

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: December 8, 2008		Item Number: A-1	
AGENDA ITEM: Allocation of Funds for the 2009 Performing Arts Grant Program as Recommended by the Cultural Affairs Commission.			
Contact Person/Dept.:		Phone Number:	
Susan Obrow / Community Development		(310) 253-5762	
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Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☒	
Public Notification: Master E-Mail Notification List (11/24/08 and 12/03/08), 2009 Performing Art Grant Applicants (11/24/08), Cultural Affairs Commission (11/24/08), Cultural Affairs Foundation Board (11/24/08) Sony Pictures Entertainment (11/24/08)			
Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld (12/02/08)		City Attorney Approval: Carol A. Schwab (by H. Baker) (12/02/08)	
Chief Financial Officer: Jeff Muir (by N. Kimball) (12/02/08)		City Manager Approval: Jerry Fulwood (12/03/08)	
<u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Staff recommends the City Council consider the recommendation of the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) and allocate funds for the 2009 Performing Arts Grant program. <u>BACKGROUND:</u> Culver City's Performing Arts Grant Program was established in 1994. The Culver City Municipal Code stipulates that 25% of the money deposited into the Art Fund in the prior fiscal year be appropriated for this program for the current fiscal year. For FY 2008-09, the budgeted amount from the Art Fund is \$50,000. To this, an additional \$15,000 is expected to be allocated by the City Council from a larger contribution made in 2008 by Sony Pictures Entertainment. The total amount available for Performing Arts Grants for 2009 is \$65,000. The CAC considered the 2009 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) at their regular meeting on July 8, 2008 and reviewed changes to the NOFA including requirements for each grant recipient to complete a profile through the California Cultural Data Project. This new state-wide, collaborative effort of public and private funders consists of an online system for collecting and standardizing historical, financial and organizational data. Subsequent to discussion, the CAC approved the document. Starting on July 25, 2008, the 2009 NOFA was posted on the City's web site, and			

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notices were distributed electronically to former applicants as well as to networking organizations in the theatre, dance and music communities.

A workshop was held by staff on August 11, 2008 at the Veterans Memorial Building at which the grant guidelines and application were reviewed in detail. Staff reviewed the application and answered questions of the attendees. Also, staff reviewed the current list of possible performance venues in Culver City.

A total of fourteen complete applications were submitted by the deadline on September 8, 2008.

The panel review session was held on Tuesday, October 21, 2008 at City Hall from 9:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Five distinguished panelists were joined by the two members of the CAC Grants and Artist Services Subcommittee who attended as an additional resource for questions and also as observers.

The 2009 Performing Arts Grant Review Panelists were:

1. Tim Dang – Producing Artistic Director, East West Players
2. Jane Linesch – Community Representative (Culver City Resident)
3. Janice Pober - Senior Vice President, Corporate Social Responsibility, Sony Pictures Entertainment
4. Patrice Rushen – Pianist and Musical Director
5. Linda Yudin – Artistic Director, Viver Brasil Dance Company

DISCUSSION:

The Cultural Affairs staff reviewed each application and then prepared a binder of applications for each panelist which was sent in advance of the Peer Review Panel meeting. The panelists were also provided a score sheet for each applicant (see attached) and an overview of Culver City's Performing Arts Grant program. There were three scoring criteria identified in the 2009 NOFA which are as follows:

1. Artistic excellence of proposed project (50 points);
2. Realistic budget and diversified funding base (25 points); and,
3. Outreach programs to the Culver City community (25 points).

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Staff opened the review panel discussion by providing a brief overview of the grant program's history, guideline changes from the previous year, and discussion of the three review criteria listed above.

After the overview, each application was reviewed with its corresponding supplemental material in alphabetical order. Staff provided updated information and then the panelists rotated in leading the discussion on the applications. Each panelist had the opportunity to ask questions and then offer comments to the group. This was followed by each panelist providing scores in each of the three categories resulting in an overall average score for that applicant. The CAC subcommittee and staff did not provide scores.

Upon completing review of the individual applications, the fourteen applicants were ranked from highest to lowest; average total scores for all fourteen ranged from 93 to 71.4. The panel felt that those applicants with average scores of 90 and above should receive 100% of the funding requested. In two instances, noted below, the panel expressed strong support for the proposals and recommended higher grant awards than requested, which would allow the organizations to enhance their marketing or performances for families. Applicants with scores below 90 received a portion of the funding requested and the amount recommended is based in part on their prior year funding history as well as their ability to present their performances with reduced funding. Applicants receiving a score below 75 were not recommended for funding.

The panel's recommendation was reviewed by the CAC subcommittee. The total amount recommended for award is \$56,500. The review panel and CAC subcommittee were satisfied with the scoring and recommended grant allocations for this year's applicants. In addition, they recommended that the unallocated funds of \$8,500 be applied towards marketing the productions of the grant recipients and any remaining funds would be carried over for the 2010 Performing Arts Grants Program.

A brief overview of the fourteen applicants (ranked from highest to lowest) is included on the following pages with summary comments as provided by the panelists.

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We Tell Stories

Proposed Project: Performances that complement the Summer Reading Program as well as Black History Month, National Library Week, Asian American Pacific Heritage Month, Cinco de Mayo, Halloween and the Holidays

Performance Venue: Culver City Julian Dixon Library

Proposed Dates: February 7, April 15, May 2, May 30, July 1, July 8, July 15, July 22, July 29, August 5, August 12, August 19, October 31, December 12

Panel Score: 93.0

Grant Request \$8,000 **Recommended Award** \$8,000

Panelists were familiar with the work of the company and noted its excellent reputation and its long funding history in Culver City. They were impressed by the longevity of the organization and its continuous quality programming. Panelists remarked on the group's inspiring commitment to diversity and its capability to serve large numbers of children. The dvd was positively received by the panel who had the opportunity to view not only a performance but how engaged the children were in the audience.

The Definiens Project

Proposed Project: *Musical Adventures* - interactive, musical stories for children

Performance Venue: Culver City Julian Dixon Library

Proposed Dates: January 3, February 10, March 10, April 14, May 12

Panel Score: 92.8

Grant Request \$2,500 **Recommended Award** \$3,000

The panel responded positively to the proposed interactive program for children. The musicianship of the performers, as presented in the cd, was appreciated and panelists felt that the program would be educational, engaging and accessible. The panel noted how modest the request was and recommended an additional amount be awarded to further support and enhance this program.

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Westchester Symphony Society (Culver City Symphony Orchestra)

Proposed Project: Annual concert featuring the winners of the Parness Young Artists Concerto Competition

Performance Venue: Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Proposed Date: January 31

Panel Score: 91.6

Grant Request \$7,500 **Recommended Award** \$7,500

Panelists were impressed with the Orchestra's commitment to young performers and its ability to offer a free performance. There was discussion on the value of having an official, community orchestra in Culver City. Panelists commented on the Orchestra's opportunity to reach out and serve large audiences.

Los Angeles Doctors Symphony Orchestra

Proposed Project: Annual concert featuring winners of the Robert Turner Piano Concerto Competition

Performance Venue: Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Proposed Date: March 8

Panel Score: 91.2

Grant Request \$3,000 **Recommended Award** \$3,000

The panel noted that this company was one of the oldest community-based orchestras in the country. They were impressed that the Orchestra partners with the Music Teachers Association and that they are working closely with young people through the Turner Competition. The panel felt that the mission of the Orchestra was clear and that this free performance would target the underserved.

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Vox Femina Los Angeles

Proposed Project: *Touch the Future* – choral performance for families

Performance Venue: Culver City Presbyterian Church

Proposed Date: May 16

Panel Score: 91.2

Grant Request \$4,350 **Recommended Award** \$4,350

The panel commented that the organization has a steadfast following and that the choral performances are often enhanced with staging and a theatrical approach to the music. Panelists offered positive comments on the company's decision to expand its repertoire and were supportive of this new project which targets families and children. Panelists comment that there could have been a more detailed description of the project in the application.

Rogue Artists Ensemble

Proposed Project: *The Story of Frog Belly Rat Bone* – a family-friendly Production using puppets and multimedia

Performance Venue: Ivy Substation

Proposed Dates: June 20, June 21

Panel Score: 90.0

Grant Request \$2,200 **Recommended Award** \$3,000

Panelists remarked on the steady success of the organization since its inception at the beginning of this decade. Reviews have been excellent for this company and a production of the proposed play has been scheduled for the Geffen Playhouse. Panelists noted that the group's work regularly included a community component. The panel enjoyed viewing the dvd of the proposed project and felt that the artistic quality of the piece was well demonstrated. The panel recommended additional funding to further support and enhance the performances.

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Great Leap

Proposed Project: *Leaps of Faith* – theatrical performance featuring song, dance and spoken word

Performance Venue: Agape Center

Proposed Date: February 13

Panel Score: 88

Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$4,500

Panelists were familiar with the artists and the work of the theatre company which has been producing for thirty years in the Los Angeles area. Panelists commended the excellence of the artistic staff and observed that this project would attract different voices from different communities. Panelists found the project budget realistic and the funding base diverse. The panel expressed confidence that collaborating with the Agape Center would attract an audience to the performance.

Collage Dance Theatre

Proposed Project: *Really, All About Eve* – a retelling of the story of Eve through dance and text

Performance Venue: Temple Akiba

Proposed Date: March 22

Panel Score: 87.4

Grant Request \$8,500 **Recommended Award** \$7,650

One of the panelists praised the company as exemplary, exciting and unique. The artistic director was noted for having a clear, innovative vision and the company has a large audience base that attends performances wherever they are. Panel comments also included praise for the company's skilled Board of Directors as well as concerns regarding incomplete information included in the application.

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Dancecence

Proposed Project: *Singularity* – multi-media dance work

Performance Venue: Modern OM

Proposed Dates: October 9, October 10

Panel Score: 86.6

Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$4,500

Panelists were interested in the idea of combining science with the art of dance. The artistic director was praised for her creative thinking and the dancers' good technique as demonstrated on the dvd. Panelists observed that this multi-media project may be attractive to audiences interested in many artistic forms presented in one performance. The panel reviewed the budget as realistic and noted that the company works collaboratively with other dance groups.

Benita Bike's DanceArt, Inc.

Proposed Project: *Double Take* – educational dance performance

Performance Venue: Culver City Senior Center
Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Proposed Dates: April 2 – Senior Center
May 10 – Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Panel Score: 84.8

Grant Request \$3,080 **Recommended Award** \$3,000

Panelists noted that the format of the project, presenting a free performance of traditional modern dance twice before the same audience, would be an interesting educational tool and especially attractive and accessible to senior audiences. Panelists commented that the work was technically fine but not provocative. The panel recommended that the marketing for the production be expanded and the staff focus on specific outreach plans. Other recommendations included the suggestion of diversified funding for the organization and more assistance for the Director.

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Culver City Chamber Orchestra

Proposed Project: Chamber music concert presenting a variety of music

Performance Venue: Kirk Douglas Theatre

Proposed Date: August 15

Panel Score: 77.8

Grant Request \$11,000 **Recommended Award** \$4,000

The panelists noted that the cd allowed them to hear that the music was well played and under good direction. The panel felt that having a chamber music orchestra in Culver City was a positive addition to the arts scene here. The panel remarked that the request was high and commented on how vague the description of the project and the proposed marketing were. The panel suggested that the orchestra continue to diversify its programming and supported the company's goal of hiring a grant writer.

L.A. Choreographers and Dancers

Proposed Project: *The Better to Bite You With* – interactive, educational dance program for children

Performance Venue: Jazz Bakery

Proposed Dates: April TBD

Panel Score: 75.8

Grant Request \$5,350 **Recommended Award** \$4,000

Panelists noted that this was a company that was over twenty five years old and had enjoyed great success presenting dance in the schools. The panel had the opportunity to view a dvd of past work and was more impressed with the company's educational efforts than with the other performances included in the submission. The panel recommended that funding be offered to the company for public performances of its interactive dance program for children.

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Playwrights 6

Proposed Project: *Play Night with the Playwright* – staged readings of full-length plays by Los Angeles writers

Performance Venue: Ivy Substation

Proposed Dates: February 10, May 12, September 9, November 10

Panel Score: 73.6

Grant Request \$3,269 **Recommended Award** \$0

Panelists remarked on the good artistic values presented in the dvd and the positive reviews included in the application. Panelists noted that the request represented the total amount of cash funding required for the project and that the remaining budget items would be covered by in-kind services. The panel expressed concern that the project description did not include specific information on which plays would be presented and that the outreach plans were vague.

Keith Glassman

Proposed Project: *Far From Home* – modern dance and performance work

Performance Venue: Rotunda Room, Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Proposed Date: May 16

Panel Score: 71.4

Grant Request \$3,500 **Recommended Award** \$0

The panel expressed interest in the project, the use of Klezmer music and the company's past presentations of intergenerational performances. The panel remarked on how broad the project seemed and would have been interested in more specifics in the application. Panelists felt that the supporting materials, including the dvd, did not best represent the company's artistic quality.

* * *

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission on November 11, 2008, the award recommendations as outlined above were approved 5-0.

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FISCAL ANALYSIS:

The total amount recommended for the 2009 Performing Arts Grant awards is \$56,500. The remainder of the funds (approximately \$8,500) would be used to market the performances of the grant recipients with the remainder carried over into FY 2009-10. These funds come from the combination of Art Fund monies as allocated pursuant to Culver City's Municipal Code and an annual contribution from Sony Pictures Entertainment.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Overview of 2009 Performing Arts Grant Requests

Attachment 2 – 2009 NOFA, Score Sheet and Performing Arts Grant Applications

MOTION:

That the City Council:

Allocate funds for the 2009 Performing Arts Grant program as recommended by the Cultural Affairs Commission and as outlined above in the staff report.