

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

Meeting Date: 12/14/09		Item Number: <u>A-2</u>	
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM: Allocation of Funds for the 2010 Performing Arts Grant Program as Recommended by the Cultural Affairs Commission.			
Contact Person/Dept.:		Phone Number:	
Susan Obrow / Community Development		(310)253-5762	
Jeremy Green / Community Development		(310)253-5764	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☐ Attachments: ☒	
Commission Action Required: Yes ☒ No ☐		Date: 11/10/09	
Public Notification: Meetings and Agendas – City Council (12/09/09), 2010 Performing Arts Grant Applicants (11/30/09), Cultural Affairs Commission (11/30/09), Cultural Affairs Foundation Board (11/30/09), Sony Pictures Entertainment (11/30/09)			
Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld (12/03/09)		City Attorney Approval: Carol Schwab (12/09/09)	
Chief Financial Officer Approval: Mark Scott (by N. Kimball) (12/10/09)		City Manager Approval: Mark Scott	
<u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Staff recommends the City Council consider the recommendation of the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) and allocate funds for the 2010 Performing Arts Grant program. <u>BACKGROUND:</u> Culver City's Performing Arts Grant Program was established in 1994. The Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) 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 Fiscal Year 2009-2010, \$12,500 is budgeted, and there are additional unused funds that have accumulated from prior years. Additionally, \$15,000 are expected to be allocated by the City Council from a larger contribution made in 2009 by Sony Pictures Entertainment. The CAC considered the 2010 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) application at their regular meeting on July 14, 2009 and reviewed changes to the NOFA. Subsequent to discussion, the CAC approved the document. Starting on July 22, 2009, the 2010 NOFA was posted on the City's web site, and 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 12, 2009 at the Veterans Memorial Building at which the grant guidelines and application were reviewed in detail. Staff reviewed			

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

the application and answered questions of the attendees. Also, staff reviewed the current list of possible performance venues in Culver City.

A total of nineteen complete applications were submitted by the deadline on September 8, 2009.

The Peer Review Panel (Panel) session was held on Tuesday, October 14, 2009 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, Ronnie Jayne and Gayle Smashey, who attended as an additional resource for questions and also as observers. Three of the five panelists are residents of the City of Culver City.

The 2010 Performing Arts Grant Review Panelists were:

- Dolores Aguanno - Founder & Artistic Director, dee-Lightful Productions
- Sara Adelman - Arts Management Consultant, Vibrant Production Management
- Laura Liepins Hong – Owner, Muse Representation for Classical Musicians
- Tommy Lee - Coordinator of Dance Presentations and Programs at the Music Center
- Janice Pober - Senior Vice President, Global Corporate Social Responsibility, Sony Pictures Entertainment (SPE).

DISCUSSION:

Cultural Affairs staff reviewed each application and then prepared a binder of applications for each panelist which was sent in advance of the Panel meeting. The panelists were also provided a score sheet for each applicant and an overview of Culver City's Performing Arts Grant Program funding for the applicants. There were three scoring criteria identified in the 2010 NOFA which are as follows:

- 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 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

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

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 nineteen applicants were ranked from highest to lowest; averaged total scores for all fourteen ranged from 95 to 57. Since there was a reduced amount of funding available for this year, grant applicants were advised that awards would be in the \$1,000 - \$5,000 range. The Panel felt that those applicants with average scores of 95 and above should receive at least half of their request for funding. Applicants with scores below 95 received a portion of the funding requested and the amount recommended based, in part, on their ability to present at least one performance with reduced funding. Applicants receiving a score below 80 were not recommended for funding this year.

The Panel's recommendation was reviewed by the CAC subcommittee. The total amount recommended for award is \$31,000. Of this total amount, \$27,500 will be used from the available budget and the additional \$3,500 will be awarded from unused Performing Arts Grant funds, which have been carried over from prior years. The Panel and CAC subcommittee were satisfied with the scoring for this year's applicants and further recommended that approximately \$5,000 of the remaining carried over funds be applied towards marketing the productions of the grant recipients, for a total expenditure of \$36,000.

Staff will work closely with the grant recipients on their marketing plans for their performances. Marketing options provided by the City include the following:

- City Website Promotion
 - Home Page
 - Arts & Culture Page
 - SWAMI
 - Community Calendar
 - Webcast Slide
- Email Blasts
 - City eblast
 - Sony Pictures Entertainment eblast
- Electronic Meeting Crawler
 - Silent Crawler running under City Council, Redevelopment Agency and Cultural Affairs Commission meetings
- Public Meeting Announcements
 - Announcements by Mayor of Culver City
 - Opportunities for organizations to announce performances

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

- Cable Television Promotion
 - Cable Slide created and posted viewed by Culver City residents who have a Time Warner Cable package
- Series Flyers
 - Flyers created and locally distributed for each performing discipline

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

Great Leap

Proposed Project: Multidisciplinary performance of *Collaboratory VIII: The Environment – Water, Power, Earth*

Performance Venue: Culver City Senior Center

Proposed Date: Thursday, April 22, 2010

Panel Score: 95

Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$3,000

The panel unanimously expressed support for the project from this distinguished community-minded theatre company, founded by Nobuko Miyamoto, and confidence in the artistic leadership and artistic process. Great Leap's unique incubator approach to developing and presenting their bi-annual *Collaboratory* performances promises partnership opportunities with the community; however, panelists articulated the desire to see more detail of how the plan to involve teens and seniors would be implemented. The panel felt that the application was well-written and the budget's marketing and fundraising plans were clear and thoughtful.

We Tell Stories

Proposed Project: Performances of original 15-minute story-plays for the Library's free *Make a Splash* Summer Reading Program

Performance Venue: Culver City Julian Dixon Library

Proposed Dates: July 7, July 14, July 21, July 28, August 4, August 11, August 18, 2010

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

Panel Score: 94.4

Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$2,500

Panelists were very familiar with the work of this company, including its long-standing program in Culver City, and praised its interactive, multicultural, multilingual “trunk show” for elementary school-aged children. The proposal calls for two new shows to be created with the *Make a Splash* theme and panelists expressed confidence in the organization’s ability to include educational elements in each show and reach every child no matter what age. Also, the panel was appreciative for the artist biographies which were included as part of the application.

contra-tiempo

Proposed Project: *Salsa Saturdays Culver City* - free, interactive, dance performances

Performance Venue: Teen Center - Veterans Memorial Complex

Proposed Date: June 5, July 3, August 7, 2010

Panel Score: 93.4

Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$2,500

Panelists noted that the work of this young, fast-growing, Culver City-based dance company is thoughtful and focuses on social issues such as immigration and cultural identity. There was praise for the proposed community event which includes a free performance as well as free salsa lessons. Members of the panel noted that the artistic director regularly surveys her audiences for their responses to the work. There were suggestions to the company that they consider ways to diversify their funding and that they consider using videography or photography to document the audience response at their performances.

Collage Dance Theatre

Proposed Project: *Second Thoughts* – a dance performance created in collaboration with architect Judit Méda Fekete

Performance Venue: Museum of Design and Architecture (MODAA)
(SPF:a Gallery Space)

Proposed Date: February 14, 2010

Panel Score: 90.8

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

Grant Request \$5,000

Recommended Award \$2,500

The panel felt that this was a unique, bold and inspiring project from this prominent dance company and expressed support for this premiere production to be presented in Culver City. A panelist noted that the “art jumped from the page” of the application. The project includes three phrases of performance since an “accidental” audience may discover the preparation and rehearsal for the performance before the night of the event at the site, there will be a paid audience for the event itself and then the video footage will be projected on the wall of the gallery for two weeks after the event. Panelists noted thoughtful viral marketing campaign; however, they recommended more outreach to the Community to promote the free rehearsal days.

Culver City High School Academy of Visual & Performing Arts

Proposed Project: Performance of *Cabaret Night – An Evening of Sondheim and Bernstein*

Performance Venue: Ivy Substation

Proposed Date: February 4, 5, 6, and 7, 2010

Panel Score: 89.75

Grant Request \$5,000

Recommended Award

\$2,500

The panel was impressed by this public school program and how it consistently inspires hundreds of students in the arts. There were comments on the parents’ dedication, the array of performing and visual arts classes and the well-attended events. Overall, panelists supported the project which would take place at a professional theatre; however, were interested in more budget detail in the application. The panel recommended more budget detail in future applications and that AVPA explore viral marketing opportunities beyond the school community.

About Productions

Proposed Project: *STAGES* - staged readings, created through collaboration between senior citizens at the Culver City Senior Center and professional writer/actors.

Performance Venue: Culver City Senior Center

Proposed Dates: March 25 and 28, 2010

Panel Score: 89.6

Grant Request \$3,000

Recommended Award

\$1,500

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

The panel noted the value of this proposal on the local senior community and commented on the consistent artistic quality of the organization's other work. The panelists praised the smart marketing plan; however, they expressed interest in reviewing more detail in the application about the project and its artistic participants especially the writers. It was also noted that the grant request was for over half of the project budget.

No Limits Theatre Group

Proposed Project:

Heroes Way – an original play offering performance opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing children learning language skills

Performance Venue:

Kirk Douglas Theatre

Proposed Dates:

August 20 and 21, 2010 (TBC)

Panel Score: 89.6

Grant Request \$5,000

Recommended Award \$2,500

Panelists were impressed with this Culver City-based organization which nurtures aural deaf children through theatre. Recently the group was selected as a finalist for the annual "Coming Up Taller Awards" by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. The panel expressed a positive view of the budget and funding plan and supported the company's use of the Kirk Douglas Theatre. Other constructive comments included a recommendation for the group to develop and implement a marketing plan that would promote the performance to the general public.

Vox Femina Los Angeles

Proposed Project:

Cool Blue: Songs for a Green Earth— choral performance to celebrate Vox's yearlong commitment to "going green"

Performance Venue:

Culver City Presbyterian Church

Proposed Date:

May 22, 2010

Panel Score: 89

Grant Request \$4,322

Recommended Award \$2,000

Panel members noted the fine artistic quality of this Culver City-based company, its excellent reputation and its dedication to the community at large. The panel was

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

impressed that each concert has been thoughtfully envisioned and that this year the proposal for a free performance featured a “green” theme. While the panelists praised the addition of a publicist to the project team, the panel was interested in reviewing more details for the overall marketing plan. Further, the panel recommended that the group consider performing in a larger professional performance venue in Culver City and the development of paid administrative positions as well as Board-focused strategic planning.

The Definiens Project

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

Performance Venue: Culver City Julian Dixon Library

Proposed Dates: 2nd Wednesdays from January to June, October and November, 2010

Panel Score: 88.4

Grant Request \$4,500 **Recommended Award** \$2,250

This is a young, innovative chamber music company and panelists noted that they were artistically adventurous and well-organized. The project targets young families and features musicians and a storyteller. Although panelists noted that the request was for more than half the project budget, they were impressed with the compensation for the musicians. Additionally, the panel was interested in receiving more details about the stories as well as viewing a dvd of one of the previously presented interactive, educational programs.

Westchester Symphony Society (Culver City Symphony Orchestra)

Proposed Project: Annual concert titled *A Mid-Winter's Concert*

Performance Venue: Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Proposed Date: January 30, 2010

Panel Score: 88

Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$2,500

The panel supported the project from this Culver City-based orchestra which will present “the music of the Americas”. The panelists commended the organization on its effort to keep the work vibrant and to diversify its funding and audience base during these challenging economic times. The panelists noted that the marketing

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

plan to specifically attract a diverse Latino audience was sparse and encouraged the company to implement a more targeted plan.

Donna Sternberg & Dancers (Dancesence)

Proposed Project: *Perception/Memory* - a multimedia dance performance

Performance Venue: Royal T

Proposed Dates: Fall 2010 (Dates to be determined.)

Panel Score: 86.6

Grant Request \$5,500 **Recommended Award** \$2,500

The panel reviewed the proposed project, which is part of the company's "science series", and focuses on the ideas of perception and memory. Discussion ensued regarding the Artistic Director's creative ideas about science, the inventive use of the Royal T space, and the panel's struggle to discern the elements of performance from the application. Panelists praised the marketing plan and the financial management of the organization; however, they observed that the request was for more than half the amount of the project budget.

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 7, 2010

Panel Score: 86.2

Grant Request \$3,500 **Recommended Award** \$1,750

The panelists remarked on the clear mission of this longstanding, community orchestra and its effort to present classical music, often lesser known work, in free concerts to the general public. The panelists commended the practice of orchestra members going into the Culver City schools and performing as part of its marketing effort. They reviewed the project which offers an increasingly rare and valuable platform for young musicians and a performance that will attract families and seniors. The panel noted that the organization was experimenting with electronic marketing which should diversify its audience.

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

Culver City Public Theatre

Proposed Project: 12th annual summer season of free theatre performances in Carlson Park

Performance Venue: Carlson Park

Proposed Dates: July 17, July 18, July 24, July 25, July 31, August 1, August 7, August 8, August 14, August 15, August 21, and August 22, 2010

Panel Score: 85.4

Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$1,500

The panel reviewed the application of this Culver City-based theatre company and remarked on its clear artistic vision, the troupe's strong storytelling ability and its commitment to offer free programming. It was noted that the volunteer artistic and administrative leadership is fairly new and always rotating. The panel recommended that an internal committee be created, if it hasn't already, to focus on the artistic vision of the company. Additionally, panelists recommended that the company continue to think imaginatively regarding the use of the park space.

Culver City Chamber Orchestra

Proposed Project: Chamber classical music concert

Performance Venue: Kirk Douglas Theatre

Proposed Date: August 22, 2010 (TBC)

Panel Score: 80

Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$1,500

Panelists remarked on the quality of the musicians and soloists in this Culver City-based chamber orchestra as well as the distinguished reputation of the artistic director. The panel felt that the marketing plan was comprehensive and that it was commendable that the organization was interested in bringing back its children's programming sometime in the future. The panelists expressed regret that there wasn't more information in the application regarding the programming for the proposed performance and recommended that the company focus on further articulation of its artistic vision.

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

Benita Bike's DanceArt, Inc.

Proposed Project: *Double Take* – educational dance performance

Performance Venue: Culver City Senior Center
Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Proposed Dates: March 18, 2010 – Senior Center
May 16, 2010 – Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Panel Score: 79

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

The panel reviewed this year's proposal for the organization's dance performance and felt that the artistic and educational elements had stabilized and could be bolder and articulated better. The panel expressed an interest in learning more about the dancers and the artistic director's own vision of modern dance. Further, the panel recommended that the company pursue other options for performance in Culver City and a re-energized marketing plan to attract residents and visitors.

L.A. Choreographers and Dancers

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

Performance Venue: Ivy Substation
Proposed Dates: March 29 and/or 30, 2010

Panel Score: 75.4

Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$0

Panelists remarked on the longevity of the organization and its work with LAUSD. They commended the artistic director on her desire to grow the organization and the recent forays into web marketing. The panel was reserved about the artistic and educational quality displayed in this particular performance which is focused on our connections to our teeth. It was noted that the organization had been awarded a grant for the same production in Culver City last year at a different venue. The panel recommended that the organization return in the future with a proposal for a new project.

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

Nevenka East European Folk Ensemble

Proposed Project: Choral concert featuring music of the Balkans

Performance Venue: Grace Lutheran Church

Proposed Dates: March 20, 2010

Panel Score: 74.4

Grant Request \$1,300 **Recommended Award** \$0

The panel noted that this ensemble of women, which was formed in 1976, had recently achieved its non-profit status as a way of expanding its organization. The panel was impressed with their vocal submission; however, they found the proposal to be too small a project and lacking an effective marketing plan to reach out to the Culver City community. The panelists recommended that the company refine its proposal and apply again next year.

Festival of New American Musicals (FNAM)

Proposed Project: *The Best of the Fest* – a gala concluding event for the 2010 Festival of New American Musicals

Performance Venue: Kirk Douglas Theatre

Proposed Dates: August 17 and 18, 2010

Panel Score: 71.2

Grant Request \$5,000 **Recommended Award** \$0

The panelists discussed the artistic and administrative quality of the participants and how unique the theatre company was since they act as matchmakers between musical theatre artists and producing organizations. They noted that the proposal was to present a review of scenes from the Festival on the Kirk Douglas Theatre stage; however, the panel was disappointed that the artistic documentation was only of a children's musical performed at an elementary school. The panel found the budget information in the application confusing and viewed the proposed performance as a benefit for the organization since the ticket prices would be priced at \$100 per seat.

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

Francois, Angelo

Proposed Project: Multidisciplinary conversation between art forms on the interpretations of love.

Performance Venue: Ivy Substation

Proposed Dates: April 7, 2010

Panel Score: 57

Grant Request \$3850 **Recommended Award** \$0

This performing artist was the only individual applying for a grant and the panel observed that the City's application, with its requirement for organizational and financial details, was more suitable for non-profit organizations. Moreover, the panel found the applicant's description of the performance elements vague and the budget figures confusing. The panelists recommended that the artist review and deepen the description of the project. It was also suggested that the artist seek other types of individual grants in the future or partner with a non-profit theatre to apply for organizational grants.

* * *

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission on November 10, 2009, the award recommendations as outlined above were approved 5-0.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

The 2009-10 Adopted CIP budget includes an allocation of \$12,500 from the Art Fund for the 2010 Performing Arts Grant (41300614), allocated pursuant to the CCMC. Additionally, \$15,000 from Sony Pictures Entertainment's required contribution to the City(pursuant to a 2006 Development Agreement) is proposed to be used for the 2010 Performing Arts Grant, for a total of \$27,500 available for 2010 Grants. The total amount recommended for the 2010 Performing Arts Grant awards is \$31,000. The additional \$3,500 is proposed to be funded from unused Performing Arts Grant funds that have been carried over from prior years. There are sufficient carryover funds to fund the additional \$3,500.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Overview of 2010 Performing Arts Grant Requests

Attachment 2 – 2010 Grant Application, Score Sheet and Performing Arts Grant Applications

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

MOTION:

That the City Council:

Allocate funds for the 2010 Performing Arts Grant program as recommended by the Cultural Affairs Commission and as outlined above in the staff report: