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## JANET STANFORD AND STAGES THEATRE COMPANY TO RECEIVE THE 2017 HAROLD OAKS AWARDS

PRESENTED BY THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES/USA

San Francisco, CA, April 12, 2017 –Theatre of Young Audiences/USA (TYA/USA), has awarded its annual Harold Oaks Awards to Janet Stanford of Imagination Stage (Individual) and Stages Theatre Company (Organization). The awards will be presented as part of the events at The Strand Theater in San Francisco on May 4, 2017 during TYA/USA’s One Theatre World Festival ([otw2017.org](http://otw2017.org)). To connect with the Innovate/Active One Theatre World theme, we asked nominees to answer the question, *How has your nominee innovated within the development of the field of Theatre for Young Audiences on a national, regional, or even global impact?*

Suzan Zeder writes in her nomination of Janet Stanford, “Janet is a particularly appropriate recipient for this prestigious award both personally and professionally. Not only does her work with Imagination Stage exemplify the criteria for this award: innovation, high aesthetic and ethical standards and sustained professional accomplishment; Janet herself embodies some of the same quiet qualities of generosity, patience and integrity as the award’s namesake Harold Oaks. In her more than 24 years as Artistic Director of Imagination Stage, Janet has seen the theatre evolve from a small community-based arts organization with an annual budget less than 600K to a major professional TYA theatre with a robust production schedule, a plethora of classes and arts integration activities for young people, an impressive well trained staff and a budget of over 6 million dollars a year! Recently, Janet established a theatre program for Central American Children who are fleeing violence in their own countries and coming to live in Washington D.C. This program, offered in partnership with local Health and Human Services Departments, stands as a beacon of hope in a country and world that is increasingly dark and uncertain for immigrant children and families. With an increasingly hostile political environment in the US for the arts and for social justice projects that extend beyond our borders, it will fall to those artists

dedicated to both artistry and altruism to keep these activities alive. Janet Sanford is just this kind of artist. Quietly and in her own way she builds bridges and then walks across them.”

Dr. Heidi Korstad writes in her nomination of Stages Theatre Company, “I am part of a community in greater Minnesota that has been served by the metro-based company for years. I have witnessed the good that can happen through theatre and have followed their lead to be a catalyst for art in my own community. For the past four years, Stages Theatre Company has been bold in using the tumultuous middle school years to introduce and develop Social Justice Theatre with students. “What does peace mean to you?” Perspectives on Peace (an in-school residency program for 5th-8th graders) has inspired students, both rural and urban, to be bold with their words—written, spoken, danced, and visually interpreted. The program has given voice to students who need to be heard; whether it is about their fears, their joys, their relationships, or their very real questions around what it means to live in this world right now. By the end of this year, they will have served almost 3000 Minnesota students statewide in 14 different sites, giving students the means to process internally and artistically what peace means and how important it is to work together to build. We are lucky to have Stages’ commitment to youth in our state.”

**About the Harold Oaks Awards:** The purpose of the Harold Oaks Awards, created in 2013, is to acknowledge the significant contributions of individuals and organizations in the Theatre for Young Audiences field in the US. We ask how nominees have contributed to the artistic development of the field of Theatre for Young Audiences, how they’ve brought national recognition to the field, how they’ve contributed to and interacted with their local community, and how they’ve contributed to a global/diverse understanding of the field of Theatre for Young Audiences.

**About Harold Oaks:** Harold Oaks was President of ASSITEJ International (1999-2002); President of TYA/USA (then, ASSITEJ/USA) (1988-1995); President, The American Alliance for Theatre and Education (1987-88); and has been an officer of the National Association of Schools of Theatre; The American Theatre Association and The Children’s Theatre Association of America. Dr. Oaks is an emeritus Professor of Theatre at Brigham Young University where he was Associate Dean of the College of Fine Arts & Communications and Coordinator of the Drama/Theatre for Young People program. He chaired the BYU Department of Theatre & Film for twelve years. He has also taught and directed at colleges and universities in Minnesota, Maryland, Nebraska and Colorado. He has directed more than forty-five plays, including performances at festivals in the US, Norway, Austria, and the former Yugoslavia. He has written over one hundred articles, reviews and publications and edited Outstanding Plays for Young Audiences International Bibliography, Volumes 2-6. He was also founding editor of ASSITEJ International Hot Line with circulation to seventy-two international centers, five times a year. He continues to serve young people throughout the world creating puppet shows that teach about substance abuse and hygiene. They have been translated into over seventeen languages and used in over twenty-five countries.

**Awards History:** The 2017 honorees will join the ranks of the following individuals and organizations: Joette Pelster (The Coterie), Scot Copeland (Nashville Children’s Theatre), Gayle Sergel (Dramatic Publishing), Dr. Megan Alritz (University of Texas at Austin), Linda Hartzell (Seattle Children’s Theatre),

David Saar (Childsplay), Children’s Theatre of Charlotte (Charlotte, NC), People’s Light (Malvern, PA), Metro Theatre Company (St. Louis, MO), and Adventure Theatre MTC (Glen Echo, MD).

*TYA/USA is a national service organization providing advocacy and resources in order to strengthen and diversify the field of theatre for young audiences. More information at [tyausa.org](http://tyausa.org).*

If you would like more information about The Harold Oaks Awards and TYA/USA, please contact Theatre for Young Audiences/USA Executive Director Michael A. Van Kerckhove at 917-438-7010 or email at [mvankerckhove@tyausa.org](mailto:mvankerckhove@tyausa.org). Thank you.

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