



## **NEWS RELEASE**

***For Immediate Release***  
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### **COMMONWEAL THEATRE COMPANY AWARDED GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**

MAY 17, 2011 — LANESBORO, MINN. — Rocco Landesman, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, today announced that the Commonweal Theatre Company has been recommended for a grant of \$12,000 to support their upcoming production of Harper Lee's classic *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Commonweal Theatre Company is one of 1,145 not-for-profit national, regional, state, and local organizations recommended for a grant as part of the federal agency's second round of fiscal year 2011 grants. In total, the Arts Endowment will distribute more than \$88 million to support projects nationwide.

An independent agency of the federal government, the National Endowment for the Arts advances artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman said, "NEA research shows that three out of four Americans participate in the arts. The diverse, innovative, and exceptional projects funded in this round will ensure that Americans around the country continue to have the opportunity to experience and participate in the arts."

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“This award from the National Endowment for the Arts affirms what many of us have believed for a long time—that the Commonweal’s efforts to become and remain one of the finest rural theaters in the country is within our grasp” said Hal Cropp, Executive Director of the Commonweal. “Recognition on a national level is tremendously encouraging.”

The NEA funds will be used to support the Commonweal’s re-imagining of Harper Lee’s American classic, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as adapted for the stage by Christopher Sergel. Directed by Michael Bigelow Dixon, formerly of the Guthrie Theater and Actor’s Theater of Louisville, and currently on faculty at Gaucher College in Baltimore, MD, the piece will be done with ten adult actors, doubling many of the roles in the storytelling style for which the Commonweal has become known. Company members Hal Cropp, Adrienne Sweeney, Scott Dixon, and David Hennessey will be joined by this year’s apprentice class and others in what is certain to be a memorable evening in the theater.

Now in its 23<sup>rd</sup> season, the Commonweal is a non-profit professional theatre with year-round main stage and educational programming in historic downtown Lanesboro, serving more than 20,000 people a year. For more information about the 2011 season, visit [www.commonwealththeatre.org](http://www.commonwealththeatre.org) or contact Adrienne Sweeney at (507) 467-2905 x208 or [adrienne@commonwealththeatre.org](mailto:adrienne@commonwealththeatre.org).

***The National Endowment for the Arts** was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at [arts.gov](http://arts.gov).*