



CYGNET THEATRE COMPANY

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Cygnnet Theatre Receives \$325,000 Grant from the James Irvine Foundation.

Recognized by Foundation as a “Vibrant,” “Successful” Cultural Draw.

SAN DIEGO, CA – **Cygnnet Theatre Company, under the leadership of Artistic Director, Sean Murray, and Executive Director, Bill Schmidt, has been selected as one of four San Diego arts organizations (out of 26 statewide) to share in \$10.2 million in grants from the San Francisco-based The James Irvine Foundation.** The grants are intended to increase the financial stability of the selected arts organizations and to expand opportunity for Californians to participate in vibrant, successful cultural activities. Cygnnet Theatre is honored to receive \$325,000, paid over the next three years, with a specific focus on expanding its audience and deepening the patrons’ experience, as well as developing a strong strategic plan.

Cygnnet Theatre was founded in 2003 by Bill Schmidt and Sean Murray. In just six short years, Cygnnet has grown from a fledgling theatre with a yearly budget of \$200K to a San Diego arts leader with an annual budget of \$1.5M and an outstanding artistic reputation. Cygnnet’s first six seasons received over 60 awards for artistic excellence and in 2007 and 2008 the San Diego Critic’s Circle named Cygnnet’s productions of *Yellowman* and *Fences* the top dramatic productions in the city. Annual attendance has increased from 8,160 to over 30,000, and in 2008 Cygnnet successfully raised over \$1M for Cygnnet’s campaign to renovate the Old Town Theatre in the Old Town San Diego State Historic Park.

“This came at a truly perfect time,” said Bill Schmidt, Executive Director of Cygnnet Theatre. “With our recent move to the Old Town Theatre and our desire to introduce more San Diegans to the theatre, we are incredibly grateful for this support from The James Irvine Foundation.” James E Canales, the Irvine Foundation’s President and CEO, stated, “In this tough economy, we want to underscore our commitment to these regional arts organizations as they explore new ways of achieving financial sustainability and attracting culturally diverse audiences.”

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The James Irvine Foundation is a private, nonprofit grantmaking foundation dedicated to expanding opportunity for the people of California to participate in a vibrant, successful and inclusive society. The Foundation’s grantmaking focuses on three program areas: Arts, California Democracy and Youth. Since 1937 the Foundation has provided over \$1 billion in grants to more than 3,000 nonprofit organizations throughout California. With \$1.3 billion in assets, the Foundation made grants of \$78 million in 2008 for the people of California.