



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Bush Foundation Announces 2009 Enduring Vision Award Winners**

#### **\$100,000 Grants Given to Kevin Locke, Michael Sommers and Mary Louise Defender Wilson**

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(St. Paul, MN — June 15, 2009) — The Bush Foundation today announced the 2009 recipients of its Enduring Vision Awards, focused on propelling the artistic investigations of mature artists. **Kevin Locke, Michael Sommers and Mary Louise Defender Wilson each will receive \$100,000** over the next three to five years to encourage their continued influence on present and future generations of artists, audiences and their chosen field of work.

**The Enduring Vision Award is the only award of this size and intent in the country.** Up to three awards are given annually to artists in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota who have at least 25 years of experience as working artists. For the 2009 awards, nominations were received for artists working in the performing and literary arts (2010 awards will consider visual and media arts).

The Enduring Vision Awards significantly expanded the Bush Artist Program in 2008, the first year they were given. After an extensive evaluation revealed a dearth of funding opportunities for artists at the later stages of their careers, the Foundation developed the Enduring Vision Awards to complement its other two initiatives supporting individual artists—the Bush Artist Fellowships and Dakota Creative Connections grants.

“This year, the Bush Foundation embarked on its ambitious [\*Goals for a Decade\*](#) that includes developing courageous leaders and engaging entire communities in solving problems,” said Bush Foundation President Peter C. Hutchinson. “We know that artists are courageous leaders because every day they commit to planting the seeds of change and growth, to serving as catalysts in their communities, and to preserving and expanding our cultural traditions.”

A regional panel of five performing and literary artists and arts professionals from Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota reviewed and selected 10 finalists for this year’s Enduring Vision Awards. A national panel (including one panelist from the regional panel) then selected the three recipients, considering the breadth and depth of

the finalists' work, their promise of continued future artistic excellence, the importance of their influence on their communities, and their interest in pursuing deeper investigations and/or new explorations to inform and enrich their work. (*Panelists noted at end of release.*)

### **About the Award Winners**

**Michael Sommers**, from Minneapolis, has practiced the theatre arts as a designer, director, composer, performer, playwright and technician, both locally and nationally for thirty years. In 2000 he and his partner Susan Haas co-founded Open Eye Figure Theatre, and in 2007 the company opened an intimate venue in South Minneapolis. Sommers' work has been seen in venues ranging from major cultural institutions to backyards and the street. Through these experiences, and drawing from traditional theatrical forms, classical text, populist entertainment, folk art and the comedy and "tragedy of our daily lives," Sommers says he "creates original work that speaks in a contemporary voice directly to the audience." His work has been presented at the Walker Art Center and in New York, Chicago, Washington DC, Canada, and Mexico. He is an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota.

**Kevin Locke** (Tokaheya Inajin, "The First to Arise") (Lakota, Hunkpapa Band/Anishinaabe) lives in Wakpala, South Dakota, and is known throughout the world as a Hoop Dancer, the preeminent player of the indigenous Northern Plains flute, a traditional storyteller, cultural ambassador, recording artist and educator. While his early instructions were received from his immediate family and community, from his extended family in every part of the world Locke has learned many lessons in global citizenship and how we each can draw from our individual heritages to create a vibrant, evolving global civilization embracing and celebrating our collective heritage. His joy is working with children on the reservations to ensure the survival and growth of indigenous culture. He is acknowledged to be the pivotal force in the now powerful revival of the indigenous flute tradition, which had teetered on the brink of extinction. Locke was awarded a 1990 National Heritage Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts.

**Mary Louise Defender Wilson** (Wagmuhawin, "Gourd Woman") (Dakotah/Hidatsa) grew up in a family of storytellers and midwives on the Standing Rock (Sioux) Reservation in North Dakota. Raised speaking Dakotah, she began telling her tribes' ancient narratives as a young girl, marveling at how much her relatives knew and how tribal stories, which talked about values and human nature, taught them to think deeply. Celebrated for her gift of storytelling, she is the recipient of the coveted National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, the nation's highest honor for a traditional artist. She also has received the H. Councill Trenholm Memorial Award from the National Education Association for Human and Civil Rights, the 2009 Community Spirit Award from First Peoples Fund, and has been honored at the Native American Music Awards with the Best Spoken Word Award. Defender Wilson teaches the Dakotah language at Standing Rock Community College in Fort Yates, ND.

### **About the Bush Foundation**

The Bush Foundation was established in 1953 by 3M executive Archibald Bush and his wife Edyth. The Foundation strives to be a catalyst to shape vibrant communities in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota by investing in courageous and effective leadership that significantly strengthens and improves the well-being of

people in these three states. In 2009, the Bush Foundation is pursuing its *Goals for a Decade*—in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota to develop courageous leaders and engage entire communities in solving problems, to support the self-determination of Native nations and to increase educational achievement.

The Bush Artist Program (BAF) was established in 1976. Since then, 475 grants have been awarded to 416 different artists. BAF creates opportunities for artists to advance their work, stimulate dialogue and contribute to deeper community engagement by providing financial and professional development support through three grant initiatives: 1) the [Enduring Vision Awards](#); 2) the [Bush Artist Fellowships](#), which provides a total of \$50,000 in grant support annually to 15 artists and is one of only three open-application artist fellowships in the country to provide unrestricted grants at this financial level; and 3) [Dakota Creative Connections](#), providing artists in North and South Dakota with project and professional development grants ranging from \$3,000 to \$6,000.

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### **2009 Enduring Vision Awards National Final Panel**

**Michael Ching**, Composer and Artistic Director, Opera Memphis, Memphis, TN

**Meg Glaser**, Artistic Director, Western Folklife Center, Elko, NV

**Rinde Eckert**, Writer, Composer, Performer and Director, Nyack, NY

**Elizabeth Bennett**, Dramaturg and Arts Administrator, Brooklyn, NY

**Jewelle Gomez**, Novelist and Grantmaker, San Francisco, CA

**Dominic Taylor**, Associate Artistic Director, Penumbra Theatre Company; Assistant Professor,

Theatre Arts & Dance University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

### **2009 Enduring Vision Awards Regional Preliminary Panel**

**David Hamilton**, Artistic Director, Fargo-Moorhead Opera, Fargo, ND

**Hal Cropp**, Artistic Director, Commonweal Theater, Lanesboro, MN

**Georgia Wettlin-Larsen** (Assiniboine/Nakota) Program Director, First Nations Composer Initiative,

American Composer's Forum, St. Paul, MN

**Andrea Graham**, Folklorist, South Dakota Arts Council, Pierre SD

**Dominic Taylor**, Associate Artistic Director, Penumbra Theatre Company; Assistant Professor,

Theatre Arts & Dance, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

**Shannon Gibney**, Fiction Author, English Faculty MCTC, BAF 2005, Minneapolis, MN