomad* and *Kaspar Hauser*. She is an alumnus of New Dramatists, a MacDowell fellow, an affiliated artist with Clubbed Thumb, and she was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2013. BA, Brown University. MFA, Brooklyn College.

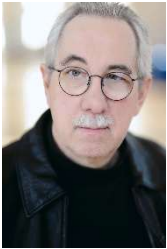


Steven Dietz's forty-plus plays and adaptations have been seen at over one hundred regional theatres, as well as Off-Broadway and in twenty-five countries internationally. For the '24-'25 season, Dietz was once again named one of the "Twenty Most Produced Playwrights in America" by *American Theatre Magazine*. Dietz was awarded the Steinberg New Play Citation for *Bloomsday*; the Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays Award for both *Fiction* and *Still Life with Iris*; the PEN USA-West Award in Drama for *Lonely Planet*; and an Edgar® Award for *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*. He has directed at many of America's major regional theatres. Previously a professor in the MFA Playwriting & Directing program at UT/Austin, Dietz continues to teach master classes at theatres and universities across the country.



Idris Goodwin is a multi award-winning storyteller whose work spans stage, screen, audio, and page. From his widely produced breakbeat plays and historical dramas such as *How We Got On*, *Hype Man: A Break Beat Play*, *This is Modern Art* and *Bars and Measures* to books for young readers like *King of the Neuro Verse* (Simon & Schuster/ Atheneum) Goodwin's been commissioned and/or produced by The Kennedy Center, The Eugene O'Neill Conference, Oregon Shakespeare

Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Arena Stage. A United States Artist Fellow and seasoned educator, he has created content for HBO Def Poetry, Sesame Street, and Nickelodeon. Idris is an Associate Professor of Dramatic Writing at Arizona State University.



David Grapes II is an Emeritus Professor of Theatre at the University of Northern Colorado, where he served as the Founding Director of the School of Theatre Arts and Dance. An award-winning director, actor, drama critic, and playwright, David has provided administrative and artistic leadership for multiple theatrical professional and academic institutions. An active member of SDC and AEA his work as a stage director (250+ productions) and actor has been seen at professional theatres across the United States. As a DGA member, David is the creator or co-creator of fifteen musicals and plays (www.summerwindproductions.com), which have enjoyed over 600 productions worldwide. David currently serves as the Dean of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.



Mia Katigbak is the co-founder and actor-manager of the award-winning National Asian American Theatre Company (NAATCO) in New York City. A USA Fellow (2021) and Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellow, she has received numerous honors, including an Obie Award, a Special Drama Desk Award, the Actors Equity Foundation's St. Clair Bayfield for Best Supporting Role in a Shakespeare Play, the Lucille Lortel and the Lee Reynolds Awards (League of Professional Theatre Women), the Actors Equity Rosetta LeNoire Award, and the St. Clair Bayfield Award for Shakespearean performance. Her additional recognitions include awards from Ma-Yi Theater, New Dramatists, and the League of Professional Theatre Women. Katigbak is widely celebrated for her artistic excellence, leadership, and lasting impact on American theater.



Carter W. Lewis served as Playwright-in-Residence at Washington University from 1999-2022. Prior to that, he was Literary Manager & Playwright-in-Residence at Geva Theatre Center in New York. Carter was also co-founder and Resident Playwright for the California new play venue Upstart Stage in Berkeley. He is the recipient of numerous national awards including a NEA/TCG Playwriting Residency, The New Dramatist Arnold Weissberger Playwriting Award, a Jerome Fellowship/Residency from the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis, and was twice honored with The Cincinnati Playhouse Lois and Richard Rosenthal New Play Prize. In 2021

he had the pleasure of serving as the Playwriting Fellow for the Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis. Carter is now writing full time in St. Louis where his prescient dog, Vivian, is snugly tucked beneath his desk at all times. Website: carterwlewis.com



Megan McClain is a dramaturg and collaborative theater artist who co-founded Peacedale Global Arts to promote international and intercultural exchange through theater. As Artistic Director, she guides Peacedale's new play development initiatives in the U.S. and abroad. She previously served as Second Stage Theater's Literary Manager, scouting plays for its Broadway and Off-Broadway venues. As the former R&D Program Director at The Civilians, she supported the work of over 80 writers, composers, and directors creating new plays and musicals. Additional dramaturgy/literary work: Disney Theatrical, Playwrights Realm, The Lark, PlayPenn and more. M.F.A Dramaturgy: UMass Amherst.



Tajh Oates (He/Him) is currently a Production Manager at the Alley Theatre. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from Georgia Southern University. Prior to the Alley, he's worked for Arizona Theatre Company, the Public Theatre, Utah Shakespeare Festival, and was an intern at the Westport Country Playhouse. Tajh is a member of the Production Managers Forum, where he serves as Chair of the Early Career Committee and a former chair of the IDEAS Committee. He was also a part of the group "No More 10/12s", which worked to end the practices of 10/12s at theatres across the country.



Lisa Portes is an award-winning director, leader, educator and advocate. She is a co-founder of the Latinx Theatre Commons and serves on the executive board of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC) and on the Directors Council of the Drama League. She is an alum of the Board of Theatre Communications Group (TCG). Her work has been seen regionally at Cal Shakes, Cincinnati Playhouse, Denver Center, Goodman Theatre, Guthrie Theatre, Olney Theatre, Portland Center Stage, Seattle Rep,

South Coast Repertory Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, and Victory Gardens Theatre. In New York she has developed and/or directed new work for Soho Rep, Playwrights Horizons, the Public, and New York Theatre Workshop. In 2016 she was honored with the SDC Zelda Fichandler Award for Directors. She was the first freelance director to be so honored. She serves as Chair of the UCSD Department of Theatre & Dance and is a proud alum of UCSD's MFA Directing program. lisaportes.com



Jon Lawrence Rivera Founding Artistic Director of Playwrights' Arena (1992). Recent directing projects: SWIPE (also playwright), MIX MIX by Boni B. Alvarez, THREE by Nick Salamone, SOUTHERNMOST by Mary Lyon Kamitaki, BABY EYES by Donald Jolly, I GO SOMEWHERE ELSE by Inda Craig-Galván, HOTEL PLAY (performed in an actual hotel), BLOODLETTING by Boni B. Alvarez (also at Kirk Douglas Theatre), @THESPEEDOFJAKE by Jennifer Maisel and many

more. He is the recipient of the first Career Achievement Award from Stage Raw, a NY Fringe Award, and an LA Weekly Award.



GIOVANNA SARDELLI is the Artistic Director of TheatreWorks Silicon Valley. Besides Sardelli's well-received productions with the Tony Award-winning TheatreWorks, she has directed and developed plays around the country, including many off-Broadway productions. Sardelli's directing credits include many collaborations with Matthew Lopez and Rajiv Joseph, including the production of Joseph's Obie Award-winning play *Describe*

The Night at Atlantic Theatre, and her production of Joseph's *Guards at the Taj* for the Geffen Theatre which won the 2016 Ovation Award for Best Production of a Play. Sardelli directed the Marvel podcast *Squirrel Girl: The Unbeatable Radio Show!* which was a 2023 Webby Honoree for Best Podcast. Sardelli holds an MFA in Acting from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and taught in NYU's Graduate Acting Program as well as its Dance Department for over a decade. She was named the 2019 Alumna of the Year for the University Nevada, Las Vegas College of Fine Arts.



DeLanna Studi (Cherokee Nation) is an actor, writer, and Artistic Director of Native Voices. Her credits include the Broadway tour of *August: Osage County*, Off-Broadway's *Gloria: A Life and Informed Consent*, and productions at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Portland Center Stage. Her play *And So We Walked*, based on retracing her family's Trail of Tears journey, premiered Off Broadway and was recorded for Audible. Film/TV credits include *Edge of America*, *Dreamkeeper*, *Goliath*, *Shameless*, *General Hospital*, *Reservation Dogs* and Disney's *The Roof*. She is a 2022 United States Artists Fellow and a finalist for the 2026 Susan Smith Blackburn Award.



Gwendolyn Whiteside - Ensemble member and Executive Artistic Director of American Blues Theater (Chicago). At American Blues, she grew the budget from zero to \$1.25MM, secured the first permanent venue, reserve & endowment; established public service into the mission; and created an arts education program. She's the recipient of nearly 20 Joseph Jefferson nominations and awards for producing; 5 nominations and awards for acting. She's included into the "Players' Hall of Fame" by Newcity Chicago. Northwestern University (B.S.); School of the Arts Institute of Chicago (M.A.); Northwestern's Kellogg School of Business (Exec Scholar - Nonprofit Management).

Schedule of Events – Friday January 16

- 9:30 AM OPEN HOUSE
Grab a cup of coffee and join in casual conversation.
- 10:00 AM PRESIDENT'S WELCOME &
NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTION
Sharon Ott, President
- CONFERENCE KICK-OFF: NTC CORE VALUES
Laura Penn, NTC member; Executive
Director, SDC
- IDEA BOUNCE
Circle up & respond in community
- 12:00 PM LUNCH
On your own
- 2:00 PM BARRIE AND BERNICE STAVIS AWARD READING
A reading of Novid Parsi's *The Life You Gave Me*, winner of the
2025 Barrie & Bernice Stavis Playwright Award, supported by
Jean Bruce Scott; directed by Janet Hayatshahi
Introduced by Risa Brainin, Stavis Award Committee Chair
Followed by A Conversation with Novid Parsi
- 4:15 PM PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION
Continue conversation with friends over drinks, courtesy of NTC

Schedule of Events – Saturday January 17

- 10:30 AM **OPEN HOUSE**
Grab a cup of coffee or juice, get ready for a great day.
- 11:00 AM **OUTSTANDING THEATRE AWARD:
WOOLLY MAMMOTH THEATRE COMPANY**
Conversation with Woolly Mammoth leadership and Committee
Chair Jack Reuler
Followed by a Q & A
- 12:00 PM **BREAK**
Cash bar
- 12:30 PM **AWARDS LUNCHEON & PRESENTATIONS**
- BARRIE AND BERNICE STAVIS PLAYWRIGHT AWARD**
Recipient: Novid Parsi
Presented by Committee Chair Risa Brainin
- OUTSTANDING THEATRE AWARD**
Recipient: Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company
Presented by Committee Chair Jack Reuler
- EMERGING PROFESSIONAL AWARD**
Recipient: Mekala Sridhar
Presented by Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company
- PERSON OF THE YEAR**
Recipient: Mark Russell
Presented by NTC President Sharon Ott
- PAUL GREEN AWARD**
Recipient: Nile Harris
Presented by Mark Russell
- 2:20 PM **A CONVERSATION WITH MARK RUSSELL
NTC PERSON OF THE YEAR**
Moderated by Sharon Ott and Robert Schenkkan
Followed by a Q & A
- 3:10PM **OPEN HOUSE: A TOAST TO 100 YEARS**

Schedule of Events – Sunday January 18

- 8:00 AM OPEN HOUSE
Grab a cup of coffee and a bagel and join in casual conversation.
- 8:30 AM NTC BUSINESS MEETING
Treasurer's Report
Committee Reports
President's Report
Vote on New Board Members
- 9:40 AM IDEA CAFÉ
This year's progress (committees, values, mission activation) and what lies ahead
- 11:00 AM CLOSE OF CONFERENCE

Outstanding Theatre Award

Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company

Established in 1996, the Outstanding Theatre Award recognizes outstanding achievement by a not-for-profit theatre.



The Tony Award-winning Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company is a non-profit company which creates badass theatre that highlights the stunning, challenging, and tremendous complexity of our world. For over 40 years, Woolly has maintained a high standard of artistic rigor while simultaneously daring to take risks, innovate, and push beyond perceived boundaries. One of the few remaining theatres in the country to maintain a company of artists, Woolly serves an essential research and development role within the American theatre. Plays premiered here have gone on to productions at hundreds of theatres all over the world and have had lasting impacts on the field. Woolly is located in Washington, DC, equidistant from the Capitol and the White House. This unique location influences Woolly's investment in actively working towards an equitable, participatory, and creative democracy.

2025 Outstanding Theatre Award Committee: *Jack Reuler (chair), Vivienne Benesch, Micha Espinosa, Rebecca Martinez, Laurie McCants, James Still*
Read about past Outstanding Theatre Award recipients at <https://www.nationaltheatreconference.org/outstanding-theater-award.html>

Emerging Professional Award

Mekala Sridhar

Presented to persons demonstrating exemplary promise in a professional organization. The recipient is selected by the leadership of NTC's Outstanding Theatre.



Mekala Sridhar is a DC-based theatre director, playwright, and producer. Building community through theatre is central to her practice, and her artmaking is grounded in creating radically inclusive, collaborative work.

In the past, she has worked in artistic and producerial capacities at theatres like Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Folger Theatre, Mosaic Theatre Company, Solas Nua, Studio Theatre, and Baltimore Center Stage, among others. As a producer, Mekala's work is not limited to theatre, but also includes literature and music programming with Solas Nua, curating art markets around D.C, and organizing an ongoing open mic series at Eaton House.

Select directing credits include *Guards at the Taj* (upcoming) at NextStop Theatre Company, *Nothing You Desire* (workshop) at Atlas Arts Lab, *A Wake At Singh's* (workshop) at Prologue Theatre, *Frederick Douglass Project* (reading) and *Hakawatis* (reading) at Solas Nua. Select associate directing credits include *Public Obscenities* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company and Theatre For A New Audience, *Metamorphoses* and *Twelfth Night* at Folger Theatre.

Mekala is currently a Resident Artist at Eaton House and is part of Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company's Playwrights Cohort. She holds a BA in Theatre, Literature, and Psychology from Sarah Lawrence College and received additional training from Moscow Art Theatre School and Accademia dell'Arte.

www.mekalasridhar.com

Read about past Emerging Professional Award recipients at <https://www.nationaltheatreconference.org/emerging-professional-award.html>

Barrie and Bernice Stavis Playwright Award supported by Jean Bruce Scott

Novid Parsi

Recognizing an outstanding emerging playwright, the Barrie and Bernice Stavis Playwright Award was established in 1988 to honor the work of playwright Barrie Stavis. Each year, NTC sends out a call to play development organizations, artistic directors, and literary managers across the country inviting submissions.



In *The Life You Gave Me* a son tries to save his mother. She has other ideas. So do two mysterious strangers who watch the play—and ask the son to tell the story again and again until he gets it right, whatever right might be.

Nominated by Boise Contemporary Theater

2025 Stavis Award Committee: *Risa Brainin (chair), Braden Abraham, Patreshettarlini Adams, Baron Kelly, Janet Hayatshahi*

About the Playwright: Novid Parsi

Novid Parsi's play *The Life You Gave Me* premiered at Boise Contemporary Theater following development at Ashland New Plays Festival, BCT's BIPOC Playwrights Festival, Illinois State University, The Road Theatre Company, and St. Louis Shakespeare Festival. Novid's other plays have been produced or developed by theaters across the U.S., including Atlanta Shakespeare Company, Golden Thread Productions, The New Group, Playwrights Foundation, Queens Theatre, and Silk Road Rising. Novid has been named a MacDowell Fellow, two-time winner of the Ashland New Plays Festival, winner of the Crossroads Project's Diverse Voices Playwriting Initiative, Relentless Award honorable mention recipient, Jeff Award best new work nominee, and two-time finalist for both the Bay Area Playwrights Festival and the Woodward/Newman Award. A son of Iranian immigrants, Novid was born in New York and raised in Texas. He has degrees in literature from Swarthmore College and Duke University, and he's a member of the Dramatists Guild. Novid and his husband live in St. Louis.



Director Janet Hayatshahi is an Iranian-American theatre-maker, living in Seattle, WA. She served as Associate Artistic Director and ensemble member of San Diego's notorious Sledgehammer Theatre and ensemble member of Chicago's Eclipse Theatre Company. Her directing work includes productions of *Love's Labor's Lost* at Seattle Shakespeare Company, *A Vast Hoard* at Chalk Rep/Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, *A Man, His Wife, and His Hat* (later *The Hatmaker's Wife*) at Moxie Theatre, *9 Parts of Desire* at

Mo'olelo PAC, *The Turn of the Screw* at Cygnet Theatre, *Thirsting for Salt* at Grüntaler9 in Berlin, Germany, and co-director of her solo piece, *Launching Ships*, based on the Helen of Troy myth. She served as assistant director to Robert Woodruff's *Notes from Underground* at La Jolla Playhouse and has directed many productions at the university/college level.

Currently an Assistant Professor of Theatre at Seattle University, Janet teaches performance courses and focuses her time in the classroom on stewarding the next generation of artists as they learn the values of using storytelling to fight reductive ideas and systems of oppression, and through their art, help propel change. Janet holds an MFA in Dance Theatre from the University of California, San Diego, an MA in Theatre from San Diego State University, a BFA in Acting from Ithaca College, and a certificate from the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts (PCPA).

See full cast at: <https://www.nationaltheatreconference.org/bios.html>

See more about past Stavis Award recipients at:
<https://www.nationaltheatreconference.org/stavis-award.html>

Person of the Year Award

Mark Russell

Awarded annually to an individual who has made an outstanding and noteworthy contribution to the theatre.



Mark Russell has been working in the downtown dance/performance and theater world for over 35 years. From 1983-2004 he was the Executive Artistic Director of Performance Space 122. He brought the space from a low-tech artist rental space to a world-renowned presenting institution committed to developing the work of New York City artists. In January 2005 Russell launched the Under the Radar Festival at St. Ann's Warehouse. UTR focuses on theater-based contemporary

performance. The festival moved to the Public Theater in 2006 and became a centerpiece in the New York City theater season; mixing international performances with national and local artists. Russell has been involved with many artists over his career, creating opportunities for them to grow and reach wider audiences. He is now involved in re-imagining The Under the Radar Festival for a new generation.

See more about past Person of the Year Award recipients at:
<https://www.nationaltheatreconference.org/person-of-the-year.html>

Paul Green Award

Nile Harris

Presented each year to a promising new talent in the professional theatre. The recipient is chosen by the NTC Person of the Year.



Nile Harris is a performer and director of live art. He has done a few things and hopes to do a few more, God willing.

Read about past Paul Green Award recipients at <https://www.nationaltheatreconference.org/the-paul-green-award.html>

About the Paul Green Award

Paul Eliot Green, March 17, 1894 – May 4, 1981

The Paul Green Award recognizes and encourages excellence in new professional theatre talent and is presented to a young theatre artist selected by the National Theatre Conference's Person of the Year. It has been given annually since 1988.

This award is named for Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paul Green, who served as the National Theatre Conference President in 1941 and '42 and on the Executive Committee in 1944 and '45. Paul Green was on the drama faculty at the University of North Carolina, one of the 1925 original theatre department organizers of what was to become the National Theatre Conference. Paul Green was a remarkable man: Dramatist Laureate of North Carolina, humanist, Hollywood screenwriter, essayist, professor of philosophy and drama at the University of North Carolina, novelist, poet, singer and writer of songs, human rights activist and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright for the Broadway production in Abraham's Bosom. Green is considered the "father of symphonic outdoor drama" with his production in 1937 of *The Lost Colony*. He went on to write 16 more outdoor dramas and in 1963 he founded the Institute of Outdoor Drama to support historical dramas across the country. Now named the Institute of Outdoor Theatre, it works with all types of outdoor theatre in the United States and in countries throughout the world.

In 1981, Paul Green died at age 87 leaving a legacy of literary works and good works that touch the lives of many thousands of people. In 1982 the Foundation was formed to carry on his work, and each year the Trustees award grants in the areas of the arts and human rights.



Founded in 1925, National Theatre Conference is a nonprofit organization comprised of accomplished theatre practitioners and academics nominated for membership by their peers. At our annual conference, we seed new ideas, engage essential issues of our art form, advocate for change in our field, honor individuals and organizations that inspire us—and connect in active community.

A century on, NTC embraces an ever more progressive, equitable, diverse, and inclusive membership, a unique confluence of artists, academics, practitioners, scholars, producers, and other theatremakers from across the country.

Find more information on NTC and the 2026 National Theatre Conference on our website:

www.nationaltheatreconference.org