



City Council

Approval of the 2022 Grants to Arts and Culture Organizations

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Title

Approval of the 2022 Grants to Arts and Culture Organizations

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

The Arts Commission recommends approval of the grants to area arts and culture organizations for 2022.

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to approve the grants to area arts and culture organizations for 2022, as recommended by the Arts Commission.

Report

Issue:

Whether to approve grants to arts and culture organizations for 2022.

Staff Contact:

Stephanie Johnson, Arts Program Manager, Parks, Arts & Recreation, 360.709.2678.

Presenter(s):

Stephanie Johnson, Parks, Arts & Recreation
Frederick Dobler, Chair, Arts Commission

Background and Analysis:

The intent of the Grants to Arts and Culture Organizations (GACO) program is to provide equitable access to the arts for all Olympians. The program goal is to fund projects that expand citizen involvement; engage underserved populations; and promote the interests of the broader Olympia community, as realized through the Olympia Comprehensive Plan.

The total available funding for this grant period is \$20,000. For the fourth year of the program, eleven applications were received, with a total funding request of \$51,000.

Commissioners reviewed the eleven applications and turned review sheets in for tabulation in advance of the meeting. Commissioners Dorgan and Gagnier recused themselves from ranking of

select organizations due to current or previous associations. As such, the final ranking was based on the average score of each applicant.

Following tabulation and discussion, Commissioners proposed fully funding the top three (averaged) proposals: Indigenous Performance Productions (\$5,000), Olympia Artspace Alliance (\$5,000), and Olympia Family Theater (\$5,000). Commissioners also agreed to reduce the award for Window Seat Media and Harlequin Productions to \$2,500 each to meet the total of \$20,000 available.

Indigenous Performance Productions (IPP)

In partnership with the Washington Center for the Performing Arts (WACPA) in Olympia, WA the Indigenous Story Incubator Program creates world class new works by all-Indigenous casts, across the genres of dance, music and theater, for the stage. Now in it's third year of operation, we are in pre-production for a short festival, "The Aunties" featuring storytelling and solo theater from elder Indigenous women who have broken ground in the field (coming in the spring of 2022) and an all-Native big band project (for the winter of 2022).

This program benefits the Olympia Indigenous and non-indigenous communities in several ways. IPP has worked hard to build partnerships with Olympia High School and will be building on our past lecture demonstrations with offerings of youth classes and workshops, youth focused performances, and educational offerings tailored to meet the needs of Olympia youth. Additionally we are building our relationship with both the Squaxin Island Tribe, the Nisqually Tribe and with The Longhouse at Evergreen State College and plan invite local Native performing and visual artists to make connection and develop relationship with these touring artists. Additionally, the non-native community will benefit from the rich and diverse content and education being offered to the community in general.

This program is the only one like it on Turtle Island (North America) and as we foster its growth we hope to build it into another first and only for the US - an International Indigenous Performing Arts Festival building on the work that IPP is doing for the regional arts agency Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation in supporting tours by New Zealand Maori and Australian Aboriginal performing arts groups. The five year goal is to make Olympia THE destination for Indigenous performing arts in the US

Olympia Artspace Alliance

Established in 2009 Olympia Artspace Alliance (OAA) is focused on live, work and exhibition space for Olympia area artists. In the spring of 2019, OAA started the "Art in Olympia Storefronts" program as an ongoing project to create a series of quality temporary art installations in vacant storefront windows. The project is currently focused on the window of The Goldberg Building downtown Olympia at 4th and Capitol. This project benefits local artists and creates vitality in our downtown by providing approximately four rotating public art exhibitions per year in otherwise vacant windows in the heart of downtown Olympia, where they are available 24/7 for all to experience and enjoy. Regular viewers include families, artists and art students, downtown business owners and their customers, tourists, and people living on the streets.

Looking ahead, we plan at least one juried show featuring work by local artists. Also in 2022 we plan to do one or more culturally specific installation/s, potentially in partnership with CIELO, Asian Pacific Islanders Coalition/South Puget Sound, Squaxin Tribe, and/or the Nisqually Tribe. We also are exploring a potential partnership with SPSCC or Evergreen for a show of student work. Our 2021

holiday exhibit will again feature artwork by local K-12 students, coordinated by local art teachers.

We hope to expand this project to additional sites, depending on available funds and our organization capacity.

Olympia Family Theater

We are requesting a \$5,000 grant to support the pilot of a new “Sliding Scale” fee structure for OFT Youth Summer Camps in 2022: ACCESS FOR ALL. We know that the pandemic has had an immense impact on the economic and social-emotional well being of families in our region. With this in mind, we want to ensure that all youth have access to high-quality summer camp experiences at Olympia Family Theater. In 2022, we will pilot a sliding scale fee structure for all summer camps, with the aim of expanding the program to our school year offerings if successful. Our goal is to ensure that all youth have the ability to access community-building, creative experiences during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Window Seat Media

Window Seat Media is a community of multimedia storytellers in the South Sound region who use story as a catalyst for conversation, connection, and social change. Our mission is to amplify local knowledge, share powerful ideas, and ask what is possible. We weave stories that have been forgotten, silenced, or ignored into the fabric of our public life because we believe our future is written with the stories we narrate, and we are committed to creating a more inclusive, connected, and just world.

In the fall of 2021 we launched a new community engagement program: Brave Practice Playback Theatre Collective. Brave Practice offers ongoing workshops, community-based collaborations with local organizations, and performances using Playback Theatre. Playback is an original form of interactive and improvisational theatre where people tell true stories from their lives and others enact them on the spot using music, dialogue, metaphor, and movement. Brave Practice uses theatre as a tool to help people connect together in community through deep listening, storytelling, and making art with empathy.

With practice, we know that bravery is a skill we can grow over time. By creating a community space for people to take supported risks, our company encourages participants to nurture the inherent bravery inside themselves. Especially in the context of the pandemic, where mental health struggles and isolation are at an all-time high, simply the act of coming together in community and being vulnerable can feel like a risk. We invite participants to explore themes such as deep listening, personal identity, community wisdom, care, and responsibility to bridge social divides and seek a deeper understanding of ourselves, other perspectives, and the human experience. Through storytelling, we work to acknowledge our shared humanity and celebrate our differences across identities and backgrounds (multiple and intersecting racial-ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religious/spiritual, national, and socioeconomic identities). As a company, we engage in ongoing learning and dialogue on the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion, asset-based community development, civic engagement, and Playback skills and techniques to be of better service to our diverse community.

Brave Practice programming enhances WSM’s current community engagement offerings. Ongoing workshops (both virtual and in-person, as permitted) add a low-barrier way for the community to become involved with WSM’s community oral history and storytelling projects. This helps broaden our

reach and attract new interest and support.

Harlequin Productions

Harlequin Productions (Harlequin) is a professional theatre company with a mission to invigorate, educate, and empower our community and all people to feel more, think more, play more, and judge less through the mirror of real live theatre. Harlequin has been producing professional theater and contributing to cultural enhancement and accessible arts in the South Sound for nearly 30 years. Harlequin Productions will address the lack of access to professional performing arts for those in our community who are or may be experiencing financial instability or reduced means. Harlequin believes that professional performing arts should be accessible to everyone, regardless of financial means or socioeconomic status. Harlequin's Pay What You Choose (PWYC) performances address this need by making performances, within each production of our 11 show season, accessible by allowing attending patrons to choose how much they would like to pay for ticket(s).

Other organizations that submitted applications include: Ballet Northwest, Olympia Area Chinese Association, Creative Theater Experience, Olympia Symphony Orchestra, Masterworks Chorale Ensemble, and Evergreen Juniors Volleyball Club.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The grants to Arts and Culture Organizations awarded will help provide equitable access to the arts for all Olympians.

Options:

1. Approve the grants to area arts and culture organizations for 2022.
2. Make alternate recommendations to the grants.
3. Do not approve the grants to area arts and culture organizations for 2022.

Financial Impact:

\$20,000 from the Municipal Art Fund

Attachments:

Indigenous Performance Productions Application
Olympia Artspace Alliance Application
Olympia Family Theater Application
Window Seat Media Application
Harlequin Productions Application