

MEETING DATE:

December 9, 2013

AGENDA ITEM:

Allocation of Funds for the 2014 Performing Arts Grant Program as Recommended by the Cultural Affairs Commission.

ATTACHMENTS

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City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: November 19, 2013		Item Number: A-2	
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM: Consideration of a Recommendation from the Ad Hoc 2014 Performing Arts Grants Program Subcommittee and a Recommendation to the City Council Related to the 2014 Performing Arts Grants Program Awards.			
Contact Person/Dept.: Susan Obrow/ Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department		Phone Number: (310) 253-6628	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☒	
Public Notification: Meetings and Agendas – Cultural Affairs Commission (11/13/13); Sony Pictures Entertainment (10/25/13), 2014 Performing Arts Grants Program Applicants (10/22/13)			
Department Approval: Martin R. Cole (11/12/13)			

RECOMMENDATION:

The Ad Hoc 2014 Culver City Performing Arts Grants Program Subcommittee (Subcommittee) recommends that the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) (1) consider the recommendation of the Subcommittee and (2) make a recommendation to the City Council regarding the 2014 Performing Arts Grants Program (2014 PAGP) grant awards.

BACKGROUND:

Culver City's Performing Arts Grants Program was established in 1994. The Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) stipulates that no more than 25% of the money deposited into the Cultural Trust Fund in the prior fiscal year be available for "performing arts" in the current fiscal year. In Fiscal Year 2013/2014, \$40,000 have been allocated and \$15,000 is expected to be allocated from a contribution made in 2013 by Sony Pictures Entertainment (for a total available allocation of \$55,000 for the 2014 PAGP).

On July 10, 2013 the CAC considered and approved the 2014 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) during its regularly scheduled meeting.

During the week of July 29, 2013, staff issued the NOFA. The NOFA advised applicants that awards would be in the \$1,000 - \$5,000 range, and grant requests should be for less than 50% of the applicant's projected proposal costs. The NOFA was posted on the City's web site, and notices were distributed electronically to

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former applicants as well as to networking organizations in the theatre, dance, and music communities. A current list of possible performance venues in Culver City was also posted on the City's web site.

On August 8, 2013 staff held a workshop in the Uruapan Room at Veterans Memorial Building during which the grant guidelines, the application, and possible performance venues were reviewed in detail. The application deadline was September 12, 2013.

On October 16, 2013, applications were reviewed by a Peer Review Panel. Five distinguished panelists were joined by Subcommittee Members Regina Klein and John B. Williams. The Subcommittee members attended as observers and an additional resource for questions.

The 2014 Performing Arts Grant Peer Review Panel Members were:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| • Lucy Pollak | Theatre Publicist-Lucy Pollak Public Relations |
| • Bradley Rand Smith | Playwright /Culver City Resident |
| • Emily Wanserski | Managing Director-Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre |
| • Catherine Rotunno | Sony Pictures Entertainment /Culver City Resident |
| • David Young | Principal Bass-Los Angeles Opera/
Culver City Resident |

DISCUSSION:

Sixteen applications were submitted. Following review by staff, binders of applications were sent to panelists in advance of the Peer Review Panel meeting. The panelists were also provided a score sheet for each applicant. The following three scoring criteria were identified in the NOFA:

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

Staff opened the review panel discussion by providing a brief overview of the grants program's history, guideline changes, 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 of the applications. Each panelist had the opportunity to ask questions and then offer comments to the group. This was followed by panelists providing scores in each of the three categories,

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resulting in an overall average score for that applicant. Only the five panelists provided scores during the peer review session.

Upon completing review of the individual applications, the sixteen applicants scores were tallied which resulted in a ranking of the applications from highest to lowest. Averaged total scores for all sixteen ranged from 99 to 59. The panel recommended that those applicants with average scores of 90 and above should receive 90% of their requested funding. The panel recommended that applicants with scores between 80 and 89 should receive approximately 80% of their requested funding, and that those applicants with scores lower than 80 should each receive \$1,500 to demonstrate support for their proposals.

The panel's recommendation was reviewed by the Subcommittee immediately following the panel meeting. The Subcommittee was satisfied with the scoring as determined by the Panel.

The overall quality of the proposals was excellent this year. The total amount recommended for awards is \$55,000. A breakdown of amounts requested and recommended for award is included as Attachment 1. Staff will work closely with the grant recipients on their promotional plans for their performances. Marketing options for grantees provided by the City include:

- City Website Promotion
 - Home Page
 - Arts & Culture Page
 - Community Calendar
- Time Warner and Verizon Fios Cable Television Promotion
 - Slide
 - Electronic Meeting Crawler
- Email Blasts
 - City eblasts
 - Sony Pictures Entertainment Eblast
- Public Meeting Announcements
 - Announcements at City Council and Cultural Affairs Commission Meetings

A brief summary of the sixteen applicants (ranked from highest to lowest) is attached (Attachment 2.) The City Council will consider the Commission's recommendation for grant awards on Monday, December 9, 2013.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

The total amount available for the 2014 PAGP awards is \$55,000. The funding includes monies from the Fiscal Year 2013/2014 Art in Public Places Program (Cultural Trust Fund) budget in the amount of \$40,000, as allocated pursuant to the

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CCMC, and a projected \$15,000 from the 2013 contribution from Sony Pictures Entertainment.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Overview of 2014 Performing Arts Grant Request Amounts.
2. Peer Review Panel Summary of Recommendations.

MOTION:

That the Cultural Affairs Commission:

1. Consistent with the recommendation from the Ad Hoc 2014 Culver City Performing Arts Grants Program Subcommittee, recommend to the City Council that 2014 Performing Arts Grants Program awards be allocated as outlined in the staff report.

OR

2. Recommend to the City Council that 2014 Performing Arts Grants awards be allocated as amended.

ATTACHMENT 2
Overview of 2014 Performing Arts Grant Request Amounts

		2014	2014	2014	2014	2014
		Grant	Panel	Grant Amount	Grant Amount	Grant Amount
Applicant	Discipline	Request	Total	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended
			Score	by Panel	By Ad Hoc	By CAC
				Subcommittee		
The Actors' Gang	Theatre	\$ 6,000.00	97.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
Benita Biko's Dance/Art Theatre	Dance	\$ 1,950.00	79.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Center Theatre Group	Theatre	\$ 5,000.00	79.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Culver City Chamber Orchestra	Music	\$ 7,000.00	86.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
Culver City Public Theatre	Theatre	\$ 5,000.00	99.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
Culver City Symphony Orchestra	Music	\$ 5,000.00	93.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
Donna Sternberg & Dancers (Danceessence)	Dance	\$ 5,000.00	96.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
Jazz Bakery Performance Space	Music	\$ 5,000.00	88.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
Lineage Dance Company	Dance	\$ 5,000.00	89.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
LA Doctors Symph. Orch.	Music	\$ 3,900.00	59.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
LA Women's Theatre Festival	Theatre	\$ 5,000.00	71.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
No Limits Theatre Group	Theatre	\$ 5,000.00	97.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
Rogue Artists	Theatre	\$ 5,000.00	87.50	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Society for the Activation of Social Space Through Art and Sound (SASSAS)	Music	\$ 5,000.00	90.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
Vox Femina Los Angeles	Music	\$ 5,000.00	95.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
We Tell Stories	Theatre	\$ 5,000.00	88.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00
		\$ 77,850.00		\$ 55,000.00	\$ 55,000.00	\$55,000.00

ATTACHMENT 3

2014 PERFORMING ARTS GRANT PROGRAM PEER REVIEW PANEL SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is an overview of the sixteen applicants (ranked from highest to lowest) with panel summary comments:

Culver City Public Theatre, Inc.

Proposed Project:	Free summer theatre performances for children and adults.
Performance Venue:	Dr. Paul Carlson Memorial Park
Proposed Date:	July 19-20, 26-27, August 2-3, 9-10, 16-17, 23-24
Panel Score:	99
Grant Request \$5,000	Recommended Award \$4,500

Comments: Panelists were impressed with the application and noted the devotion necessary for this style of theatre. They praised the company's plays for children and noted that these free performances could spur family interest and participation in theatre. It was noted that the theatre company had developed a good online funding network and publicity campaign and that they were reaching approximately 3000 people each summer. Panelists encouraged the company to clarify the payment to actors and the concession revenue in future grant applications.

The Jazz Bakery Performance Space

Proposed Project:	Jazz Performance featuring world-class artists and Los Angeles native The Billy Childs Quartet.
Performance Venue:	Kirk Douglas Theatre
Proposed Date:	June 12, 2014
Panel Score:	98
Grant Request \$5,000	Recommended Award \$4,500

Comments: Panel Members agreed that the Jazz Bakery is a treasure and should be supported. They were enthusiastic about the project proposal, featuring pianist and composer Billy Childs, and the use of the Kirk Douglas Theatre as the venue. Panelists praised the organization's addition of an Executive Director and encouraged the company to increase its presence in the Culver City area with effective marketing for this performance. Specifically, they

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recommended that the organization establish a partnership with the Culver City Unified School District to educate students and build future audiences.

No Limits Theatre Group, Inc.

Proposed Project: The premiere of *Silent No More*, an original production featuring No Limits alumni and their families
Performance Venue: Kirk Douglas Theatre
Proposed Dates: June 15, 2014
Panel Score: 97
Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award \$4,500**

Comments: Panel Members praised the organization's mission and program and noted its distinguished success. They were moved by the human experience of the work and responded favorably to the proposal of an original play titled *Silent No More* which focuses on families impacted by the hearing loss of a child. The proposal is for a single performance, and panelists encouraged the organization to employ its positive connections to the City to attract a substantial audience.

The Actors' Gang

Proposed Project: An adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for all ages
Performance Venue: Media Park
Proposed Dates: Saturdays and Sundays August 2014
Panel Score: 97
Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award \$4,500**

Comments: The panel noted that arts education and outreach to families is a part of The Actors' Gang's regular programming. There were comments on the success and popularity of this free, annual program and that the 10 free performances would attract an estimated 2500 audience members. They noted that Media Park is a good venue for the performances and that the company performs excellent outreach to the Culver City community. The panel recommended that more budget detail be added to future applications and that the artistic documentation include a DVD from one of the summer performances.

Donna Sternberg & Dancers (Danceissance, Inc.)

Proposed Project: Five to six choreographers from different cultural backgrounds will create and perform dances using the same piece of music.

Performance Venue: Ivy Substation
Proposed Dates: September 5-6, 2014
Panel Score: 96
Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$4,500

Comments: The proposal, which combines dance, science, and music, was enthusiastically praised by the panel. They found it to be a unique concept and an excellent opportunity to bring these three fields together. They surmised that this performance could attract new and diverse audiences. Panelists also supported the addition of post-performance discussions to clarify the ideas and specifically recommended that the organization use the application form to explain how the scientific ideas would be integrated into the performance.

Vox Femina Los Angeles

Proposed Project: A preview of *Half the Sky: Hear Our Voices*, the second part of Vox Femina's two-year concert series, featuring music by American composers
Performance Venue: Culver City Presbyterian Church
Proposed Date: March 16, 2014
Panel Score: 95
Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$4,500

Comments: Panel members observed that this organization was very respected in the choral community, and they supported the proposal which features the premiere of a new commission by Los Angeles composer Jenni Brando. The performance will also include text compiled from personal statements by past and present Vox Femina singers. It was noted that the organization presents eclectic musical programming that it is comprised of a diverse group of women and that it is volunteer driven. Panelists encouraged the organization to continue using online marketing techniques for its performances and they recommended that they research other musical venues in Culver City to draw new audiences.

Culver City Symphony Orchestra

Proposed Project: A chamber music concert, featuring classical and 20th Century compositions
Performance Venue: Kirk Douglas Theatre
Proposed Dates: June 14, 2014
Panel Score: 93
Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$4,500

Comments: The panel commended the orchestra for its proposal to present work at the Kirk Douglas Theatre and encouraged the group to continue to stretch and move forward. They praised the leadership's plan to present more

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provocative work to a traditional classical music audience. They suggested that the opportunity to present at the Kirk Douglas Theatre could result in more supporters, a larger audience base, and more general publicity. They encouraged the orchestra to develop ongoing programs with the Culver City Unified School District and to research opportunities with West Los Angeles College.

Society for the Activation of Social Space Through Art and Sound

Proposed Project:	A free performance of original site-specific work by three local composers
Performance Venue:	Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook
Proposed Dates:	May 2014
Panel Score:	90
Grant Request \$5,000	Recommended Award \$4,500

Comments: Panelists noted that the group was commissioning local artists and that this new music has a following. Members of the panel commented positively on the surprise factor that happens with site-specific work. They encouraged SASSAS to continue its marketing efforts within the Culver City community for this performance. Further, they recommended for future applications that the group provide an artistic sample which better demonstrates the musical performances.

Lineage Dance Company

Proposed Project:	<i>Arc of Evolution – The Path of Loss</i> explores what is gained when we experience loss and how those changes bring new insights and hope in our lives.
Performance Venue:	Ivy Substation
Proposed Dates:	September 6, 2014
Panel Score:	89
Grant Request \$5,000	Recommended Award \$4,000

Comments: The dance performance would explore what is gained when loss is experienced and how those changes bring new insights and hope. Panelists supported the proposal; however, there was concern that the subject matter could be difficult for the audience. They recommended that, since the company was a second year grantee, it could begin to establish deeper connections to the Culver City community. They also felt that including a pre- and post-performance discussion might be beneficial for the audience.

We Tell Stories

Proposed Project: Seven free, 45-minute performances for family audiences presented in conjunction with the County's summer reading program
Performance Venue: Culver City Julian Dixon Library
Proposed Dates: June 25, July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and August 6, 2014
Panel Score: 88
Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** **\$3,500**

Comments: The panel commented on the company's long-standing relationship with the Culver City Unified School District's elementary schools and the Culver City Julian Dixon Library. Panelists praised the efforts to promote reading, engage young audiences, and provide accessibility to children who may not otherwise be able to attend performances. Panelists also expressed concern that the plays lacked sophistication and encouraged the company to review that aspect. Further, it was noted that the request was in excess of 50% of the program budget and that the artistic documentation was dated and did not reflect the quality of the work.

Culver City Chamber Orchestra

Proposed Project: *A Night in Vienna* concert.
Performance Venue: Veterans Memorial Auditorium
Proposed Date: January 4, 2014
Panel Score: 86
Grant Request \$7,000 **Recommended Award** **\$4,000**

Comments: There was an enthusiastic response from the panel for the artistic merits of the proposal. They were impressed with the idea of presenting this particular music and incorporating dancers in the production. Panelists surmised that this performance could be attractive to diverse audiences in the Culver City community and beyond and urged the organization to develop an outreach plan to promote this concert as well as the organization throughout the year. Panelists observed a lack of infrastructure in the organization and a weak funding base. Further, it was noted that the request was in excess of 50% of the program budget.

Benita Bike's DanceArt Company

Proposed Project: Interactive dance outreach performance designed to awaken people to the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual value of dance and art.
Performance Venue: Culver City Senior Center

Proposed Dates: June 1, 2014
Panel Score: 79
Grant Request \$1,950 **Recommended Award** \$1,500

Comments: The panel discussed the proposal for this dance company to present a new piece in Culver City at the Culver City Senior Center. Panelists praised the company's commitment to presenting free performances which educate the general public about modern dance. They noted that the company had longevity and its dancers were often recent graduates who were starting their careers. Panelists praised the founder for providing dancers with performance fees. Panel members expressed concern with the outreach plans for the performance at the Senior Center. They strongly recommended that the company develop a publicity plan for the wider Culver City community to ensure that a diverse and multi-generational audience attends the performance.

Center Theatre Group

Proposed Project: Discount ticket program for Culver City residents to attend productions of *I'll Go On* and *different words for the same thing*
Performance Venue: Kirk Douglas Theatre
Proposed Dates: January 10 - February 9, 2014 and May 4 - June 1, 2014
Panel Score: 79
Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$1,500

Comments: Panel members were supportive of a ticket discount program for Culver City residents and recognized the artistic quality of the two productions which would be offered. The plays selected for this discount are Samuel Beckett's *I'll Go On*, performed by Barry McGovern, and the world premiere of *different words for the same thing* by Korean-American Kimber Lee. Panelists felt that the request for the discount ticket program and the artistic documentation were disconnected from the actual artistic proposal. Panelists also noted that the number of tickets offered would directly correspond with the amount of the grant award. Panelists recommended that Center Theatre Group offer these discounts as an on-going program to the Culver City community on its own. The panel urged the organization to prepare a specific outreach plan for the community to effectively market this ticket discount program.

Los Angeles Women's Theatre Festival

Proposed Project: An evening of solo artists featuring multi-disciplined and ethnically diverse women
Performance Venue: Ivy Substation
Proposed Dates: September 5, 2014

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Panel Score: 71
Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$1,500

Comments: The panelists commented on the group's longevity as well as its diverse performers and programming. They recognized the difficulty of promoting solo performances; however, the panelists expressed confidence that if the company developed a marketing plan, focused on the Culver City community, that the one-night production could attract a full house.

Rogue Artists

Proposed Project: *Hyperbole: bard* is an original, family-friendly performance that recreates a collection of William Shakespeare's most famous scenes through clowning, masked movement, puppets, and original music
Performance Venue: Dr. Paul Carlson Memorial Park
Proposed Dates: June 28, 2014 at 11am and 3pm
Panel Score: 67.5
Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$1,500

Comments: Panel members supported the idea of bringing Shakespeare to young audiences in a park setting and recommended that the organization improve its marketing to the Culver City community this year. Panelists expressed concern that there was a lack of vision evident in the application. They also noted that the artistic sample was not compelling enough and that it did not show the level of artistry implied in the application. The panel recommended that the organization provide a DVD that is more indicative of their best work in future applications.

Los Angeles Doctors Symphony Orchestra

Proposed Project: A concert featuring ballet music
Performance Venue: Veterans Memorial Auditorium
Proposed Dates: November 16, 2014
Panel Score: 59
Grant Request \$3,900 **Recommended Award** \$1,500

Comments: The group's long-standing tenure in the community, the dedication of the musicians, and the organization's philanthropic efforts were all noted by the panel. Panelists suggested that bolder choices for programming may attract new audiences and encouraged the organization to increase its audience appeal through program selections and marketing.