

CROWDED FIRE THEATER

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Crowded Fire Theater Announces 2021 IGNITE FUND Recipients Granting \$10,000 to Bay Area Designers and Technicians

San Francisco, CA, November 30, 2021 – Crowded Fire Theater (CFT), known as a vital home for new play development and production on the West Coast, announce **Kenan Arun, Nathaniel J. Bice, Chibueze Crouch, Mitchell Jakubka, Gabriel Nuñez de Arco, and Grisel (GG) Torres** as the fifth cohort of **IGNITE FUND** awardees. The **IGNITE FUND** awards a total of \$10,000 annually to support the growth of and enhance the working lives of Bay Area theater designers and technicians through a competitive grant process.

“After a pause in 2020, we are excited to continue to support designers, technicians, and stage managers through the **IGNITE FUND**, and we are grateful to the anonymous angel donor who supports the **IGNITE FUND** annually. It is so important to prioritize all the creatives that bring art to fruition,” commented Production Manager Stephanie Alyson. “Last year due to the pandemic, we saw so many artists out of work and struggling to survive in the Bay Area. With this in mind, we adjusted the grant parameters in order to reach as many individuals as possible. The **IGNITE FUND** was created to invest in the sustainability and growth of individual artists who have very few opportunities for funding via grants and awards. This year’s artists work throughout the Bay Area in a variety of disciplines, and therefore impact the sustainability of the greater Bay Area theater community.”

Just as Crowded Fire’s artistic programming supports a plurality of voices, the **IGNITE FUND** is distributed with an awareness towards supporting a diversity of race, culture, class, gender, age and sexual orientation in our local design and technical community. The **IGNITE FUND** provides grants for professional development workshops and training opportunities, to purchase design tools and equipment, and to strengthen the economic sustainability of an arts practice.

In this 2021 round, **Kenan Arun (he/him)** was awarded funding for makeup materials. Kenan is a makeup artist for stage and FX makeup for over 10 years, and is a Resident Makeup Designer for Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco, CA. Some of his credits include work with Stage on the Run (Heidelberg, Germany and Ankara, Turkey), Turkish-American Association (Ankara, Turkey), Rob Cantor (Los Angeles), Golden Thread Productions, and African-American Shakespeare Company (San Francisco). Kenan also serves as Wig & Makeup Consultant at Drunk Drag Broadway.

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Nathaniel J. Bice (he/they) was awarded funding for a computer capable of running designing and drafting softwares. Nathaniel is a scenic designer, fine artist and craftsperson based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has worked all around the Bay as a props artisan, scenic painter, and as an assistant to award winning set designer, Nina Ball. He is originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico, and moved to Seattle in 2014 where he graduated from Cornish College of the Arts Summa Cum Laude.

Chibueze Crouch (she/her) was awarded funding for camera equipment for the video design aspect of an upcoming experimental performance project. Chibueze is a Nigerian-American interdisciplinary artist & curator working across ritual theater, text, song, movement and video. She is based on Huichin, Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone territory (Oakland, CA). She creates participatory, intimate performances in collaboration with her chi and community, exploring themes of ancestral longing, Igbo cosmology, Afro-Diasporic masquerade and queer identity. Chibueze has been an artist-in-residence at CounterPulse, Paul Drescher Ensemble, and the SF Heritage Foundation, and she is the 2019-2020 RHE Foundation Artistic Fellowship awardee from Theatre Bay Area.

Mitchell Jakubka (he/him) was awarded funding for lighting design software. Mitchell is a Bay Area native, who's elated to return to San Francisco after completing his MFA in Lighting Design at Carnegie Mellon University. He is currently serving as one of the Assistant Lighting Designers at the San Francisco Opera, and loving every moment of it! He enjoys working on impactful pieces of dance, theater, opera, and the occasional installation. Favorite design collaborations include Jacquelyn Buglisi's Moss Variations #3, Lauren D'Errico's Three Knockdown Rule, and the Blunite memorial events in Santa Barbara. Mitchell is also a theater historian, writing on the queer/BIPOC history of lighting design. Portfolio: MitchellJakubka.com

Gabriel Nuñez de Arco (they/them/esp: elle) was awarded funding for sound equipment. Gabriel is a visual artist, composer, sound engineer, lighting designer and DJ from Oakland, CA (Chochenyo Ohlone land) with roots in La Paz, Bolivia (Aymara territory). They have performed and provided technical support at events across Australia, Bolivia and the United States with a focus on queer DIY spaces. Their creative work explores questions of belonging as a queer diasporic person and seeks reclamatory formations of history as generative space for decolonized futures.

Grisel (GG) Torres (she/they) was awarded funding for a laptop capable of multiple design and streaming softwares. Grisel is from the Bay Area by way of migrant parents from Guanajuato, México. She studied Technical Theatre, Light Design, and Props Design at San Francisco State University. She also loves to paint and create movement-based performance art, and sees the two art forms as a vantage point for learning about self-healing. Grisel is a Resident Artist for Golden Thread Productions, and is also the Venue Manager for the Joe Goode Annex in the Mission. She often designs lights for PUSH Dance Company and Queer Punk performance artist Keith Hennessy. She is extremely grateful to have a hand in making some of the Bay Area's best radical art.

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About IGNITE FUND

Each year a total of up to \$10,000 is granted through the IGNITE FUND with grants ranging between \$1,000 and \$2,000 (adjusted in 2021). Applications are reviewed by a panel composed of Crowded Fire staff members, Bay Area theater designers and/or technicians, and other leaders in the theater community. The 2019 recipients included Ard for Sound Equipment; Keiko Shimosato Carreiro for Digital Equipment and Training; Everett Elton Bradman for Sound Design Training, Equipment, and Studio Time; Erin Gilley for Video Design Software Training, and Ashley Smiley for Production Equipment and Software.

About Crowded Fire Theater Company:

Crowded Fire Theater Company was founded in 1997 by a group of young artists interested in experimental contemporary theater. Known for developing and presenting innovative and provocative new plays, Crowded Fire contributes to the creation of a contemporary canon that reflects the diverse world in which we live. Winner of 2018 'Best of the Bay,' the company has been described in American Theatre Magazine as "instrumental in introducing the Bay Area to new writers who push the boundaries of what theatre can be" and "one of the most reliable local stops for high-quality new work by diverse voices."

In addition to two-three mainstage shows each season, CFT offers a robust new play development program. The Matchbox @ Crowded Fire actively supports the creation of high quality contemporary theater through commissions, in-house workshops, and an annual free public reading series. The company is composed of an ensemble of Resident Artists made up of top Bay Area actors, designers, and dramaturgs. This ensemble, with its multiplicity of interests and ideas, as well as the dedication and talent of its members, represents one of the company's most significant strengths. The company also supports our Mentorship Program, providing customized year-long mentoring for up to three artists, technicians, or arts administrators each year.

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