

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: 12/10/07		Item Number: <u>A-2</u>	
AGENDA ITEM: Consideration and Award of 2008 Performing Arts Grant Awards as Recommended by the Cultural Affairs Commission.			
Contact Person/Dept.: Susan Obrow		Phone Number: (310) 253-5762	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☒	
Public Notification: Master Notification List (12/05/07), 2008 Performing Art Grant Applicants (12/05/07), Cultural Affairs Commission (12/05/07), Cultural Affairs Foundation Board (12/05/07)			
Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld (11/26/07)		City Attorney Approval: Carol Schwab (by H. Iker) (12/03/07)	
Fiscal Impact Review: Marlee Chang (12/05/07)		City Manager Approval: Jerry B. Fulwood (12/05/07)	

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council consider the recommendation of the Cultural Affairs Commission (the "CAC") and award funds for the 2008 Performing Arts Grant program to the applicants specified.

BACKGROUND:

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 2007-08, the budgeted amount from the Art Fund is \$50,000. To this, an additional \$15,000 has been allocated by the City Council from a larger contribution made in 2007 by Sony Pictures Entertainment. The total amount available for Performing Arts Grants for 2008 is \$65,000.

The CAC considered the 2008 NOFA (Notice of Funding Availability) at their regular meeting on July 10, 2007 and reviewed changes to the NOFA including requirements for each grant recipient to obtain a City business license and to review marketing plans with Cultural Affairs staff. The 2008 NOFA also included information on the Kirk Douglas Theatre Community Access Program. Subsequent to discussion, the Commission approved the document. During the week of July 23, 2007, the 2008 NOFA was posted on the City's web site, and notices were distributed electronically to former applicants, individuals and organizations included in the Cultural Affairs master contact database, the City's Master Notification System and Los Angeles Culture Net which is the listserv of the Los Angeles County Arts

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Commission. Special outreach was conducted and the application was sent to networking organizations in the theatre, dance and music communities.

On Wednesday, August 8, 2007 a workshop was held by staff 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 sixteen applications were submitted by the deadline on Friday, September 10, 2007.

The panel review session was held on Tuesday, October 9, 2007 at City Hall from 9:30 am until 5:00 pm. 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 2008 Performing Arts Grant Review Panelists were:

1. Fred Fate - Director, Los Angeles City College Theatre Academy
2. Ben Hong – Assistant Principal Cellist, Los Angeles Philharmonic (Culver City Resident)
3. Janice Pober - Senior Vice President, Corporate Social Responsibility, Sony Pictures Entertainment
4. Jeannine Stehlin – Executive Director, Circus Theatricals (Community Representative / Culver City Resident)
5. Lula Washington – Artistic Director/Founder, Lula Washington Dance Theatre

DISCUSSION:

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 2008 NOFA which are as follows:

1. Artistic excellence of proposed project (50 points);
2. Realistic budget and diversified funding base (25 points); and,

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3. Outreach programs to the Culver City community (25 points).

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. In one instance, as noted below, Ms. Janice Pober recused herself from providing scores because she interacts with an applicant and wanted to avoid the perception of a conflict of interest. In this instance, the score listed is an average of four panelists' scores rather than five.

Upon completing review of the individual applications, the sixteen qualifying applicants were ranked from highest to lowest; average total scores for all sixteen ranged from 95.2 to 49.4. The panel felt that those applicants with average scores of 90 and above should receive 100% of the funding requested. In one instance, noted below, the panel and subcommittee expressed strong support for a proposal and recommended a grant which would allow the organization to present two performances instead of only one performance. 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.

- The panel's recommendation was reviewed by the CAC subcommittee. The total amount recommended for award is \$57,750. 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 \$7,250 be applied towards marketing the productions of the grant recipients. A pocket calendar as well as additional materials to market performances in a series would be created; and any remaining funds would be carried over for the 2009 Performing Arts Grants Program.

A brief overview of the sixteen 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 Culver City Summer Reading Program as well as Black History Month, Children's Book Week, Fiesta La Ballona, Halloween and the Holidays

Performance Venue: Culver City Julian Dixon Library

Proposed Dates: February 2, 9, or 23, 2008
May 14, or 15, 2008
June 25, 2008
July 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30, 2008
August 6, 13, 20, and 27, 2008
October 31, 2008 or November 1, 2008
December 6, 2008

Panel Score: 95.2

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

The panel was enthusiastic about the proposal to present performances in connection with the existing programs at the Culver City Julian Dixon Library. They felt that the organization was true to its mission and had been successful in serving the community by adapting and presenting stories for children that were interactive and consistently received positive feedback. They noted that the company enjoyed a high profile and were impressed that the company had a full-time artistic director.

Culver City High School Academy of Visual and Performing Arts

Proposed Project: *Java Drama 14* – a multi-media event featuring one acts, scenes, monologues, films, videos, music, art, and poetry

Performance Venue: Ivy Substation

Proposed Dates: May 21-24, 2008

Panel Score: 93.25 (This average does not include scores from Ms. Pober)

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

Panelists were positive about the assertive programming from AVPA and expressed support for the proposal of providing multiple outlets for the varied talents of the

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students. Panelists were aware of the reputation of AVPA and felt that it was indicative of the City's profile.

The Definiens Project

Proposed Project: The *Culver City Crescent* concert series featuring contemporary chamber music

Performance Venue: Culver Hotel

Proposed Dates: January 13, 2008
February 10, 2008
March 9, 2008
April 13, 2008
May 18, 2008
June 8, 2008

Panel Score: 92.4

Grant Request \$6,000 **Recommended Award** \$6,000

The panel was impressed by the proposal and the accompanying CD. It was noted that the organization was unique and had a clear artistic vision that included educating the public about chamber music and new music. There was enthusiasm for the outreach efforts and support for the interactive nature of the performance which would change the experience for the audience and enable patrons to understand the music. There was a suggestion that the organization explore the possibility of working with dance companies in the future for mutual benefit.

Collage Dance Theatre

Proposed Project: *Gallery Piece* - a live performance installation

Performance Venue: Bandini Art Gallery

Proposed Dates: March 22, 2008

Panel Score: 92.2

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

The vision of the organization and the proposed program were exciting to the panel. They were interested in the concept of a performance in an art gallery where

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dancers would create movement to allow visitors to experience the space in a different way. Panelists agreed that it showed artistic courage to take on such a challenge. The budget and funding sources were impressive and the fact that the organization's board members were required to "give or get". The panel suggested that the outreach be broadened to attract architects, designers and performers.

Vox Femina Los Angeles

Proposed Project: *All Aboard! Fiesta Bound!* celebrating VFLA's upcoming tour to Mexico, featuring American folk songs, signature pieces, and world music

Performance Venue: Culver City Presbyterian Church

Proposed Dates: May 17, 2008

Panel Score: 90.8

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

Vox Femina Los Angeles is based in Culver City and the panel was enthusiastic about the mission of the organization and the dynamic talent of its performers. Panelists observed that this was an organization that aspires to achieve long-term goals and that they appear to have the resources to accomplish that. The panel applauded the comprehensive development plan, including the board development plan, and other long-term planning projects. The panel encouraged the company to consider performing in a larger Culver City venue in the future.

Benita Bike's DanceArt, Inc.

Proposed Project: The educational *Double Take* dance program

Performance Venue: Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Proposed Dates: February 24, 2008 and May 18, 2008

Panel Score: 90.2

Grant Request \$1,700 **Recommended Award** \$3,400

Panelists familiar with the dance company praised its artistic quality and reputation. The proposal for Plan A was the most attractive to the panel since it would provide a second viewing of one of the dances after a question and answer period. The

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educational aspects of the performance could promote more understanding about dance in general. The panel was interested in demonstrating its support for the project by doubling the grant award so that two performances could be performed in Culver City instead of one. Panelists also suggested that the dance company examine its funding base and consider diversification in the future.

Culver City Chamber Orchestra

Proposed Project: The *Passport to Europe* concert featuring a segment of the Just for Kids Youth Symphony

Performance Venue: Kirk Douglas Theatre

Proposed Dates: August 3, 2008

Panel Score: 88

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

The panel was interested in the proposal to present a performance at the Kirk Douglas Theatre and agreed that it was an excellent opportunity for children to perform at a professional venue. Panelists respected the organization's commitment to the community with its emphasis on education. The panel felt that the Just for Kids Youth Symphony is a very specific program for children and that mixing professionals with students would be very valuable. Panelists encouraged the orchestra to reach out to children to attend the performance and suggested that the program may provide an opportunity for the orchestra to obtain school contracts.

Westchester Symphony Society (Culver City Symphony Orchestra)

Proposed Project: Annual concert, *On Our Way Up*, featuring winners of the Parness Young Artists Concerto Competition

Performance Venue: Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Proposed Dates: March 29, 2008

Panel Score: 88

Grant Request \$10,000 **Recommended Award** \$5,500

Panelists remarked on the orchestra's reputation in the community and on the good artistic quality of the CD. They felt that it is important to have a community orchestra

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that offers free performances. The panel felt that the proposed program is important to the music education system since it is a vehicle for encouraging children to study classical music and learn an instrument. The panel encouraged promoting the concert through the Culver City Schools. Also, it was recommended that the orchestra initiate strategic planning and review its need for an Executive Director. The orchestra will receive a fee waiver of \$3,150 for the use of Veterans Memorial Auditorium as per a prior written agreement with the City Council.

WCB Arts Foundation Inc.

Proposed Project: *Adventure in Wonderland and On the Green*; educational, family-friendly, contemporary dance productions, featuring circus clowns, stiltwalkers, and live music with the Bob Applebaum Acoustic Ensemble

Performance Venue: Culver City Park – Basketball Court

Proposed Dates: October 17-19, 2008

Panel Score: 83

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

Panelists were not aware of this company prior to reviewing the proposal however they were enthusiastic about the project and favorably regarded the performance on DVD. They appreciated the fun that the group generated and believed that the company could effectively present dance in the park. Panelists remarked on the company's corporate funding as well as its Cultural Affairs Department funding from the City of Los Angeles as signs of confidence in the company.

Culver City Public Theatre, Inc.

Proposed Project: The 2008 Summer Season, featuring classical theatrical works, as well as the Children's Popcorn Theatre program

Performance Venue: Carlson Park

Proposed Dates: Two performances every Saturday and Sunday
July 19, 20, 26, and 27, 2008
August 2, 3, 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, and 24, 2008

Panel Score: 82

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Grant Request \$10,000 **Recommended Award** \$5,000

This company has established itself in Culver City and audiences look forward to the summer productions. The Panel respected the efforts of this community theatre and recognized the benefits of presenting performances in Carlson Park. Panelists were familiar with the productions and remarked on the enjoyable ambiance of the events with families bringing folding chairs and blankets. Panelists remarked on the changes that the organization has undergone over the years and recommended that more effort be made on developing an artistic vision for the company.

L.A. Contemporary Dance Company

Proposed Project: An interactive dance and music performance that is part of the *New Spaces, New Faces* project- an initiative to perform dance in unconventional venues

Performance Venue: Culver City High School Gymnasium

Proposed Dates: June 23-29, 2008

Panel Score: 80.2

Grant Request \$7,000 **Recommended Award** \$3,500

The panel felt that this was a promising young company and noted that they had already performed at the Ford Amphitheatre. Panelists were excited by the project and believed in the capability of the company although the DVD did not feature a hip hop or jazz performance. The budget was commended especially for its footnotes of additional information. Panelists remarked on the company's interest in developing a broader relationship with the City and recommended that the organization explore the City's current performing arts scene including the activities of AVPA.

Los Angeles Area Veterans' Artists Alliance

Proposed Project: *The Need to Know*
April Fitzsimmons' solo show, sharing her story as a performer and a veteran

Performance Venue: Kirk Douglas Theatre

Proposed Dates: August 2, 2008

Panel Score: 76

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

Panel members were excited by the concept of this one-woman performance and interested in the subject matter. Panelists remarked that grant funding might provide a foundation for the artist to obtain other grants. Questions arose regarding the size of the theatre for this production since the piece seems to require a more intimate space. Additionally, there was a recommendation to have the director or an acting coach assist in the transition to the Kirk Douglas Theatre.

Los Angeles Doctors Symphony Orchestra

Proposed Project: The Annual Young Pianist Concerto Concert, featuring six middle and high school age winners of the Robert Turner Piano Concerto Competition

Performance Venue: Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Proposed Dates: March 9, 2008

Panel Score: 74.8

Grant Request \$3,100 **Recommended Award** \$2,000

Overall, panelists found this organization unique and remarked that the project provided good community benefit. The young pianists are serious and the event is important for the piano student community. Panelists recommended that the organization explore more diversified funding sources for this project in the future.

Three Chairs Theatre Company

Proposed Project: *Believe You Me*
An original production examining familiar fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, Aesop, and traditional Korean and Japanese works

Performance Venue: Black Box Theatre at West Los Angeles College

Proposed Dates: February 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, and 16, 2008

Panel Score: 66.8

Grant Request \$3,000 **Recommended Award** \$1,000

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The panel noted that this was an emerging, young company that had already made connections in the Culver City community and specifically with AVPA. Panelists felt that West LA College was a good venue for this group and this project. The panel recommended that the company explore opportunities to involve seasoned professionals in its work so that they may act as mentors for the young artists.

NACUSA-LA

Proposed Project: A series of five concerts, presenting professional singers and instrumentalists performing art songs and chamber music by composers from Southern California

Performance Venue: Culver City Presbyterian Church
Culver City Senior Center

Proposed Dates: April 30, 2008
June 21, 2008
September 24, and 27, 2008
December 7, 2008

Panel Score: 56.2

Grant Request \$4,000 **Recommended Award** \$0

The panel appreciated the project's concept but was not favorably impressed by the CD. It was noted that the two reviews submitted were written by a composer included on the CD and the panel would have preferred to see an independent third party review. After careful examination and comparison, the panel recommended against funding the organization this year in favor of selecting other music proposals which would provide higher quality performances and more impact in the community.

Nom de Guerre Theatre Guild

Proposed Project: Halloween Theatre Festival - Adaptations of classic literature in the thriller genre, produced an evening of one-act plays

Performance Venue: Not Set

Proposed Dates: September 26-November 2, 2008

Panel Score: 49.4

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Grant Request \$6,500

Recommended Award \$0

The panel was interested in the project but noted that a venue had not been set in advance. The submitted review and videotape were seven years old and that raised questions about the quality of the current company. The project seemed large and the budget and fundraising plan seemed unrealistic to the panel. The panel declined to recommend funding for this project.

* * *

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission on November 13, 2007, the award recommendations as outlined above were approved 5-0.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

The total amount recommended for the 2008 Performing Arts Grant awards is \$57,750. The unallocated funds of \$7,250 would be used to market the performances of the grant recipients with the remainder carried over into FY 2008-09. These funds come from the combination of Art Fund monies as allocated pursuant to Culver City's Municipal Code and a contribution from Sony Pictures Entertainment. **Sufficient funds are available in CIP Project 614 – Performing Arts Grants to fund this recommendation.**

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Overview of 2008 Performing Arts Grant Requests

Attachment 2 – 2008 NOFA, Score Sheet and Performing Arts Grant Applications

MOTION:

That the City Council:

Allocate funds for the 2008 Performing Arts Grant program as recommended by the Cultural Affairs Commission and as outlined above in the staff report.