

# **CROWDED FIRE THEATER**

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**Contact: Tiffany Cothran (415) 523-0034  
tiffany@crowdedfire.org**

## **Local Artists Beth Hersh, Devon LaBelle, and Mikiko Uesugi Named as Crowded Fire Theater's Inaugural IGNITE FUND GRANTEES**

**San Francisco, CA, August 1, 2016** - Crowded Fire Theater is thrilled to announce the 2016 IGNITE FUND recipients, a newly established grant in support of Bay Area theater designers and technicians. This year's grantees are Beth Hersh, Devon LaBelle, and Mikiko Uesugi.

Beth Hersh, a playwright, designer and educator living and working in San Francisco will use her IGNITE funding to participate in audio engineering classes at Women's Audio Mission. Scenic Designer Mikiko Uesugi will apply funding towards training in and the purchase of Vectorworks software, transitioning her practice from a hand-drafted process to computer drawings, which are the industry standard. Devon LaBelle, a props designer and artisan, will use funding from the award towards the purchase of a truck, allowing her to more easily transport large props and scenic items.

"We are so thrilled to support these three incredible Bay Area designers who have all worked with Crowded Fire and numerous theater companies throughout the Bay Area," commented Artistic Director Mina Morita. "We are also very grateful to our anonymous angel donor who is committed to providing annual support for the IGNITE FUND. With the shifting economics of the region, artists are struggling to stay afloat while creating their art -- and in many cases struggling to stay in the field. The IGNITE FUND was created to serve as an investment in individual artists' professional sustainability and growth, and specifically to assist designers and technicians who have very few opportunities for funding via grants and awards. Our hope is that these funds will impact the individual careers of each of these artists and support the greater Bay Area theater community."

Just as Crowded Fire's artistic programming supports a plurality of voices, the IGNITE FUND supports a diversity of race, culture, class, gender, and age in the local design and technical community. The fund will continue to provide grants annually for professional development workshops and training opportunities, to purchase design tools and equipment, and to strengthen the economic sustainability of an arts practice. The next round of applications are projected for June 2017.

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