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## **Stolen Chair Theatre Company Awarded \$20,000;** launches Community Supported Theatre, offering “fresh, local theatre”

Sick of hearing about the economic downturn, one downtown theatre company is taking action by revitalizing the way they create theatre and cultivate audiences, drawing inspiration from the growing popularity of **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)**. **The Stolen Chair Theatre Company** has recently been awarded **\$20,000** to put its new **Community Supported Theatre** model in action.

The grant is generously provided by **The Field’s Economic Revitalization for Performing Artists (ERPA)** Phase 3 Implementation award. The Field’s ERPA program receives funding from **The Rockefeller Foundation’s Cultural Innovation Fund**. In addition to the \$20,000, Stolen Chair was awarded an initial grant of \$5,000 from ERPA last fall to research the ties between New York’s farm-to-table communities and process-driven independent theatre communities. As part of their research, Stolen Chair visited local farms, interviewed farmers, and polled downtown theatre goers. In a CSA, a local farm collects seed money from a membership community before the growing season begins so they have the capital to pay for equipment and labor (and seeds!). Every week during the harvest, the farmer drops off produce at a location where members meet-up and pick-up their share of the farm’s profit. Like the CSA model, Stolen Chair hopes to build a membership community, a Community Supported Theatre (CST), which would provide “seed” money for the company’s ensemble-driven development process and then reap nine months worth of theatrical “harvests.”

At a presentation on September 17, 2009 at **WNYC’s Jerome L. Green Performance Space**, Stancato spoke about his plans for the CST: “Instead of transforming the way a farmer and a group of consumers relate to each other, could we transform the way a small independent theatre company and its audience base relate to each other. Just as ‘grocery shopping’ at CSAs can be a weekly ritual where you meet up with friends and gab about the graffiti cauliflower that just came in, can theatre stop being a place where you bring your friends, and instead become the process that brings you and your friends together? Instead of going home with a bag of sometimes imperfect but always exciting veggies and some fresh milk, our members will get glimpses of our sometimes imperfect but--we hope--always exciting work-in-progress, and related cultural and entertainment events.”

Using the \$20,000 grant award, Stolen Chair will begin a pilot version of the CST in November, 2009, timed to coincide with the start of the development of their 13<sup>th</sup> original work, *Quantum Poetics*, a science experiment for the stage. CST members will follow the project’s development from its first creative retreat to its first public work-in-progress. Given the piece’s themes, CST events will also bring in speakers from the scientific community (curated by the piece’s science consultant), screen science-inspired movies, let members dress up and dance in a themed “Atoms & Eves” Valentine’s Day Party, and encourage the members to explore their own amateur scientific wonderings in a members-only Science Fair. CST members will have exclusive access to a **private social network** offering special members-only content: a feedback forum, podcasts, rehearsal footage, script excerpts, and more. In between each monthly event, Stolen Chair will also research and curate science-related cultural events throughout the city and arrange CST field-trips to these events.

The season will end with a fully-produced work-in-progress showing of *Quantum Poetics* and a very special Cast (and Community Party). The company is currently accepting applications for charter members and interested parties should visit <http://communitysupportedtheatre.com>.

Chosen as “Best of Manhattan 2007” by New York Press, **The Stolen Chair Theatre Company** is an award-winning collaborative theatre laboratory dedicated to the creation of playfully intellectual, wickedly irreverent, and exuberantly athletic original works. Proudly plundering the pop culture of the past half millennium, Stolen Chair’s work recycles and reinvents old genres and stories to discover new ways to challenge and delight contemporary audiences. Under the artistic direction of playwright Kiran Rikhye and director Jon Stancato since it was founded in 2002, the company has created twelve critically-acclaimed original works including the absurdist noir *Kill Me Like You Mean It* and the Weimar child’s-play cabaret *Kinderspiel*, both published by United Stages. Their 2005 silent film for the stage, *The Man Who Laughs*, was published in the anthology *Playing With Cannons: Explosive New Works from Great Literature by America’s Indie Playwrights*. In addition to support from The Field, the company’s programs are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.