



**New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations &
Committee on Economic Development**

**Oversight Hearing: The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational
Programming in New York City
December 15, 2020, 10:00AM – Virtual Hearing**

**Testimony Presented by New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)
Commissioner Gonzalo Casals**

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Good morning, Chair Van Bramer, and members of the committee. I am Commissioner Gonzalo Casals, here today to testify on behalf of the Department of Cultural Affairs regarding today's topic, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City." I am joined today by Cultural Affairs Deputy Commissioner Sheelah Feinberg.

As you are aware, no realm of life in New York City has been untouched by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. And our cultural community, which is the foundation for so much of what makes our city vibrant, healthy, and alive, has been particularly hard hit. The effects span both the profound personal losses and suffering that so many New Yorkers experienced, and the devastating financial losses experienced by our nonprofit partners. Back in the spring, we conducted a survey of the financial impact, which found half a billion dollars in lost revenue, and thousands of layoffs and furloughs. One particularly alarming data point involved the impact on arts education organizations. According to the report, these groups experienced the most severe income losses – a staggering 18% of annual revenue within the first few weeks of the pandemic. Our survey also found that some of the greatest reductions to artist employment have come from arts education organizations, which collectively reported decreases of over 2,100 artists, or 78% of artist staffing, during this period.

Recognizing these extraordinary challenges, we're committed to working with Council to support these important organizations, which provide arts education services to so many schools, childcare sites, and families across the five boroughs. For one, we worked with City Council on guidelines for Cultural After School Adventures program, known as CASA. We also worked with you to adjust requirements for CASA to the realities of the current moment, allowing funds to be used to serve students learning at home through remote programming. We also worked with Council on guidelines for organizations delivering blended and live programming through the anti-gun initiative, Art as a Catalyst for Change. This collaboration has kept public funds flowing to these critical arts education programs: nearly \$14 million to 170 organizations this year through CASA alone. My staff is working to process these payments as quickly as possible. Given the radically altered landscape and circumstances we're working under, there is a slight delay in processing the funds, but we anticipate issuing payments starting in January.

We've also been providing arts ed organizations with resources to help them make the transition to remote programming, through webinars and resources posted online.

I am excited to announce that just yesterday we sent notifications to over 1,000 cultural groups receiving \$47.1 million in FY21 support through the Cultural Development Fund. This included more than \$12 million added by City Council at budget adoption. Nearly half of CDF grantees provide services to a K-12 audience, so this support is crucial for arts education. We thank you for this critical funding, and we were able to use this money to invest in some of the cultural sector's most urgent needs, including:

- across-the-board grant increases for all CDF recipients;
- grant increases for more than 600 groups working in low-income neighborhoods and areas most affected by COVID-19;
- boosts for the five local arts councils that will be passed along to individual artists and smaller nonprofits.

Importantly for today's topic, it also includes money specifically earmarked for arts education in two ways: first through increased funding to 25 arts education groups and second, funding for the Arts Educator Emergency Relief Fund, established by the Arts in Education Roundtable earlier this year. As I mentioned earlier, our COVID-19 impact survey found that arts education was particularly hard hit by the pandemic – just at the moment when New Yorkers needed their services the most. The Arts Educator Emergency Relief Fund, initiated earlier this year with contributions from the New York Community Trust and Booth Ferris Foundation, provided unrestricted grants to hundreds of arts education professionals who were hardest hit by the COVID-19 crisis. We're thrilled to be able to support the educators who are so critical to providing young people with the extraordinary benefits of creative engagement.

The extraordinary staff at Materials for the Arts program, which is beloved by arts educators throughout the city, has made sure that their arts ed services continue to benefit educators and students. The MFTA Education Center has transitioned its in-person programs to online platforms. They continue to host field trips, in-school residencies, professional development courses, monthly public events, artists-in-residence, and gallery exhibitions. We also launched the MFTA Online Education Center to support teachers and students with resources during the pandemic. Thanks to the creative MFTA team, the Education Center has served over 10,000 NYC DOE students and over 1,000 teachers through 37 virtual field trips, 35 online residencies at over 20 schools, and 9 online professional development courses for DOE teachers, all since the pandemic began.

We've been inspired to see how cultural workers, despite the incredible stresses of recent months, have remained committed to bringing cultural programming to New Yorkers. And arts education, which has such a profound effect on youth and families, is among the most vulnerable, and most important programming to support. We appreciate your partnership in supporting these essential arts ed programs and the people who make them possible, and we recognize the long road ahead toward full recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on today's topic. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Arts in Education **R**NYC **UNDTABLE**

New York City Arts in Education Roundtable *Live Testimony - Oversight Arts Education*

Thank you Chair Van Bramer, Committee on Cultural Affairs, and Commissioner Casals and staff at DCLA for your leadership and commitment to arts education. Also, congratulations on the passing of the Open Culture bill. My name is Kimberly Olsen, and I am the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable and proud LIC resident.

The Roundtable is a service organization who builds its efforts around the values that arts are essential and that arts education is a right for all NYC students. Our 120+ member organizations have worked in long-standing partnership with the DOE to ensure that every child has access to quality arts learning.

We acknowledge that our great city is in crisis, but we at the Roundtable believe that the pathway forward includes investing in arts education as part of the city's recovery. The cuts to arts education programs have not only stripped away much-needed resources from young New Yorkers, but jeopardized the livelihood of thousands of artists and cultural workers. Earlier this year, the Roundtable administered a relief fund to arts education cultural workers impacted by COVID-19. 80% of applicants had been furloughed or laid off. 85% estimated their 2020 income will be under \$30,000 -- well under NYC's poverty-threshold. We are grateful for support from DCLA to engage in another round of relief funding to support these highly specialized workers.

As we rebuild from the dual pandemics, investment in cultural partnerships puts artists to work in communities and drives movement towards a more equitable education system.

We seek City Council's help as the field of arts education fights its way through this time of economic strife. To rebuild and sustain arts education programs, we believe the city must:

- Work with the DOE to reinstate system-wide per capita funds for arts learning akin to Project Arts
- Increase accountability around arts learning by mandating the art's inclusion in every school's Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Offer a one-year extension to cultural organizations with MTAC contracts expiring between March 2020 and June 2021, with a suggestion that an audit of the contracting system be conducted after the pandemic.
- Restore cuts to arts education services at the NYC DOE and cuts CASA programs in FY22 budget

Now, in partnership with OASP and certified arts teachers, our cultural organizations are ready and able to support schools in what could be a crucial lifeline for them and our city's youth. Thank you for your time and consideration.



December 2, 2020

The text of my testimony would be provided prior to the hearing, but more generally, I would like to discuss the impact of BRIC's city council-funded arts education programs on our students in partner schools in Brooklyn. I would discuss findings from our FY20 program evaluation and present other evidence for the importance of arts programs in public schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Kaminski". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Keith Kaminski, Director of Education

Hearing on Tuesday, December 15th at 10:00am of the Committee of Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

Testimony from Kati Koerner, Hiltz Director of Education, Lincoln Center Theater

Although Lincoln Center Theater is dark, our education programs are going strong. This year, we will provide online theater education services to more than 2,800 students in 28 NYC public middle and high schools in 15 City Council districts.

LCT is reaching students and teachers through a combination of pre-recorded and live online content. The centerpiece of this effort is a website devoted to LCT's production of Dominique Morisseau's play PIPELINE about race and schools: a "one stop shop" where students can watch a video of the show and access activities and contextual information. The site also serves as a springboard to post-show content created for each participating class by LCT's teaching artists.

The key is maximum flexibility. Each of our school partners has its own schedule, its own balance of live and pre-recorded content, and its own challenges with attendance and student access to technology. Serving ENL students is a core part of LCT's education work. Our partner schools are gravely concerned about language loss among ENL students, and see the arts as a key way to encourage them to show up online and speak up in class.

LCT's teaching artist costs have gone up by more than 50% with our shift to online instruction. Like with all teaching right now, the job has changed. It now requires more planning time, time to film and edit lessons and put them online, respond to student work, and learn the necessary skills to teach effectively online.

LCT charges schools approximately 20% of the true cost of our programs. The balance of the costs are assumed by LCT's funders. Our partner schools have indicated wide disparities in their ability to pay for our services complicating budgeting on our end.

The City Council can support arts education through its advocacy and oversight. Underlining the importance of arts education, even in the current emergency school situation, and ensuring budget transparency for schools and prompt disbursement of encumbered funds with required documentation that reflects the reality of online instructional delivery.

Thank you.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

12/8/20

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Laura Craft, and I work at LEAP / an arts education based nonprofit that serves schools in all five New York City boroughs with particular focus on neighborhoods that are historically underserved.

LEAP's mission is to provide educational arts programs that promote access and equity for New York City students underserved in the arts. We inspire diverse school communities to love learning and build their creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills.

We envision a city filled with creative and collaborative community members prepared to thrive in the 21st Century. We're enabling underrepresented youth to find success in high-earning careers by building the next generation of life-long learners and innovative problem-solvers.

Over 70% of business leaders say that creative thinking is the top skill they look for when hiring. But the arts—one of the best ways to teach creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication skills—aren't always prioritized in schools. Even more so, traditional teaching methods can't access all types of learners, often resulting in low student engagement.

LEAP is currently working both in-schools and virtually to continue to serve our students in arts educational programming. We have found our program to be more essential than ever in these deeply trying times for our students, their families, and our schools. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages.

In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Budget cuts would devastate the schools we work with and nonprofits like LEAP. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Laura Craft

Lucy Sexton
Executive Director
New Yorkers for Culture & Arts
lucy@NY4CA.org
NY4CA.org

June 22, 2020

Thank you Chair Van Bramer and members of the City Council for hearing my and so many others' testimony. And thank you and the entire City Council for all the care and work you have been doing for our city in this crisis.

My name is Lucy Sexton and I am proud to head New Yorkers for Culture and Arts, a citywide coalition of cultural groups of every size from every neighborhood. The damage of the COVID to every artist, cultural worker, and organization has been immense. And the damage to arts education among the most extreme.

There have been many studies on the impact of arts in schools. Last year, an article in the Times detailed the many ways that arts integrated into the curriculum improved outcomes. From the article:

“The arts can be a source of joy in a child’s day, and also come in handy for memorizing times tables. Neuroscience suggest that arts education can play additional important roles in how children learn. Dr. Mariale Hardiman said: “We found the biggest difference with children at the lower level of achievement. Could this be at least one lever for closing an achievement gap?” *

This fall the Brookings Institute did another study affirming other benefits of arts in education. There were upticks in standardized test scores, reductions in disciplinary infractions, and marked increases in compassion for others. Additionally, to quote from the research:

“increases in arts learning positively and significantly affect students’ school engagement, college aspirations, and their inclinations to draw upon works of art as a means for empathizing with others.”**

So a crisis for arts and culture in education is a crisis for our kids and a crisis for our city. As you will hear from others today, it is also a crisis for artists who teach. An NPR show this morning detailed the devastating impact on artists livelihoods.***

So many have noted that NYC has the most segregated school system in the country. Shocking. The inequity plays out when it comes to arts and culture for schoolchildren, with the wealthiest whitest schools providing PTA funds to pay art teachers, and the poorest schools in Black and brown neighborhoods going without.

As you struggle with this budget during this time of crisis and upheaval, we ask that you break with the past. Instead of cutting arts and culture first, instead of slashing arts ed, instead of abandoning those neighborhoods hardest hit, we ask that you imagine a city where every kid in every neighborhood deserves the educational benefits, the dignity, the healing, and the joy that culture provides.

*<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/04/well/family/using-arts-education-to-help-other-lessons-stick.html>

** <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2019/02/12/new-evidence-of-the-benefits-of-arts-education/>

***<https://one.npr.org/?sharedMediaId=946628922:946628>

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My name is Madeline Calandrillo. I am a teaching artist, arts educator, and theater-maker working in all five boroughs of New York City. I am a proud born and raised New Yorker and have devoted much of my career to creating and growing arts education programs in public schools. I am passionate about using theater as a tool to enliven education and create community. My definition of a teaching artist is a person that is both skilled as an educator and artist. A person that has a role in building their communities arts sector and actively exploring how to use their art form to dismantle systemic issues within their community. For me, there is no separation between creating art for and with young audiences and advocacy. I use my art form (devised theater/music/dance) to offer an opportunity for students to think critically, problem solve, and have an emotional connection at the same time. In this moment, teaching artists have been at the forefront in creating new and engaging virtual arts programming. We are now video content creators and editors. We are resilient and flexible. My fear has been and is ever more apparent now in the sustainability in our world of teaching artistry. The pandemic has exposed the severe inequalities in our field. Lack of access to health care, fair wages, and consistent work. I think our field is in danger of losing so many fabulous teaching artists because of the lack of income.

In the beginning on March 2020, I had just begun a part time arts administration job for New York City Children's Theater, as well as teaching in person instruction for five organizations across the city. By the end of March, I lost all of that work except for the administration job. As we moved to focus on creating remote programming for our students we realized how much music and theater was needed. So many of our students were having trouble engaging in remote learning in their general education classes. We worked closely with our teachers to create a music and theatrically based virtual program where 98% of our students engaged with. We had students send us videos of them singing the original song they had helped write. We had students create visual art pieces in response to prompts we gave. I realized that we will heal through art and creating space for our young people to express themselves through art. Dramatic play is something that allows participants to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is both a catalyst and a context for learning. Children learn and are influenced by their surroundings by playing pretend. Children create games and imaginary worlds to help them cope with situations and/or understand their reality. Theatrical play can put young people in situations where they need to learn (i.e.: language, social and emotional, decision making) skills in order to resolve the conflict within a drama.. Play can also address the viewpoints and feelings of a young participant. As teaching artists, arts educators, and theater-makers we want to create a world within our sessions and performances in which our early learners can engage. We need to have adequate funding to help support these programs for our communities. The arts will have a major impact in how our city and communities rebuild from the trauma of this crisis. Thank you so much for reading my testimony.

-Madeline Calandrillo



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The Joan Weill Center for Dance 405 West 55th St, New York NY 10019-4402 (212) 405-9000 AlvinAiley.org

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Founder
Alvin Ailey

Artistic Director Emerita
Judith Jamison

December 11, 2020

I will upload my testimony at a later date.

Thank you,

Blair Reavis-Tyler

Blair Reavis-Tyler

AIE Assistant, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

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Notes in Motion, Inc. DBA Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

December 6, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Amanda Selwyn, and I am the Artistic/Executive Director of Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre/Notes in Motion.

Notes in Motion Outreach Dance Theatre offers a wide array of residency, professional development, interactive performance, and after-school programs that teach dance skills, choreography, improvisation, inter-disciplinary study, and arts appreciation in dance styles including modern, ballet, tap, jazz, hip hop, Latin, African, and more. These programs are united by our singular approach to arts education, *The Movement Exchange Method*, in which students take on leadership roles in their own learning, have creative input in the design of the curriculum, participate in critical discussions of the work of their peers, and develop collaborative skills. Programs foster self-discovery, risk-taking, and making connections between different topics, themes, and areas of learning. We aim to provide access to the art form of dance to inspire the next generation of dance appreciators. As an aggregate, the breakdown of the demographics of the students we serve are: 6% Asian; 39% Black, 44% Latino, 10% White; 8% English Language Learners; 21% Students with Special Needs.. Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre creates original and dynamic dance theatre that raises questions and magnifies humanity through dance. Productions pivot around core themes and through an interplay between athletic and pedestrian motion, activate emotional expression in a rich and abstract collage. Presenting dance in an immediate, mature, and inclusive way, we engage audiences from start to finish and beckon a response of thought, feeling, and soul.

Our primary focus right now is supporting our school partners with socially distanced or remote program, resources for families, a supportive check-in, any way we can help in this incredibly challenging time. We are rooted in our mission and aim to create access to dance for many years to come. Our dance education programs in the NYC schools offer students tools to express themselves, engage with their peers, and gain a more well rounded school experience. Through sharing and providing access to this inclusive learning model, we are engaged in the critical work of breaking down barriers of systematic racism and oppression. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages.

In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Government funds are essential for us to provide our dance education programs for our school partners -- without them, these schools will likely have no arts education, less parent engagement, and a drastic decline in individual student learning, leadership, and community engagement. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Amanda Selwyn
Artistic/Executive Director

Notes in Motion, Inc. DBA Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre

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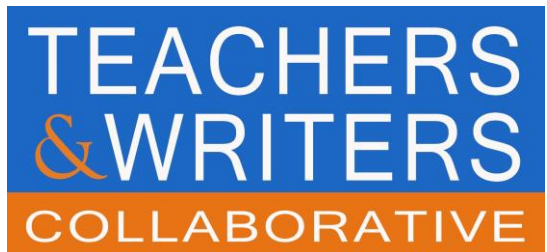
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Sincerely,
Amanda Selwyn
Artistic/Executive Director



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December 8, 2020

To: New York City Council

From: Asari Beale, Executive Director, Teachers & Writers Collaborative

RE: City Council Hearing, Tuesday, December 15 @ 10am - Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations

Remarks to be presented at this hearing will be submitted at a later date.

NYBG

NYBG Testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations on Tuesday, December 15, 2020, regarding "Oversight: The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City"

Good morning Chairman Van Bramer and Members of the Committee. On behalf of the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG), thank you for letting me testify today and for all your hard work in supporting our City's thriving arts and culture community, especially during these unprecedented times. I also want to thank Speaker Johnson and your colleagues in City government for the ongoing support for our City's cultural institutions.

As we grapple with the continuing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the arts and culture community become even more crucial for the coping and recovery of its wearied citizens. Operating on limited funds, strained resources, and building closures, our City's cultural institutions continue to serve through remote and safe in-person programming, for culture in NYC, despite any setbacks, never closes. NYBG is a member of the City's Cultural Institutions Group and throughout the COVID-19 crisis, all CIGs have been committed to contributing to the City and to New Yorkers by supporting public life, public health, and public service

When NYBG was mandated to close in late March, along with many of our partnering Bronx schools, we were left with a growing harvest at our Edible Academy but without any school groups to take home the organic produce. Always ready to address the health disparities and food insecurities of the Bronx, NYBG donated thousands of pounds of fresh produce to neighboring charities and public schools. Also, NYBG created eight Bronx food hubs, organized by groups of community gardens throughout our borough, who received thousands of seedlings plants to promote healthier eating while becoming local food resources for their neighborhoods. In the realm of public health, the Garden stepped up at the onset of the pandemic to feed The Bronx, in a healthier way.

When NYBG was given permission to welcome the public back on July 20th, we began to offer any Bronx resident and healthcare worker free access, totaling tens of thousands of visits so far. Understanding that equitable access to our grounds may be a challenge for some of our borough's hardworking families, our free access programs contribute to the intellect and reprieve for all Bronxites, no matter what socioeconomic level they come from. In the realm of public life, NYBG is a cultural and educational anchor for all in the Bronx community.

However, it is NYBG's efforts in the realm of public service that I want to close this testimony with. Garden staff immediately shifted into free remote programming for the public and our school partners in the Bronx. Our innovative online programs covered diverse topics of discussion, such as the intersectionality of history and the LGBTQ community regarding botanical professional research and science, Black Botany, an online exhibition featuring the Black experience and the reconsideration of the conscious omission of Black knowledge of the natural world, Fiesta de Flores: A Celebration of Latinx Heritage, and a very compelling symposium feathering Native American perspectives on land and plants. At our Edible Academy, the staff there modified the multi-visit school program to be conducted virtually. Utilizing online platforms and a variety of technologies, students and teachers are able to participate in gardening workshops synchronously, while engaging live with NYBG educators to observe plant phenomena and teach grade-specific lessons adhering to NYC school curricula.

Yet, all these great free online programs, along with the many others offered by our colleagues in the arts and culture community, cannot maximize their potential for diverse audiences without adequate broadband access, especially for low-income communities. With a growing trend in online programming and socially distant learning, getting everyone connected online must be a topic of ongoing work by the Mayor and City Council

Thank you once again Chairman Van Bramer and Members of the Committee.

Angel Hernandez, *Director of Government Relations*
The New York Botanical Garden
ahernandez@nybg.org

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 13th, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Sarah Kleinke and I am the Company Manager and a dancer at Elisa Monte Dance based in Harlem, NY.

The mission of Elisa Monte Dance is emphasized through three main objectives: Train and maintain a corps of professional dancers of multi-ethnic origin, capable of meeting the artistic and physical demands of the choreography; educate individuals in the art of movement and in appreciation of live dance performance; and collaborate with distinguished artists across other disciplines.

We are currently in collaboration with the Police Athletic League to bring free quality dance education to the students in the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan communities. Our mission in these programs is to use dance to develop character, instill confidence, and prove that a career in the arts is possible.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages.

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My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences.

As a member of a Harlem based organization, these budget cuts would greatly impact the students we serve in communities that need a creative outlet now more than ever. In addition, a budget cut to the arts during this global pandemic would create a monumental setback to many organizations in the field as we were the first to close with an unforeseeable reopen.

Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Sarah Kleinke

New York City Center is a member of the City's Cultural Institutions Group. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, CIGs have been committed to contributing to the City and to New Yorkers by supporting public life, public health, and public service. We at New York City Center Education have been working tirelessly to provide arts education services in both dance and musical theater to our dedicated school partners during this pandemic. We are currently working with over 2,000 students in approx. 75 classrooms across the city in virtual, synchronous dance and musical theater workshops. Sadly, for so many of our school partners this has not been possible. Most do not have the capacity or the funds to support arts partnerships like ours; partnerships that have been a part of the fabric of their schools for decades.

It is heartbreaking to see relationships between cultural organizations and schools get sidelined. It is even more devastating to think that students, who otherwise would have had an arts experience this year, will go without. How will that impact our youth going forward? The arts have the capacity to change a child's life. Art has again been shown by research to aid in mental health outcomes. Investing in arts education is vital to the emotional recovery of our youth post-pandemic.

In the work we have been fortunate to maintain, it has been a privilege to witness how engaged students are in the arts even from behind their individual screens. Our workshops offer students the opportunity to get up and move their bodies, sing songs, and actively engage in a dialogue with professional teaching artists both face to face or within the comfort of the chat feature. This work encourages creativity, boosts confidence, and promotes movement and physicality - a necessity when so much time is being spent at home.

The work of our department is inherently linked to NYC schools and our fiscal well-being relies heavily on robust and thriving partnerships with our incredible network of schools and educators. This year, New York City Center had to shrink its overall budget by 44%, which affected the allocation available to us to assist in subsidizing the cost of programming for our partner schools. At the same time, the funding schools have for this work has also been slashed. With these factors in play, we have only been able to reach 21% of the students we had impacted in a pre-pandemic year so far this season.

We continue to get creative in addressing this gap by offering as much as we can for free. For example, we have boosted our online resources and study guides and made them available to any interested teacher or family. We are currently offering free digital access tickets to our gala performance, An Evening with Audra McDonald, to the first 50 students to register via Virtual Culture - an online catalogue of free virtual offerings for NYC students ages 12 - 19.

More than ever, we remain committed to making the arts accessible to students across New York City, now and for years to come. These massive financial shifts have deeply impacted our community of partners. We implore the city to increase funding and support so that we may continue to provide students with access to the arts and strengthen these vital relationships with New York City schools for the long term.

Sincerely,



Assistant Director of Education
New York City Center





Testimony to the New York City Council

Stephanie Hill Wilchfort, President & CEO, Brooklyn Children's Museum, December 15, 2020

Good afternoon. I'm Stephanie Wilchfort, President & CEO of Brooklyn Children's Museum, a community museum in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and the world's first children's museum. I'm grateful for this opportunity to share some of the work that funding from the City of New York has allowed us to do over the past 9 months.

Brooklyn Children's Museum has been open to the public since September, providing programming on the Museum's roof terrace built by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the Department of Design & Construction. Because we have this beautiful, open space – as well as a large, relatively new building also built by DCLA and DDC – Brooklyn Children's Museum has been able to safely serve nearly 10,000 children and caregivers with in-person experiences. Another 5,000 people have participated in our online programs.

In October, we partnered with the National Museum of the American Indian to present programs on *Indigenous Peoples' Day*, including a traditional hoop dance by Ojibwe and Oneida performance artist Ty Defoe and spoken word with Taino storyteller Bobby Gonzalez. On *Dia de los Muertos*, the roof hosted teaching artist Mincho Vega, who created a communal *ofrenda* for our families to honor lost loved ones. That day, Åse Dance Theater Collective performed four times to make sure that every one of our visitors could see their work. On *Diwali*, Ajna Dance Company welcomed our families for Bollywood dancing lessons and Raga Kids shared traditional and contemporary Indian music.

Thousands of children and caregivers were touched by these performances. Some days were cold and rainy, but our families were dry under a rooftop canopy built by the City of New York.

Not only were the events well-attended, they provided income for all of the artists and performers we hired, some of whom had not performed since March of this year. Our next weekend of rooftop performance and programming will celebrate Kwanzaa on December 26 and 27. Asase Yaa Cultural Arts Foundation is curating our festival, which will include dance, drumming and art-making.

In partnership with the New York City Department of Youth & Community Development and with support from Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel, BCM provided free, in-person summer camp in July and August, and is currently operating a free, in-person STEAM afterschool program at PS 189/The Bi-Lingual School on the border between Crown Heights and Brownsville. In addition to arts and science enrichment, children receive homework help, snack and physical education.

Many families have not been able to visit museums recently, but thanks to support from the City and other funders, we have been able to create the *Our City* activity kit, filled with art supplies and a booklet featuring projects inspired by local artists who were compensated for their participation. Brooklyn Children's Museum has distributed 1,000 of these kits through partners such as Women in Need, United for Brownsville, and Public School Districts 16 in Bedford Stuyvesant and District 17 in Crown Heights, among others.

Thanks to support from DCLA and other City agencies, BCM has been able to serve its communities in new ways this year. Special thanks to Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo, Council Member Robert Cornegy, Council Member Farah Louis and Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel who are champions for children and families in our community during this time and always. Please know how grateful we continue to be for the City's commitment to arts and culture.

I will upload my testimony at a later date. Thank you!

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM & LIBRARY

TESTIMONY TO THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2020

OFFERED BY
MIA NAGAWIECKI, VICE PRESIDENT FOR EDUCATION

Dear Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs:

Thank you for your service to the arts and culture community in New York City, and thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of the New-York Historical Society, New York's oldest Museum. For over 200 years, New-York Historical has told the story of our nation's founding and history, using our vast collections to highlight under-told stories and diverse perspectives throughout that history. It is in very large part due to the continued support and generosity of the city government--in particular, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York City Council--that New-York Historical remains a strong, vibrant institution that presents exhibitions and educational initiatives reaching more than 400,000 students, teachers, and visitors each year.

This has been a challenging but transformative year for New-York Historical, which mobilized rapidly to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Museum and Library closed to the public on March 13, 2020, and since that time, our staff has developed new and innovative ways of reaching audiences, both remotely and on-site. Following City and State guidelines, New-York Historical's phased reopening began on August 14 with the presentation of a free, outdoor exhibition titled *Hope Wanted: New York City Under Quarantine*, which documented the experiences of diverse New Yorkers across the five boroughs during the height of the pandemic. Our indoor galleries reopened on September 11, following robust safety measures and health protocols.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

Since March 13, New-York Historical staff have been working remotely to ensure that our institution's programming continues to reach the broadest possible public. While we remain committed to serving our audiences, New-York Historical also recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted our ability to serve our constituents. Compared to 38,418 students and teachers served in our galleries in Fiscal Year 2019, New-York Historical welcomed 18,862 students and teachers through Museum-based programs in Fiscal Year 2020. Our programming calendar has been significantly interrupted as well; New-York Historical has cancelled five exhibitions and postponed six as a result of the pandemic.

Given the financial consequences of the Museum's closure, urgent cost-saving measures, including salary reductions for high-earning staff, along with receipt of a PPP forgivable loan were implemented, allowing New-York Historical to retain all staff through June 30, 2020. However, the Museum continued to face challenges from loss of earned income streams, including admissions, building rentals, program fees, Museum Store, café, and restaurant sale, which have jeopardized our long-term financial

stability. As a result, the institution has dramatically shrunk its operating budget for the 2021 fiscal year and has had to implement severe staff reductions and furloughs across all departments.

PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

Despite these difficult setbacks, New-York Historical has remained committed to its mission of creating museum programming that highlights under-recognized stories, challenging traditional historical narratives, and enriching public understanding of our shared past. In response to stay-at-home orders and school closures, New-York Historical launched History @ Home on March 23, turning our robust slate of K-12 programming into virtual and digital offerings.

Under History @ Home, New-York Historical transformed its lauded gallery-based, in-school, and after-school history and civics education programs into powerful online education services. Classroom-based social studies enrichment classes have been transformed into free, weekly virtual sessions, tailored to all grade levels and delivered by experienced Museum Educators. Museum-based field trips and youth group tours are now offered as virtual tours, during which Museum Educators lead classes through our galleries and exhibitions through live video conferencing or virtual galleries. Onsite Teen Programs and Teacher Programs have moved online as well, quickly adapting to online meetings, lectures, and working sessions. Additionally, our flagship Academy for American Democracy residency program, which engages sixth grade classes in the history of democracy and its evolution over time, has been converted to an engaging online format, with Museum Educators delivering programming directly to learners in their homes. Finally, New-York Historical's robust digital curriculum library has served as a vital resource to teachers adapting to remote instruction, and we provide daily lesson plans and asynchronous content to further enrich at-home learning. In particular, our *Women and the American Story* (wams.nyhistory.org) initiative, the first-ever K-12 American history curriculum foregrounding the roles of women, has seen usage double since school closures, reaching over 40,000 students and educators at the end of the 2019-2020 school year compared to 20,000 in the previous year.

These measures have allowed us to provide direct cultural education services to more than 61,000 learners since the PAUSE began, and will continue as long as is needed until our in-person services can resume.

Though engagement for some programs has been impacted by our building's temporary closure and social distancing guidelines, New-York Historical is pleased to report that the transition to a virtual model has also allowed us to reach new audiences. Attendance in our Tech Scholars program, an initiative that works to address the gender gap in tech through providing women's history and coding classes to teen girls, has risen dramatically; when facilitated onsite at New-York Historical, program capacity was limited by physical space, but as a virtual coding bootcamp, we anticipate serving 1,000 girls through week-long intensives. Our Citizenship Project classes, which provide free civics and American history workshops to Green Card holders preparing for the naturalization exam and interview, have also moved to virtual sessions, allowing us to experiment with new program models that respond to the needs of our constituents. For example, we are developing Spanish-language classes to serve individuals who are exempt from the test's English proficiency requirement. With the program's

*Mia Nagawiecki, Vice President for Education
(212) 485-9236 // mia.nagawiecki@nyhistory.org*

adaptability to an online learning model, we have also launched self-guided Citizenship Project lessons, providing content to those who can't make scheduled video conferencing sessions.

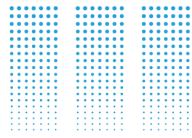
For our youngest audiences and their families, New-York Historical's DiMenna Children's History Museum has moved all Family Programs to a virtual platform, providing fun and engaging activities as counterparts to the more rigorous curriculum-based learning students are also doing remotely. To help keep young learners engaged, our Family Programs offer intergenerational experiences modeled after our Museum-based activities, including Reading into History Family Book Club, Little New Yorkers story times and activities, Living History reenactments, and downloadable activities with instructions.

CONCLUSION

The New-York Historical Society remains deeply grateful for the important programmatic and capital funds from New York City that have allowed us to expand our resources and adapt to the urgent needs of our local community. These funds will become even more essential in the months and years of recovery ahead. In this time of fiscal uncertainty, we remain grateful for the city's investment in cultural education and ask for the Committee's robust support as we work both to extend our service as an institution and to strengthen New York City's vibrant cultural landscape more broadly.

We thank you and your fellow City Council Members for your exceptional service.

Courtney J. Boddie's testimony will be uploaded at a later date.



QUEENS MUSEUM

Queens Museum Testimony

The Impact of COVID-19 on Arts and Cultural
Educational Programming in New York City
New York City Council: Committee on Cultural
Affairs, Libraries & Int'l Intergroup Relations
December 15, 2020

Queens Museum
New York City Building
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Queens, NY 11368
T 718 592 9700 **F** 718 592 5778
E info@queensmuseum.org
queensmuseum.org

Good Morning, Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Committee. My name is Kimaada Le Gendre and I am the Head of Education for the Queens Museum. Thank you for your continued support of arts and culture during these difficult times and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Like other members of New York City's Cultural Institution Group (CIG), the operations of the Queens Museum were significantly impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic. After the Museum shut its doors in March 2020, we were faced with many challenges, including programming to the public and meeting payroll. Despite this, we continued to offer essential programs and resources to advance and support public health, public life, and public benefit for our constituents.

Despite significant loss in revenue and steep cuts to programming, including to 6 CASA partnerships, we were still able to move forward with full suite of educational and cultural offerings including:

- Queens Teens: Our Queens Teens have the opportunity to create art, discuss social justice issues, and attend various workshops and events. This group has grown in size from 30 teens (from Queens) prior to the pandemic, to 120 teens from across the 5 boroughs and Long Island since. They have been meeting weekly via Zoom for Artmaking workshops followed by peer discussion time. Teens are also connected to peers through other institutions including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Whitney. Participants created a *Queens Teens Stay-at-Home Guide* featuring artmaking and self-care prompts. Most recently, Teens

created a *Civic Engagement Guide* to help both younger and older teens become active and involved in civics in their local communities.

- Our Sunday Family Workshops, which took place every Sunday at the Museum prior to the pandemic, are now a series of virtual artmaking tutorial videos offered in Spanish and English and featured
- Uploads for Downtime: artmaking worksheets and guides for students and families in English, Mandarin, Spanish, and Bangla.
- La Ventanita: A multilingual series of artmaking prompts and workshops that connect schools, families, communities, and cultural institutions.
- ArtAccess: In partnership with local social service organization Queens Community House, we were also able to continue our ArtAccess Workshops via Zoom, for adults with disabilities, young adults on the autism spectrum, and for caregivers of older adults with memory loss. Also in collaboration with Queens Community House, we provided 47 remote artmaking experiences for adults and children, on drawing, multimedia art, STEAM, sketching, photography, anime/drawing, craft arts and self-care for educators.

We partnered with La Jornada and Together We Can Community Resource Center Inc. to host a food pantry.. Since launching the pantry in June 2020, we have provided over 16,000 residents in Elmhurst and Corona with fresh and shelf stable food items.

Our staff and Teens regularly volunteer at the food pantry; a support StreetLab series features art making workshops and play time for the children of families visiting the food pantry. These drop in sessions are ideal for kids ranging from 3 – 12 years old and feature materials and self-guided activities, as well as StreetLab’s signature no-touch obstacle course and PLAY NYC program.

Moving forward we will provide our on-site artist studios rent free to Queens-based artists, collectives, and community organizations. We will invite artists and small arts organizations from across disciplines living and working in Queens to come and use the Museum, and feature their work in monthly community days when content will be presented in the form of exhibitions, performances, and public and educational programming.

QM will continue to look at this recovery through the lens of arts and culture, as we strongly believe that a healthy cultural life will be an important part of the recovery and well-being of our communities. We will work with them to provide spaces of care and creativity, to nurture both the heart and soul of our communities, as well as the relevance of our organization. Education and community organizing are core to us all and they will enable us to replenish

and make visible as well as nurture and provide care for our communities. For us that includes artists and educators, and a potentially lost generation of cultural workers.

Thank you to the committee for this opportunity to testify. QM looks forward to our continued partnership with the Council and values your leadership through this crisis. Arts and culture are part of what defines New York's history and resiliency, and are critical to our rebuilding the economy.

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Sindy Isabel Castro, and I am a teaching artist in NYC for organizations such as Lincoln Center Theater, Arts Connection, People's Theatre Project, and New York City Children's Theatre. I am also the co-founder of Jugando N Play, a multilingual theatre for young audiences.

When the pandemic hit NYC and everything shuttered in March of 2020, I saw firsthand how everyone's plans went up in the air. School residencies were cancelled, final performances for students were cancelled, students I met were never to be seen again. Some organizations I worked for stepped up and continued to employ us as part of their organization, finding opportunities for us to continue after school classes online via Zoom or creating pre-recorded theatre lessons to be shared with students through their classroom teachers. While others had to let us go, they could not afford to continue employing us.

As a teaching artist for People's Theatre Project, I saw how committed they were to their community. Within one week of schools closing, PTP called up all their Academy families to check-in. Do you have access to a device to connect to Zoom? Do you need food or shelter? What other resources do you need? Within a week, we were back with our students via Zoom, re-connecting in this new format. A big feedback we received from parents was how much they appreciated this escape for their young artists. With the stress of school, loss of work for families, Monday nights became the days where we could imagine and create. A welcome "normal" to an ever-changing time.

My residencies for New York City Children's Theatre were cut-off. Students never got to perform their plays they worked in the auditorium. We managed to come back to partner with the teachers, but meeting was different now. Due to accessibility and internet connections, we decided it was best to share pre-recorded videos with the students. We reviewed the songs they had written. We performed the characters we had chosen. And we managed to hold a celebration day in Google Meets. The students danced to their choreography for their original songs.

Through a Small Business Loan, Arts Connection was able to bring back teaching artists for May and June 2020 for Think Tanks. Teaching Artists worked alongside staff members to strategize best ways to engage young people remotely and offline. There were teams to create engagement for early learners, Multilingual learners, teens, and families. The support for small businesses allowed the organization to continue employing its staff and use the time to strategize for the 2020-2021 school year.

Heading into this Academic School year, however, has been rough. Partnerships with schoolteachers or schools have been reduced due to lack of funding. The programming that is continuing for some of the organizations I work for have been heavily reduced. A lot of the partnerships that have continued have been with schools or organizations that can afford to pay. What about those students/families/schools that do not have the budget to pay for arts programming?

Personally, I lost my father to COVID-19 in July 2020. Theatre and my teaching became a welcome space for joy. A moment to laugh. There is a lot of trauma in the city right now. I strongly believe that arts programming engages with students' social emotional wellbeing. My theatre classes have become welcome bubbles of joy. An opportunity to dive into a story, to play pretend, to escape our Zoom windows for a moment.

Research shows that kids that are engaged in arts programs have better academic results. Remote arts and culture classes are some of the most engaging for kids stuck at home. But the arts have also been shown by research to aid in mental health outcomes.

I have heard students say, "I don't turn on my camera" and then be the first ones to suggest a new idea for a place we should explore in our imaginary world by turning on their cameras. I have seen students rise to be amazing narrators in stories, writing the script of a play we are going to perform. Students have been engaged with using the arts to process the Black Lives Matter movement, COVID-19, LGBTQ+, and other social justice issues. They are using theatre as their platform to process the world.

We need arts funding. We need to provide students with the space to process their world using their imagination. To draw how they are feeling. To sing what they hope for the future. To perform a motivational speech to create change. To play the music the embodies the world they live in and wish to see.

Those opportunities should not be denied to our youth based on the schools they attend. Private schools and other schools with means will never have to choose between an arts program or another enrichment program. They know the value of the arts for their young people.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sindy Castro', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sindy Castro

Sindy.i.castro@gmail.com

786-325-0005

New York, NY



**Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 13, 2020**

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Kelly Donovan and I am the Director of In-School Programs at ArtsConnection. For 40 years, ArtsConnection has provided innovative arts programming to millions of students in the New York City public school system, enhancing children's intellectual, personal and social growth, while developing award-winning educational models.

To address the educational challenges for the 21st century, ArtsConnection's research-based arts programs create socially just learning environments. Our programs support literacy, communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. ArtsConnection's partnerships include and strengthen the diverse voices of New York City's children and youth, cultivating their arts and academic skills for success in a changing world.

ArtsConnection provides:

- Customized in-school programming to over 120 schools, pre K-12, citywide, serving tens of thousands of young people annually
- Out-of-school programs for teens, providing experience-rich opportunities for young people to engage in NYC's cultural world
- Extensive professional development opportunities for classroom teachers and arts specialists, as well as for our own teaching artists
- On-line resources for educators and like-minded practitioners to enrich the arts education field

After the mayor closed New York City public schools in March due to COVID-19, the ArtsConnection team opened its laptops and got to work, engaging our valued school partners to connect students with remote arts learning as quickly as possible. From asynchronous, pre-recorded video classes in dance, to live, synchronous theater classes and more, our teaching artists have reached thousands of NYC children and teens during the pandemic.

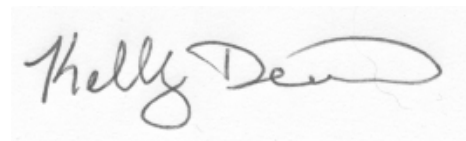
Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and

cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages.

ArtsConnection online residencies highlight social emotional learning and the authentic conversations between artists and students. In order to continue this important work, city agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities. My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. Let us make New York City – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that regards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Budget cuts to DOE, DYCD, and/or DCA would mean less programming for the NYC students who so desperately need it. Programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for dance, theatre, music, visual art, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future . These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Donovan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Donovan
Director of In-School Programs

THANK YOU, COMMITTEE, FOR THIS HEARING.

I WORK FOR DANCE EDUCATION LABORATORY – DEL.

OUR MOTTO “DANCE FOR EVERY CHILD”.

DEL BRINGS LIFE-CHANGING DANCE EDUCATION TO NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS. WHILE SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS, AND OUR INCOMPARABLE ROSTER OF EXPERT TEACHING ARTISTS. OFFERING THEM AN ARRAY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING WORKSHOPS AND EMPLOYING FREELANCE ARTISTS AS WORKSHOP FACILITATORS – MYSELF INCLUDED.

OUR DOE CONTRACT THIS YEAR DROPPED FROM 260,000 DOLLARS TO 35,000 DOLLARS. A GRANT FROM THE NYC COMMUNITY TRUST ALLOWED DEL TO CONTINUE PROGRAMMING VIRTUALLY ALBEIT AT LESS THAN HALF OF OUR PRE-COVID CAPACITY.

NOT ALL ARTS ED PROGRAMS ARE SO LUCKY OR AS FINANCIALLY SECURED – MOST OF ALL, PROGRAMS IN NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

OF THE 34BILLION DOLLAR DOE BUDGET FOR THIS YEAR, A MERE .04% HAS BEEN ALLOCATED TO BRING QUALITY ARTS EDUCATION TO 1.1 MILLION STUDENTS. 72.8% OF WHOM ARE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED AS DEFINED BY THE CITY AND WILL BE HARD PRESSED TO GAIN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACCESS TO THE ARTS.

PERSONAL STORIES HAVE GREAT IMPACT ON YOUR COMMITTEE AND NOTHING FEELS MORE PERSONAL THAN THE FUTURE OF THIS CITY. A FUTURE ASSURED BY CHILDREN RAISED WITH A FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE ARTS EDUCATION. REMEMBER, ARTS EDUCATION IS NOT ONLY ABOUT JOY AND MENTAL HEALTH, IT IS ABOUT THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX AND ALSO KNOWING HOW TO DESIGN THE BOX, BUILD THE BOX, DECORATE THE BOX, DANCE AROUND THE BOX AND MAKE THAT BOX A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT – IT IS ABOUT INTERDISCIPLINARY AND TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS THAT THESE KIDS WILL HAVE FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES.

RADICAL POLICY CAN SECURE POST-COVID RECOVERY AND SUSTAIN THIS FUTURE FOR ARTS ED PROGRAMMING. I AM CALLING ON THIS COMMITTEE TO ADVOCATE FOR AN ARTS EDUCATION BUDGET YEARLY STANDARD OF .25% OF THE DOE BUDGET. THIS QUARTER OF A PERCENT OVERALL BUDGET INITIATIVE WILL HIRE MORE ARTS FACULTY, PROVIDE ESSENTIAL RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL PROGRAMMING AND HELP SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS LIKE DEL AND THE ORGANIZATIONS HERE TODAY IN OUR ONGOING MISSION TO BRING THE ARTS TO EVERY CHILD IN NYC.

THANK YOU.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 14, 2020

Jeanne Houck, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Jeanne Houck, and I am the Executive Director of the Creative Arts Team at City University of New York, a 46-year-old arts-in-education organization based in Manhattan that serves every council district in New York City.

Chris Vine
Artistic & Education Advisor
Academic Director,
CUNY MA in Applied Theatre

The CUNY Creative Arts Team uses theatre to build community, promote social emotional learning, and to support the development of academic and life skills. We serve between 15,000 - 20,000 individuals per year, with the majority being public school students in Pre-K - 12th grade, CUNY students, and adults who work with students and young people.

Advisory Council

Stephen R. Aiello
Elyse Buxbaum
Charlotte Frank
Joanne Halev
David R. Jones
Steven L. Krause
Sandra A. Lamb
Jack Lusk
Nancy Walker

Lynda Zimmerman
Founding Executive Director

Nancy F. Swartzell
In Memoriam

Creative Arts Team, also known as CAT, is grateful for funding from the City Council through a number of initiatives (Crisis Management Systems, Social and Emotional Supports for Students through the Education Initiative, Cultural After School Adventures, and the CUNY Creative Arts Team Citywide Initiative). This funding enables us to bring arts-in-education to students through remote platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom and Meet, and Microsoft Teams, to engage students and support teachers to deliver student-centered education. Whether we are using drama scenarios delivered by CAT's brilliant actor-teachers/teaching artists to facilitate difficult conversations, or engaging students in making drama about issues they care about – yes, you can create and deliver compelling theatre on Zoom! – we are building community and pushing against the isolation, boredom, fatigue, and trauma that students are experiencing during the pandemic and the rising collateral violence and stressors that have come with it.

Arts and culture will continue to be the heart of New York City. It is a vital mode of communication, self-expression, and the building blocks for agency for our students. City agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities.

My first request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us do all we can to support young people to stay engaged in their education and on the pathway to their future. Let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards the arts and community as an integral part of our lived experiences.

My second request is to make the funding that comes through the City Council and the Department of Education for arts organizations be streamlined and simplified. Right now, the burden of collecting paperwork for payment of DOE-related remote services is almost



impossible to meet. It requires proof of service that necessitates technical experience that many educators do not have the expertise in or time for. It costs arts organizations thousands of dollars in unclaimed funds, and thousands of dollars in staff time spent working with teachers and continuous calls and emails to school staff to retrieve the very specific spreadsheets for every class that we serve online. A simpler email verification would serve the same purpose with much less cost to both schools and arts organizations.

With appropriate funding levels and a more streamlined funds dispersal system, arts organizations across the city can bring the valuable assets of arts and all of its positive impacts to students across New York, now and in the future.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Houck
Executive Director



540 President Street, 3rd Floor, Brooklyn, New York 11215

P 212.691.6590 F 212.675.0171

www.twc.org • www.teachersandwritersmagazine.org

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 15, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to present testimony in support of arts education.

My name is Asari Beale, and I am the Executive Director of Teachers and Writers Collaborative. As one of the first writers-in-the-schools programs in the country, Teachers and Writers has partnered with New York City schools for over 50 years, offering innovative creative writing programs taught by poets, playwrights, novelists and other professional writers. We also offer arts programs for seniors and free resources for teachers.

The pandemic has changed everything about the way we operate. In terms of funding, we anticipate a loss of over 70% of revenue from Department of Education contracts, due to cuts to school budgets and initiatives like College Access for All. This represents about a 1/5 of our operating budget. We are still uncertain about funding through the Department of Cultural Affairs and City Council initiatives like SU-CASA.

Since March, all of our programs are being offered remotely. With each school operating in different configurations of in-person and remote learning, the logistics of partnership are straining our staff and organizational resources.

There is a silver lining to all of this. Our programs continue to offer students the social and emotional learning that is so needed right now. They have high attendance rates and get students excited about showing up in the remote learning space. Our remote senior programs are well-attended and create vital social networks during this time of isolation. In short, our programs are still doing what they have always done: build community and empower the voices of our youth.

Arts education programs like ours are needed in New York City more than ever before. The City Council can support our work by restoring funding to the Department of Cultural Affairs, including to City Council initiatives like CASA and SU-CASA, and to College Access for All.

I know that the City is in crisis. But I believe that arts education organizations like Teachers and Writers can be a resource. We can help with the most critical problems schools are facing this year, such as teacher shortages, social-emotional learning needs and student absenteeism. We can improve the quality of life for seniors who are sheltering at home. And we can create jobs for teaching artists who are the heart and soul of arts and culture in New York City.

Thank you.

LESLIE – LOHMAN MUSEUM OF ART

Welcome Alyssa Nitchun — our Museum's New Executive Director



After a long and thorough search, the Board of Trustees and Staff of the Leslie-Lohman Museum are thrilled to announce that Alyssa Nitchun — who has worked for years at the intersection of art, culture, and social justice — has been named the new Executive Director of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art!

Nitchun most recently served as Acting Executive Director at Creative Time, where she helped realize an ambitious program of socially concerned art projects and convenings. She previously served as Deputy Director and Director of External Affairs, among other roles spanning a seven year tenure at the vanguard public art organization, enhancing its audiences and presence in the Middle East, Mexico, Canada, and Europe.

Nitchun will succeed our dedicated Interim Director, Laura Raicovich, who has led the Museum throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and our temporary closure.

“The Museum possesses a reputation and gravitas that deserves to be extended nationally and internationally. I will be passionately focused on expanding and deepening its ability to serve as an LGBTQI+ sanctuary, catalyst, and provocateur,” Nitchun said. She will begin her directorship in a moment when the institution strives to hold space for multiple subjectivities, be an intersectional platform, and bridge the gap between the physical and virtual with a rich, diverse, and inclusive array of programs and special events. “I have long championed the role and voice of the artist in society and culture. I look forward to ensuring Leslie-Lohman is a living, adaptive Museum,

responsive to the times in which we live and above all to the intersectional evolution of LGBTQI+ communities."

Join us in welcoming Alyssa Nitchun to the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, and [visit *The New York Times* to read the exclusive announcement](#) in full.

And as we close out 2020, make sure you also join us both online and on-site for the following programs and exhibitions:



Remote Intimacies is a series of new and experimental performances created specifically for online viewing and commissioned and co-organized by the ONE Archives at USC Libraries and the Leslie-Lohman Museum. Invited artists explore how to sustain intimacy in these highly mediated times and how to imagine opportunities for communion across temporal and geographic distances. The series debuted on October 7 on Zoom, and participants have included Brontez Purnell; Joseph Liatela; and the [upcoming performance by Mikki Yamashiro tomorrow, December 16](#). Additional artists for the spring Remote Intimacies program will include Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo and Young Joon Kwak.



[Rashaad Newsome's tripartite commission, *Black Magic*](#), gathers queer, Black, and trans people in kindred celebration. The project launched with two simultaneous events on December 1, World AIDS Day. The premiere of "Black Magic", a multi-channel work, co-commissioned with Times Square Arts that combines improvisational performance, animations, and intricately designed graphics, opened with a parallel installation of vinyl wallpaper in the Museum's Living Room Gallery windows. The project continues with the debut of the full film by the artist on our website at leslielohman.org, and a virtual event presented in partnership with Eyebeam on January 16.



Chitra Ganesh's iteration of QUEERPOWER, our annual site-specific public art installation, *A city will share her secrets if you know how to ask*, wraps the exterior windows of the Museum with imagery of queer protest, survival, joy and the queer and transgender histories of downtown Manhattan. The work is visible 24/7 to all who pass by on the streets of SoHo for a year. If you aren't able to visit, you can watch an [episode of our Queer Art TV](#) series, produced by the Museum's Center for Arts and Intersectionality, in which Ganesh discusses her practice with our educators Edwin Gonzalez and Catalina Schliebener; and a [recording of a live conversation between Chitra Ganesh and scholar Amber Musser](#) on queer femininity, racial equity, and Ganesh's practice.

This end of year, please consider a donation to the Leslie-Lohman Museum today. We hope to welcome you back into our galleries in 2021. Happy Holidays!

CLICK HERE TO DONATE TO OUR 2020 ANNUAL FUND

IMAGE CREDITS:

Alyssa Nitchun, 2020. Courtesy The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. Photo: (c) Khaled Jarrar.

Courtesy Mikki Yamashiro. Photo © JJ Stratford

Rashaad Newsome, *Black Magic*, 2020. Courtesy Rashaad Newsome Studio.

Chitra Ganesh in front of, *A city will share her secrets if you know how to ask*, 2020, site-specific QUEERPOWER facade installation. Courtesy Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. (c) Kristine Eudey, 2020.



LeslieLohman.org

SUPPORT THE LESLIE-LOHMAN MUSEUM TODAY!

The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art is closed temporarily to support New York City's effort to contain the spread of COVID-19. Please stay informed through our emails, website, and social media channels.

Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art | 26 Wooster Street, New York, NY 10013

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WHITNEY

**Whitney Museum of American Art Testimony
NYC Council Cultural Affairs Hearing:
The impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City
December 15, 2020**

The Whitney Museum of American Art is a contemporary art museum located in lower Manhattan. As the preeminent institution devoted to the art of the United States, the Whitney presents the full range of twentieth-century and contemporary American art, with a special focus on work by living artists. Founded in Greenwich Village ninety years ago, the Museum collects, exhibits, preserves, researches, and interprets art of the United States in the broadest global, historical, and interdisciplinary contexts. As the foremost advocate for American art, the Museum fosters the work of living artists at critical moments in their careers, often before their work has achieved general acceptance, and educates its diverse public through direct interaction with these artists.

The City of New York is the Whitney's bedrock. The Museum emerged from a community of New York artists more than ninety years ago. Since its beginning, the Whitney has been an institution whose entire community—artists, staff members, visitors, education participants, patrons and more—is made up predominantly of New Yorkers. The Whitney would not be able to pursue its mission without its presence in the city and bond with the people of New York. The Museum is deeply committed to serving the City of New York, and that commitment drives much of the development and execution of the Whitney's Education programs.

In March the Whitney temporarily closed its doors to the public to reduce the spread of COVID-19 for the well-being of its visitors, volunteers, and staff. This fall, after government authorized the safe reopening of museums, the Whitney reopened at reduced capacity. Throughout the pandemic, during the temporary closure and while operating at reduced capacity, the Whitney has remained fiercely committed to realizing its mission of celebrating American art and serving New Yorkers. This spring the Education department quickly pivoted to reconceptualize its entire range of programs to make them available online to audiences. This included a reimagining of the Whitney's marquee free NYC public school tour program, its nine longstanding school partnerships, educator programs, family programs, teen programs, senior programs, community programs, access programs and adult education.

The Museum has served NYC public schools free of charge since 1983 and today is proud to offer free guided tours for the city's public schools. Whitney staff and educators customize every school visit to meet teachers' curricular needs and student interests. Programs are based on the Whitney's collection and exhibitions. Educators lead students on interactive tours that involve inquiry-based discussions, movement activities, and writing and artmaking projects. Before the pandemic the Whitney typically served an average of over 20,000 NYC public school children annually.

This spring when the City of New York went on pause to battle the rising pandemic and schools moved to remote education, Whitney educators rapidly identified a need for virtual arts education for the city's K-12 students. In response the department moved these programs online. Modeling a new

online school tour program after the in-person museum experience, Whitney educators offered more than 229 virtual classes to serve in excess of 4,400 students from March to June. After participating in a program, many teachers requested to continue working with the Museum. Teachers have expressed appreciation for the ongoing collaboration and reported being energized by the ways in which the classes were tailored to their needs. This response has reinforced the value and importance of this new type of online school program and that it should continue into the 2020-2021 school year. Given the cuts in funding to arts education in New York City's FY 2021 budget, this work is all the more critical.

The Whitney is proud to be of service to New Yorkers from all five boroughs. Recognizing the unequal impact of the pandemic on New York's communities the Whitney Education team undertook a major outreach project this summer and fall to raise awareness about the Museum's offerings to schools in the areas that were hardest hit by COVID-19. Museum staff reached out to 307 schools in Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx that had not visited the Whitney before, and touched base with 48 additional schools that had visited the Whitney, with an offer to lead multi-part programming across grade levels. The response was that many of these schools were eager to work with the Whitney, as many of their art programs/classes have been depleted due to new school schedules and a decrease of teachers. There has been a total of 17 schools that have confirmed that they want to take part of this opportunity this school year, with some schools starting this work mid-December and others in the late winter/early spring. Through this new initiative, we are hoping to serve close to an additional 3,000 students in the 2020-2021 school year.

Additionally, the Whitney has long-standing partnerships with nine New York City schools located in Brooklyn and Manhattan including seven public schools: they are PS 3, PS 41, PS 33, Lab Middle School, Clinton Middle School, Lower Manhattan Arts Academy, Gotham Professional Arts Academy, George Jackson Academy, and the Grace Church School. These partnerships are multi-year long-term relationships between the Museum and each school community. Whitney educators work with students, teachers, parents and administrators at each school to tailor the partnership to school needs. The Museum offers school partners substantive programs including hosting virtual classes during the pandemic, and professional development opportunities for teachers. Though currently on pause because of COVID the Museum also organizes programs for school community members with Whitney artists, and special after-hours evenings and tours for families. These in-depth partnerships serve more than 4,000 students a year.

Since 1997, the Whitney has offered free, in-depth afterschool programming for New York teens. Museum admission is always free for children 18 years and younger, and the Whitney regularly offers special hours and events to welcome in teens to think creatively and make art with contemporary artists, educators and peers. Since March these teen events have moved online and the Museum has served 257 teens at virtual events like Art College Night and Whitney Teens x Artists. The hallmark of the Whitney's teen program is Youth Insights, a dedicated free semester long program where teens work closely with educators and artists to become youth arts leaders. This program continues remotely, and currently 60 teens from across the city participate. The lasting positive impacts of these teen programs were recently documented in the published report titled 'Room to Rise,' which analyzed the long-term benefits of the Whitney and its peer contemporary institutions' teen programs.

Along with programs serving New York's school community, the Whitney continues to advance its family and adult education programs which have all moved online and are available free of charge. This summer, kids, teens, and families were invited to join Whitney Educators for a series of weekly online art classes in a program series called Summer Studio. More than 2,500 participants attended one of the 24 sessions between July 7 and August 15. There were four classes a week designed for each age group. The Whitney invites families with kids of all ages to an ongoing weekly art making program called Open Studio from Home. Participants experiment, create, and learn together with at-home art materials. Each week features a new theme and project connected to a work of art in the

Whitney's collection or current exhibitions. Participation is robust - more than 755 people have participated, and 46% of them hail from the five boroughs. In 2021 the Whitney will launch a weekly program, After School Art Club, for kids ages 5-10. The Whitney continues to offer robust public programming including regular occurrences of Art History from Home where participants join with Whitney educators to discuss critical topics in American Art. More than 18,000 people have participated in Art History From Home since the program launched.

The programs detailed in this testimony present a portion of the work the Whitney has undertaken to make its art available during the pandemic when in-person visits to the Museum may not be feasible for all. From foregrounding online access to the Museum's collection to hosting virtual events with curators, all free of charge, the Museum believes that art has an important role to play in New York's recovery. Engaging with art can be healing, and online events offer moments of togetherness and community during a crisis which has forced so many into isolation for their safety.

The Whitney Museum is unwavering in its commitment to serve the citizens of New York and remains grateful for the ongoing support it receives from Chair Council Member Van Bramer, Speaker Corey Johnson and the New York City Council.

For more information contact:

Jane Carey, Senior Officer of Government + Community Affairs

Jane_carey@whitney.org

301-775-9956 (mobile)

Statement by: Megan Greener

On behalf of: Self (Actor, & employee of Developing Artists Theatre Company)

December 15, 2020

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Inter Group Relations

Testimony to City Council on the Impact of COVID-19 on Arts Education

I thank the committee for the opportunity in submitting a written statement today. My name is Megan Greener. I'm here to testify today only as myself, a longtime actor and teaching artist for over a decade. Currently, I am program director and an acting teacher for a youth arts non-profit organization called, Developing Artists. Developing Artists is an intensive acting program for young, hungry students (or "artivists", as we call them) from ages 13-19, from all boroughs of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut; we are known for our socially and politically-driven, devised pieces that strive to question and comment on our world today. Our company is also known for hosting an annual youth arts festival called REBEL VERSES, which in recent years has been co-produced and performed at the Vineyard Theatre, an Off-Broadway institution. However, since quarantine, events such as this could of course not go forward this year, and likely won't next year.

Although Developing Artists has gained a respected name in the New York youth arts scene, and has been a launching pad for many professional, highly artistic careers, we, like many other amazing organizations like us, could never afford a home space, or even an office for the core staff to perform day-to-day administrative duties. Not our choice, of course; it was merely an impossibility, due to ever-growing rents. Most of any little money that educational companies like us make immediately goes into space rental for the next session of classes - and even that is a monster in itself. In normal times, youth arts classes are constantly competing for spaces alongside adult, professional acting companies, - even Broadway shows that are rehearsing - which makes consistency in a safe, clean space for any growing numbers of students extremely difficult to manage. Now that we have gained a reputation for our work, our class sizes have grown, and we are now juggling simultaneous ensembles at once, as opposed to a few years ago. We love that these young, talented, relevant voices have found a safe home in us - but that can only go so far when we have no space of which to bring them. We have gone virtual in the meantime since quarantine, and it is an entirely different experience. We do what we can to keep our young artists working and engaged, but the reality is that we are not able to give them the same sense of safety away from home, and worry that we still won't when it is safe to have physical classes together again, specifically because we won't have anywhere to go, much less

afford them. When it comes to finding safe, sizable, insured spaces with sprung floors, most (who are not in this line of work) would merely say, "Just use a vacant office or workspace on the weekends, or something", which only creates more problems for organizations like us, rather than solves them.

I have had the gracious opportunity of seeing the written testimony from David Lawson from the League of Independent Theatre before this meeting, and being that companies like Developing Artists were dependent on the exact spaces that he speaks of, his statement could not explain the theatrical/rehearsal space crisis any more accurately: "It is urgent to highlight one important aspect of this crisis, which is the devastation of unchecked commercial rent on spaces in our communities. You may have seen in New York Magazine the list of 500 permanently closed businesses who could not meet rent in the face of these business closures. Each one of these have impacts that resonate for entire communities. For me personally, I was crushed when Simple Studios, my local rehearsal space, closed after over a decade. Although a few large institutions own their spaces, many community arts education programs like mine rely on renting rehearsal studios to provide our classes. We rely on these studios to provide insured and safe spaces that are designed for arts education. Simple Studios was by no means struggling before the pandemic: every time I was there, it was packed full of arts education classes and professionals rehearsing productions. And it's not just Simple Studios: Shetler Studios, Champions Studios, Chelsea Studios, and Spaceworks were all rehearsal spaces that have permanently closed, each one serving thousands of artists and educators over the course of the year. Not only that, but the only search engine for finding rehearsal space in the city also was closed as a result of the pandemic... These spaces are critical infrastructure for local community groups providing arts classes to the public at low cost. And these spaces are closing because commercial rents have been out of control for years."

For the sake of our artists, growing and professionally working, I ask the City Council to pass Introduction 1796, which would create a Commercial Rent Stabilization Board. If we want New York to continue to be a leader in culture, art, and progress, we must give our artists the space to carry out their mission.

With respect,

Megan Greener
Actor & Teaching Artist



Thank you Chair Van Bramer and members of the cultural committee for hearing my testimony today as a representative of Dance Parade.

My name is Carlye Eckert and I'm the Community Engagement Director for Dance Parade. My responsibilities are to coordinate year round dance education outreach in schools and community centers across the boroughs which culminate in the Annual Dance Parade on Broadway and Festival in Tompkins Square Park. Although the 14th annual parade and festival were preempted last May due to COVID, we did manage to launch an interactive festival which was attended by more than 6500 people. Attendance was considered good for an online event however we believe that live performance in the streets and public parks is vital to awakening the communal human spirit and helps build a more equitable and vibrant society.

After halting programming that began in February, a portion of our weekly dance residencies transitioned online and were offered free for students April through September, including residencies taught in Mandarin launched under an award from Create NYC Language Access Fund. We had to bare considerable expense to get Zoom working, acclimate our teaching artists to remote teaching platforms, and overcome access and technical challenges for our students.

We applied for several emergency grants from private foundations, received some financial assistance for 3 of our 15 teaching artists but failed to receive support for the organization. We also applied for PPP but as our organization is facilitated by mostly independent contractors, we were not eligible. We did get a 30year \$75,000 SBA loan and have spent down half of it.

This Fall we have had to suspend online classes due to financial hardship but will resume in February with DCLA CDF programs, and hopefully CASA and SU-CASA residencies as well. We are currently planning both a live event and virtual event as it's not clear whether a live parade and festival will be possible on May 22nd. Either way our 2021 theme will be "Dance Brings Us Together".

Through our continued efforts and experiences of this time, we greatly acknowledge the health risks to all New Yorkers, pledge to continue strict virus-free safety protocols and are grateful to DCLA and for the Council Member's effort to support the cultural sector.

Thank you very much.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carlye Eckert".

Carlye Eckert
Community Engagement Director



Dear Council Member Van Bramer and members of the cultural community,

My name is Carlye Eckert and I'm the Community Engagement Director for Dance Parade. My responsibilities are to coordinate year round dance education outreach in schools and community centers which culminate in the Annual Dance Parade on Broadway and Festival in Tompkins Square Park. Though the 14th annual parade and festival were preempted last May due to COVID, we did manage to launch an interactive festival which was attended by more than 6500 people. Attendance was considered good for an online event however we believe that live performance in the streets and public parks is vital to awakening the communal human spirit and helps build a more equitable and vibrant society.

Our weekly dance residencies were offered free online through September and we had to bare considerable expense to get Zoom working for our teaching artists with bluetooth headsets and overcome technical challenges. This Fall we have had to suspend classes due to financial hardship. We applied for several emergency grants from private foundations, received some financial assistance for 3 of our 15 teaching artists but failed to receive support for the organization. We also applied for PPP but as our organization is facilitated by mostly independent contractors, we were not eligible. We did get a 30year \$75,000 SBA loan and have spent down half of it. We are currently planning both a live event and virtual event as it's not clear whether a live parade and festival will be possible on May 22nd. What is clear is that we will not have corporate support and it is still unknown if we will continue to receive DCLA CDF funding and City Council SU-CASA funding.

Through our continued efforts and experiences of this time, we greatly acknowledge the health risks to all New Yorkers, pledge to continue strict virus-free safety protocols and are grateful for the Council Member's effort to support the cultural sector.
Thank you very much.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carlye Eckert", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carlye Eckert
Community Engagement Director



Remarks delivered by: David Lawson

On behalf of: League of Independent Theater

December 15, 2020

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Inter Group Relations

Testimony to City Council on the Impact of COVID-19 on Arts Education

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is David Lawson. I'm here to testify today as a member of the League of Independent Theater, and as an arts educator. The League is an advocacy organizer for those who work in small theaters or non-traditional spaces. Like myself, many arts educators also work in creating professional theater. The abrupt shut-down of the theaters, professional performances, and classes hit us from all sides.

For the past few years I have been independently teaching classes where students write and perform their own one-person shows. Some of my students have gone on to perform their work in theatres, comedy clubs, and universities for audiences around New York City and across the nation.

Many arts educators like myself rely on renting rehearsal studios to provide our classes. Earlier this year Simple Studios, the rehearsal space where I would teach my students, closed after over a decade in business. Simple Studios was by no means struggling before the pandemic: every time I was there, it was packed full of arts education classes and professionals rehearsing productions. And it's not just Simple Studios: Shetler Studios, Champions Studios, Chelsea Studios, and Spaceworks were all rehearsal spaces that have permanently closed, each one serving thousands of artists and educators.

These spaces are closing because commercial rents have been out of control for years. That's why I am asking, on behalf of community arts educators like myself, for City



Council to pass Introduction 1796, which would create a Commercial Rent Stabilization Board, to ensure that rehearsal spaces and theaters have a future in this city. I call upon the members of this committee to co-sponsor Intro 1796 and call for a hearing now.



Testimony written by: Lani Fu, teaching artist with Superhero Clubhouse

Submitted by: League of Independent Theater

December 15, 2020

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Inter Group Relations

Testimony to City Council on the Impact of COVID-19 on Arts Education

The following letter was submitted to the League of Independent Theater was submitted as testimony from Lani Fu, a working teaching artist with independent theater company Superhero Clubhouse:

Virtual arts education with students is really different for families with different levels of resources. Our work, especially as performance-based artists, often asks for students to have access to video technology, to quiet space, and what is true for all students-- someone who is available to support them in navigating that technology. As many of our programs work with lower income families and students, it's been a huge challenge to stay connected and offer the same level of care and investment that we would be able to with in-person teaching. As long as virtual learning is a component of the programs that are being supported, I would strongly urge the city to include in any arts education funding increased support *specifically* for students to receive appropriate technology and support at home. And also for teaching artists to be able to build a home-teaching setup that is functional for their work.

I personally think that ongoing arts education is such a necessary space for reflection, healing, and community building -- especially during times of crisis, and that it should absolutely be a priority as the city considers how to best support NYC residents during this time. Young people do not always receive space for creative expression, listening, and processing as part of a traditional public school curriculum. Teaching artists across all disciplines that work with youth are especially skilled at distilling complicated, challenging ideas and making them accessible to young people, giving them space to listen and process, and they are among the residents that need it the most right now -- I have seen how the shifting rules and tragedies of the pandemic have thrown young people into a state of confusion and unprocessed grief.

Also, traditionally, there have been barriers to teaching artists being able to teach during the school day. Which I understand as a security precaution in pre-covid times, but it seems like it's worth making the process more streamlined and possible for teaching artists now, so that schools and



teachers have the option of incorporating artistic programs that are typically after-school into their daytime curriculum. I believe this would be a huge support to teachers who are struggling to keep up with the challenges of remote-learning and hybrid learning, putting in double the time they normally would. And I believe it would also allow more teaching artists to find meaningful work in a time when so many of us in arts fields are struggling to make ends meet.



**Testimony to New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and
International Intergroup Relations
*Oversight - The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational
Programming in New York City*
December 15, 2020**

Presented by
Alexander Kopelman, Co-Founder, President & CEO, Children's Arts Guild

Chair Van Bramer and honorable Committee members, it is an honor to appear before you today. Thank you for taking up the critical issue of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on art and cultural education in New York City.

The Children's Arts Guild is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children harness their creativity to transcend limiting expectations and to explore and develop their authentic selves. We are based on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and work with children primarily in District One schools through afterschool programs, serving a very diverse community.

When schools closed on March 16th, we quickly shifted to offering programming online. Almost immediately, we noticed a disturbing pattern: Children who were attending online programs tended to be primarily from higher-income families. When we inquired among members of our parent community, families with limited economic resources reported a variety of barriers to having their children participate. These included living conditions not conducive to learning; lack of access to technology and connectivity; and most importantly, parents' inability to help their children connect and stay engaged.

This observation has been corroborated by the educators with whom we work through our professional-development programs. Throughout the past nine months, teachers have been reporting to us how the pandemic has exacerbated the effects of socio-economic inequalities for their students. Many children do not have access to technology, necessary supports at home, or basic materials needed for learning.

As schools and organizations like ours adapt to distance learning, we are in danger of further widening the gap between children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.



We call on the Council and the Administration to allocate funding to ensuring that online creativity education is accessible to all children.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this important issue and for working to ensure children benefit from arts education.

About the [Children's Arts Guild](#)

At the Children's Arts Guild, we believe that to grow into engaged, productive adults, children must have the opportunity and the support to develop their authentic selves.

We believe that creativity education is instrumental in helping children become creative problem solvers, develop self-regard, and feel empowered to take action in the world.

Since 2011, we have partnered with educators, parents, and students to build transformative and creative learning environments that support children in becoming emotionally intelligent, socially engaged, and productive citizens of the world.





Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 14, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Arts and Culture. My name is Jessica Chen, and I am the Artistic Director of J CHEN PROJECT, a 501c3 non-profit dance company in Hell's Kitchen, New York.

The mission of J CHEN PROJECT is to explore how we perceive and create identities within the collective human experience through innovative and culturally-based dance works and community engagement initiatives. JCP has a demonstrated history of diversity and inclusion with immigrants, POC, and the LGBTQ community. Past and future events remain open and inclusive to people of all races, ages, beliefs, genders, and sexual orientations.

J CHEN PROJECT (JCP) was formed in 2008. The company provides high-caliber dance education and professional career advancement workshops to pre-professional dancers, as part of its Mentorship Program, and has given over 20 individual scholarships. JCP also partners with local non-profit theaters to produce an annual Choreographers' Festival that has presented nearly 60 emerging to mid-career choreographers. The company has also received commissions to teach and perform at 28 universities and performing arts venues across the U.S.

Within the past 12 years, JCP has been fortunate to receive generous funding from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Center, Jerome Foundation, and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in NY. J CHEN PROJECT's work has been commissioned by Rutgers University, Desales University, Orange County School of the Arts, Yangtze Repertory Theater, and Women in Dance, with press featured in *The Huffington Post*, *Broadway World* and *Dance Magazine*.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families and communities. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support Arts and Culture.

The COVID-19 pandemic has cost New York thousands of lives, hundreds of thousands of jobs, and billions of dollars in lost revenues and economic activity. Few workers, employers, or industries will emerge unscathed. But even as the city's economy shows signs of recovery, the city's critically important cultural sector remains in crisis mode. No single part of NYC's economy has been hit harder by the COVID-19 pandemic—or is facing a longer road to recovery—than the performing arts, and cultural institutions of all kinds and sizes are under unprecedented threat of extinction.

According to a study done by Center for an Urban Future, prior to the pandemic, New York City's creative industries employed nearly 300,000 people—more than finance, tech, or education—and contributed more than \$110 billion in economic activity to the city's economy. New York's arts and culture sector now faces an existential crisis, amid a prolonged shutdown of the performing arts and catastrophic declines in earned revenue and employment.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Cultural Affairs. As a small, non-profit organization, the long term financial ramifications that J CHEN PROJECT faces due to the COVID-19 global pandemic remain unclear. COVID-19 has affected JCP's regular programming and resulted in lost opportunities to engage audiences through previously planned programs and live performances. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

In the absence of major relief from the federal government, New York City will need to do more to stanch the bleeding and help lay the groundwork for a long-term recovery for the city's cultural sector. Arts and Culture represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for the opportunity to share and highlight the enormous challenges facing New York City's arts and cultural ecosystem.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Jessica Chen
Artistic Director of J CHEN PROJECT

www.jchenproject.com
jchenproject@gmail.com

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**Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup
Relations
Oversight Hearing – The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural
Educational Programming in New York City
Tuesday, December 15, 2020**

My name is Lisa Gold and I am the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts Alliance (also known as A4). We are a 37-year old, Brooklyn-based service organization dedicated to ensuring greater representation, equity, and opportunities for Asian American artists and arts organizations as well as providing a critical voice for this community. We are a diverse coalition of artists, arts organizations, and arts supporters who believe that working together as a pan-ethnic, multidisciplinary community is essential to nurturing the development of our artists and arts organizations.

I'd like to thank the council for the work you are doing to support the creative community in these challenging times and for the opportunity to share my testimony.

So many individuals and institutions in our city have been devastated by COVID and its impacts this year, with a notable disproportionate effect on people of color. And Asian Americans are no exception, having been burdened by the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and anti-Asian racism.

A very large number of the artists we work with rely heavily on teaching as either a supplement to or their only identifiable source of income. With the loss of public school arts programs and the devastating layoffs of arts education staff by larger institutions (like MoMA, the Guggenheim, and others), our artists are facing incredibly precarious and challenging futures.

Many have left the city to find more economically sustainable communities. Others have given up their art practices, seeking financial support through whatever paying jobs are available. This loss of artistic talent is a tragedy for all New Yorkers and will negatively impact the resiliency of our creative sector, in both the short- and long-term.

I ask that the Council consider the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on artists and arts organizations of color in their support for the cultural sector moving forward. In the DCLA FY20 budget, 985 grantees received over \$45.6MM, yet only 43 of those were Asian American led or serving—representing 4.4% of DCLA grantees (DOWN from 44 organizations and 4.7% in FY18). And the total amount of funding for those organizations? Just over \$1.3MM--approximately 3% of the DCLA programmatic budget. Additionally, in FY20, the average DCLA program grant amount was approximately \$46,000, while the average grant to AAPI-led and serving organizations was only \$31,000. Why do Asian Americans deserve 32% less funding than other groups? Why are we only receiving 4% of grants when we make up almost 16% of the population?

Please note that these statistics only take into account programmatic funding, not capital funding, CIG funding, or other discretionary funds, which would illustrate an even greater disparity and financial disenfranchisement of the Asian American community.

BIPOC-led and serving arts organizations not only hire more BIPOC arts educators than white-led organizations, they serve communities where representation is paramount. [A well-known study](#)* published by the National Bureau of Economic Research outlined findings from researchers at Johns Hopkins and American University showing that Black students who are exposed to one Black teacher by third grade were 13% more likely to enroll in college. Those who had two Black teachers were 32% more likely to enroll in college.

Representation matters.

Students without Asian American or Native American or LatinX or Black art teachers will be less likely see to themselves in creative roles, perpetuating a lack of diversity in the stories we hear and see in literature, on Broadway, in museums.

I know that hard budget choices have to be made, but continuing to underfund Asian American artists and arts educators on top of the devastating losses our community is facing is just unconscionable for a budget that was negotiated with a focus on achieving equity, particularly for low-income communities of color.**

Throughout the pandemic, A4 has continued to serve our community which has been beset by growing anti-Asian racist threats and actual occurrences of violence. We have launched two virtual residency cohorts in the past month, providing a safe and supportive space for artists to collaborate and connect. And while we continue to seek opportunities for our artists to survive, we don't have

the deep pockets of other larger institutions to be able to employ hundreds of artists (whose jobs are just as important as restaurant and retail workers, airline administrators, or other professions which have garnered special support) so it's critical for our constituents to be able to have paid opportunities to teach and access arts education funding.

We and our colleagues need YOU to ensure our community receives the support they need and deserve. Please continue to support Asian American artists and arts organizations, and ALL BIPOC-led and serving organizations, in a fair, just, and equitable manner.

Thank you.

* Seth Gershenson, Cassandra M. D. Hart, Joshua Hyman, Constance Lindsay & Nicholas W. Papageorge, 2018. *The Long-Run Impacts of Same Race Teachers*. National Bureau of Economic Research

** June 30, 2020. New York City Council Press Release: Speaker Corey Johnson, Finance Committee Chair Daniel Dromm, and Capital Budget Subcommittee Chair Vanessa Gibson Announce Agreement on FY 2021 Budget



Live Testimony - Amanda Adams-Louis

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the state of arts and cultural education in New York City. I will be submitting my live testimony at a later date.

Kate Temple, Director of Education, Artists Space

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

December 7, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Kate Temple, and I work at Artists Space located at 11 Cortlandt Alley in the Chinatown area of Manhattan.

Artists Space's Expanded Art Ideas (EAI) program, now in its 21st year, provides hands-on art education including portfolio development, painting, drawing, photography, mixed media and sound art, and poetry to middle and high school youth throughout the academic year in two historically underserved Manhattan neighborhoods: the Lower East Side and Washington Heights, reaching approximately 250 students every year and engaging in community-oriented events that have served more than 600 additional family members and friends.

We have managed to conduct fully remote classes and events and when possible, are ready to bring them back to in-person teaching in the schools. Working closely with school staff, we have made adjustments to each course according to the changing needs of the students in the midst of the pandemic. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. **In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities.**

Artists Space requests that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not make New York a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. **Budget cuts by the DOE and DCA have reduced our support by 40% this year.** Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Countless NYC youth discover a passion for the arts as students and build important life skills that help them in the future through our work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city, let's support them!

Sincerely,

Kate Temple

Director of Education
Artists Space
11 Cortlandt Alley
New York, NY 10013



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

December 15, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education for the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs. My name is Nelle Stokes, and I am the Founding Executive Director of Magic Box Productions.

Magic Box's mission is to prepare young people to navigate the world with curiosity, collaboration, and a critical lens. Since our founding in 2006, we have guided over 20000 students, teachers and parents in the exploration of photography, documentary, animation and audio. Media arts offer a perfect way to ready our students for an ever-changing global society, by teaching what are called 21st century skills, or the 4 c's: , critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity.

The challenges of Covid19 have required creativity, flexibility, and the willingness to embrace change. Since the onslaught of the virus, our students, artists and teachers have worked remotely, using technology to spur new thinking and engagement, and to spark creativity. This meant a pivot in the way we provide services. We asked our school partners what they needed most, and then responded. For example, when graduation ceremonies were cancelled, we edited and uploaded virtual graduation celebrations for over 600 graduates in Queens. At one high school, we helped teachers create an original viral video for their seniors, contributing videos from literally all parts of the country. In return, the seniors created their own video for the school community, saying 'welcome' in over 30 different languages and dialects.

At The Scholars Academy in the Rockaways, we now work with 90 students at a time over Zoom. These Remote arts and culture experiences are some of the best ways for kids stuck at home to engage. In the words of one student, " I LOVE it – it's the best part of my year so far!"

Now that we are in a different phase of the pandemic, the arts are even more essential in helping our students and our city recover. Department of Education funding cuts, contract delays, and school budget uncertainties have negatively impacted arts education organizations and the students we serve. Many of our students live in neighborhoods that are struggling. In the words of one administrator, 'they are in the epicenter of the epicenter.' The city's budget cuts directly affect these young people, and their future. In our case, our budget has been reduced by over a third, meaning that we can only serve under 1000 students instead of 3000.

I know that the city is in crisis. The arts education community is willing and able to find creative solutions to help our communities and our cities survive and heal from this time. Post- pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations like ours are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive



steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. For this to happen, city agencies, arts groups and schools need sustained funding.

Countless NYC youth have discovered a passion for media arts, and built important life skills that help them in the future through this work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please keep them in your thoughts, and in your budget. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Nelle Stokes
Executive Director

The City College
of New York

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
160 CONVENT AVENUE, NAC 6/207
NEW YORK, NY 10031
212.650.7681
skavanakudiyil@ccny.cuny.edu

Dear City Council,

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of myself, and the views of this testimony represent my own views, as an individual, and my opinion in this testimony does not represent that of my employer.

I am writing as a leader in the theatre education community and an advocate for arts education in NYC as well as a concerned educator. I am currently Co-Chair of the Board of Directors for the New York City Arts in Education Roundtable as well as Director of the Graduate Program in Educational Theatre at The City College of New York.

Arts education is essential in many ways to the youth and children of NYC and has implications on impacting our present and future. It is important to continue to support arts education by supporting our cultural organizations with education programs, their teaching artists and the continued growth of schools having certified arts teachers. Cultural organizations and certified arts teachers bring something unique to their children and communities in which they work and both are essential.

It is crucial to the healing of the children of our city. Many children have experienced trauma during the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020. Many have lost access to education due to limited internet access, lack of devices for learning and the responsibility of taking care of younger siblings. Many have lost family members due to the pandemic and are still suffering. The arts have brought joy to many of these young people during this time and will play an important role in healing our communities and schools.

The arts have also had important implications on learning. There has been much research that shares that engagement, attendance and test scores increase when children participate in arts programming. The arts support increased development of critical thinking skills as well as it develops social skills such as confidence, community and the ability to support each other.

Arts teachers have been working hard to continue the sequential arts based learning. Cultural organizations have been offering remote programming as well. I have heard from teaching artists and certified arts teachers alike that students who do not normally speak in class are participating more in theatre class during remote learning and that these classes are also giving children space to move, be creative and have fun during the day. These classes also provide

connection in that they are able to engage with classmates in a way they are not able to in other classes. The arts also provide a creative outlet for children to process all that they are managing during COVID 19.

It is so important that NYC continue to support these cultural organizations that provide these remote programs so that teaching artists can remain employed and so that the youth of our city continue to get these services that are more important than ever during this time. The Arts and Culture sector is so vital to the economy of New York City and the support is needed now to continue to let these organizations employ their artists and also crucial to the future of the city. If these organizations don't get the support needed not only will Arts and Culture suffer but the future economy of the city will suffer. We will not have engaged our youth to want to work in this sector and that will have huge economic implications on the future of the city. In addition, we will lose valuable and talented artists who are ready and willing to serve the children and communities of this city but who will be forced to work elsewhere in order to survive.

We know that the City of New York is in crisis and our community has the ability to find creative solutions to help our communities survive and heal from this time, but support is needed. Without art and culture, children and families will take longer to process and recover from this traumatic time and in turn it will have long term implications for the City of New York.

Thank you for your time in reading my testimony.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sobha Kavanakudiyil', written in a cursive style.

Sobha Kavanakudiyil, Faculty
The Graduate Program in Educational Theatre
The City College of New York
<http://www.ccnycuny.edu/edtheatre/>



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

December 14, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Jahzeel Montes, and I am the executive director for Internal Creations, Inc. in Washington Heights, Manhattan.

The mission of Internal Creations is to develop leadership, self-sufficiency and life skills through learning the classical guitar. Internal Creations provides access to after-school classical guitar programs in public schools and community centers for youth ages 11-24 in under-resourced schools and neighborhoods to keep them engaged in productivity during after-school hours that develop self-sufficiency and independence to bolster positive mental health and social/emotional learning. Students will learn how to play the classical guitar as an ensemble and be required to perform for their community and complete a public service every year. Students who are a part of the program have shown an increase in self confidence, self-reliance, and increased G.P.A.'s in their academic classes along with students being accepted into accredited four year universities.

Currently, we continue to offer our programming virtually and with limited capacity for in-person learning. The students are still held to the standards of in-person learning while simultaneously checking in with their physical and mental health through discussion either as a group or in private. Many of our students have stated this program has been their "calm of the storm" when asked about how they feel about having a guitar program available to them during the pandemic. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages.

In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community

that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. If there are further budget cuts, we would not be able to continue providing our services to students free of charge and would be forced to become a paid program by the individuals who want to participate, thus, eradicating an opportunity for students to learn and build upon their potential passions, skills and interest due to inability to afford the class. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jahzeel Montes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jahzeel Montes
Internal Creations, Inc.
Founder/Executive Director

Ballet Hispánico City Council Testimony
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City
December 15, 2020

Good morning. I'm David Chase, Associate Director of Institutional Relations at Ballet Hispánico. Thank you Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee for calling this hearing and for your support of the New York City cultural community.

Last March, COVID-19 made it necessary for Ballet Hispánico to shut down all in person program activities and within one week we shifted everything online. This transition enabled us to stay engaged with our community and provide them with the educational and emotional support they needed.

After nine months of online programming, what we have learned echoes what the majority of education experts and parents are saying: in person is preferable to online learning.

Additional impacts and responses to COVID include the following:

- Our dance students miss the experience of making memories, building friendships, and enjoying social time together. So teaching artists now include some social time in their online classes.
- Students are spending so much time on screens for school, that some parents are discouraging them from taking dance classes that they view as extracurricular.
- Ballet Hispánico faces substantial, unbudgeted costs related to COVID testing and sanitation in order for us to plan to reopen our School.
- Continuing support for the arts and arts organizations is more important than ever. And at a time when arts budgets are at risk, we are enormously grateful to the City Council for their support and continuation of the CASA program this year.

It has been both heartbreaking and inspiring to see students in our Zoom classes dancing in their living rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens. A recent letter from the mother of one of our students sums up the impact of the pandemic and the impact of Ballet Hispánico when she wrote:

“Just wanted to say thank you for all you are doing. I don't see Gannon smiling as much these days, and to see the huge genuine grin on his face while dancing in your class warms my heart.”

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Bridging Education & Art Together Testimony
City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
Zoom Hearing on 12/15/2020

Thank you for your time. I'm Lulu Fogarty, a proud graduate of New York City's public schools, and I'm speaking to you on behalf of Bridging Education and Art Together, an arts nonprofit and registered DOE vendor that provides critical arts programming to New York City's youth and people with disabilities. Since our founding in 2009, we've impacted over 2,000 students, most of whom come from under-resourced communities. Nearly half of our participants have a physical and/or cognitive disability.

I urge you to recognize what New York State Education Law has clearly stated for years -- that Arts Education is Essential, and it must be adequately funded.

Engagement in the arts is critical to youth development, and even more so for youth with disabilities. The collaboration necessary for art-making builds foundational life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, and empathy. Even before the COVID crisis, schools and organizations serving under-resourced youth and youth with disabilities were already underfunded and could not develop art programs that reinforce these life skills.

What's worse is that recent reports from *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* indicate students with disabilities are losing social and academic skills they acquired before COVID-related school closures began. This skill loss will only continue if art education does not receive the funding it so desperately needs.

In March, after the shutdown began, we lost every school partnership we had -- not because of dimming interest from the schools, but from budget cuts and mandated spending freezes from the DOE. Nonetheless, we pivoted our instruction to virtual platforms and struck new partnerships with disability service organizations who brought our programs to 700 participants this year.

But we're here today on behalf of the hundreds of youth in NYC schools who needed our programming but lost access in March. It keeps us up at night wondering what kinds of skill loss and disengagement they're currently experiencing without any support.

Given the traumas that our students have experienced over the last year alone, we as administrators have a responsibility to provide the necessary tools to our youth that can ensure this time of great turbulence does not stilt their lifelong development. The arts are a natural and necessary component of the social-emotional learning mandates that are a priority in education.

Now is your opportunity to ensure that the City's public schools that are in violation of New York State Law due to underfunding can finally contribute to the holistic development of our youth through art. We owe it to our students. Thank you.

My name is Becky Leifman, and I'm the Executive Director of CO/LAB Theater Group - a non profit that offers individuals with developmental disabilities a creative and social outlet through theater arts. We recognize that the city is in crisis and we're grateful to have the time to speak to you today.

CO/LAB, like so many arts education organizations, transitioned our in-person classes from a rehearsal studio to zoom classrooms. We are happy to report that we have retained the majority of our participants - teens and adults with developmental disabilities. Much of this success is due to the flexibility of funders, such as NYC's Department of Cultural Affairs, who allowed for grantees like CO/LAB to reallocate performance costs toward digital programming.

These past 9 months:

- We've seen huge inequities in our participants - some have access to high quality technology and some freeze through a class with unreliable internet.
- We've seen many of our partner organizations-- day habilitation centers, schools, and nonprofits-- struggle as they reallocate their arts funding to COVID precautions. Unfortunately, many have not been able to partner with us this season due to financial strain.
- We've listened to our participants share their grief as family and friends are passing away and sharing their anxieties around vaccine progress & distribution.
- On a positive note, we've seen our roster of 22 Teaching Artists brilliantly reimagine what it means to be an arts educator. They've brought compassion, innovation, and joy to our programs.

After the age of 21, free mandated creative and social services for people with developmental disabilities drops as they leave the school system. Please invest in the arts as you continue NYC's COVID-19 response. New Yorkers - like our participants - need it **now** as a creative and social outlet, and will need it post-pandemic to process the grief, trauma, and rebuilding process. Our field is willing to help you think of creative solutions. Thank you for your time!

--

Becky Leifman, Executive Director

Phone: 847-529-7355

CO/LAB Theater Group | Creative Opportunities without Limits And Boundaries

www.colabtheatergroup.com

[Like us](#) on Facebook.

<https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=814035&GUID=E26AC2B3-36A1-461F-A644-5A5BDCE3305D&Options=info%7C&Search=>

The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City

December 12, 2020

Regarding:

<https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=814035&GUID=E26AC2B3-36A1-461F-A644-5A5BDCE3305D&Options=info%7C&Search=>

The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City

My name is Bonnie Sue Stein and I am writing to you as a concerned citizen and from the viewpoint of a non profit arts leader who has been Executive Director of GOH Productions in NYC since 1982. The long and short term impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational programming in New York City is unprecedented, and we will only see the longer term impact as the years go by.

NYC is not possible without its artists, and when artists are not working, we all lose. At the same time arts allow our neighborhoods to thrive, beyond the performance space or exhibition halls. In order to develop audiences for our extraordinary arts programs in NYC, we strive to educate students at all levels of study, to the wonderful, meaningful programs across all boroughs of New York. At this time, with schools closing and studios operating at a very small percentage, if at all, the educational component of study has been vastly overlooked and dismissed. We have fought for the curriculum of STEAM (not STEM) to include the “Arts” as much as possible in a students

As a non profit leader, I run a dance studio which has been a location for youth after school and weekend dance education programs for the last 10 years. At this time, the dancers and students we work with are missing being in a real studio, as this is the balance of their study. The arts completely support all of the academics and round out educational experiences.

Arts and Entertainment were the first industries to be affected and will be the last ones to re-open. Therefore, I am writing to you today to implore you to advocate for our vulnerable sector of the city.

The arts employ thousands of people in NYC, and serve many thousands more. While they may not seem to be “essential” to the time of the pandemic, the closing of our arts centers and organizations and the lack of arts educational programming will have a considerable negative economic impact on NYC when the pandemic is over.

Thanks for your considered attention to solving this problem. My hope is you do the right

thing for the citizens that make the fabric of New York City vibrant like no other place in the world.

**With Gratitude,
Bonnie Sue Stein
Executive Director, Seven Loaves DBA GOH Productions**

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**Bonnie Sue Stein
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Statement for the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs on the impact of COVID-19 on Arts and Cultural Education Programs

The Broadway League was founded in 1930 and, to this day, serves as the principal trade association for the national commercial theatre industry. It now represents over 700 theatre owners, producers, presenters, general managers and suppliers of theatrical goods and services across North America and around the world. We thank Chairman Van Bramer and the distinguished members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations for the opportunity to address the impact of COVID-19 on arts and cultural education programs in NYC.

Broadway is one of the city's largest and most reliable economic drivers that, prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, brought an average of 40,500 theatregoers to Midtown Manhattan each day. Every year, Broadway hosts millions of travelers from across North America and around the globe who spend billions of dollars in our city.

Broadway sold 14.8 million tickets in the season ending May 2019, contributed \$14.7 billion to the City's economy and supported nearly 97,000 local jobs. Broadway shows drew audiences from around the world and attracted the highest number of foreign visitors in all of Broadway's storied history (2.8 million). However, Broadway and everything it brings to the City ceased on March 12, 2020 and, as of today, has no clear path to reopening.

Since 2017, The Broadway League has partnered with the New York City Council, the Department of Education's Office of Arts and Special Projects and the United Federation of Teachers on our Broadway Bridges Program. The program's objective is straightforward: to ensure that every New York City public high school student attends a Broadway show prior to graduation. It is a challenging and long-term goal, but one that represents Broadway's commitment to New York City, its students, and Broadway's future audience and workforce. Live theatre is an integral component of what defines New York City, and we feel it is important that young people, regardless of economic status, participate in something so vital to their city's cultural landscape.

As we all well know, many studies have found a definitive link connecting a child's exposure to the arts with his or her academic success. Students who participate in arts-related programs develop better problem-solving techniques, which help them see the world in new ways and provide access to creative ways of understanding information. As recently as March 2019, a study from the George Mason University Arts Research Center and published in the journal *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* found a relationship between arts elective courses in music, dance, visual art and drama, and better grades in middle school.

Since Broadway Bridges' inception, 46,000 students and chaperones have attended over a thousand live performances of 44 different Broadway productions. The response from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with teachers reporting that students have stated that attending a Broadway show, and having an opportunity to discuss the performance with their peers, was one of the highlights of their semester. Below are just two sample comments from our follow-up surveys:

"Our students LOVE attending BB (Broadway Bridges) shows because many of them have never been to a live show. It gives them a wonderful opportunity to get to know Manhattan and to know that this is THEIR town



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with all sorts of exciting things to see and do that are NOT just reserved for wealthy people/students.”

- Teacher, Fort Hamilton High School, Winter 2020

“...To be a New Yorker, but also the child of an immigrant, has its ups and downs. One of the downs is that my family was never very into New York culture. It was a very satisfying experience because I've always wanted to see a Broadway show. So this experience was amazing.... This show was amazing. I can tell because it made me feel something in my heart.”

- Student, Young Women's Leadership School of Queens, Winter 2020

As schools become more engaged and we continue to expand our outreach network, we have experienced continued growth in participation. Until the pandemic struck, we had been steadily advancing towards our goal of ensuring that all 70,000 10th grade students enjoy a live Broadway performance during the academic year. Schools from every City Council district, along with D75 and D79, participated in the 2019 - 2020 Broadway Bridges program. Between January and March 2020 alone, 296 teachers from 228 schools brought students to a Broadway show.

Since 2005, the New York City Council has generously granted The League funding for education programs, with over \$500,000 in the past three years going to support Broadway Bridges. However, with the Broadway industry's complete shutdown and social distancing mandates, we were forced to suspend the program and only 21,407 students and chaperones were able to participate in the program this year. Given the uncertain trajectory of the virus' transmission rates and the enormous loss of tax revenue that all cities have experienced, we are deeply concerned about future funding for the program, even after social distancing mandates are lifted and it is deemed safe for students to gather.

While the League absorbs 100% of the program's administrative costs, for every \$1,000 we lose in funding, 80 students will be unable to participate in the program. Further, delayed financial support will make scheduling future shows extremely challenging. Additionally, we have heard from teachers that they are uncertain about their future school funding, or worse, that financing to bring students to the theatre when Broadway returns has already been eliminated.

The League recognizes that the City is in a dire financial position and that revenue will be down significantly for the foreseeable future. We understand that to be part of the City's economic recovery, we will all have to share the burden and become creative in the use of more limited financial resources. We look forward to collaborating with the City towards reviving our arts economy. However, **we join with other arts organizations that provide vital services to New York City in requesting that future budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs** which would be devastating for the City's arts education and the cultural community.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony at this important hearing. Please do not hesitate to contact The Broadway League with any follow up inquiries.

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL: HEARING OF THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL
AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES & INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City

December 15, 2020

Thank you to the New York City Council for the opportunity to testify as part of the December 15th hearing on NYC Cultural Affairs on art and cultural education programming in New York City. Below is written testimony on behalf of BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music).

First, thank you to Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Johnson, and the City Council for your support of the cultural sector and for your leadership during this crisis. These are unprecedented times for so many, including for the cultural organizations of all sizes who have struggled to survive under tremendous financial shortfalls throughout the City's five boroughs.

Your long standing support of BAM has been essential in bringing world class artistic programming and community events to our Brooklyn audiences. In March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic forced BAM to close its buildings to the public and suspend all in-person programming. Despite this, BAM's extensive digital archives, expert teaching artists, responsive film program, and strong community partnerships allowed BAM to continue connecting audiences with engaging artistic work online. The same week that it closed its venues, BAM launched *Love from BAM*, a weekly series that presents first-run and repertory films, archival recordings of past BAM performances, and livestreamed events and talks; these programs engaged over 25,000 viewers between March and June 2020.

BAM Education programs were among the first to pivot to the digital realm during the COVID-19 shutdown. Committed to providing meaningful, robust, and high-quality performing arts programs that help young people develop their voice, vision, and power as creative agents, BAM moved quickly to adapt in- and after- school programs for online learning. This fall BAM will continue to engage students with remote creative learning opportunities. Chief among BAM's goals is to bridge the stark divide between access to broadband, technology, and virtual learning that is both stark and growing in our city during COVID-19. Below are a few of the education initiatives that BAM has created and re-imagined, offered during this time:

- **Brooklyn Interns for Arts and Culture (BIAC)**

BIAC annually provides high school juniors and seniors with paid work experience in arts administration, as well as career mentoring and college readiness preparation. In fall 2020, BIAC seniors returned for virtual college and job readiness workshops, to be followed by work internships in the spring. Internships are structured to have participants working onsite, remotely, or in a hybrid model, as social-distancing guidelines mandate.

Additionally, this fall BAM launched a BIAC alumni program that re-engages recent program graduates to offer additional support while they attend their first or second year of college. This year has presented unique and formidable challenges for our students, and BAM is proud to have launched this virtual engagement of BIAC alumni as they contend with these challenges at the start of their college career. BAM is looking forward to continuing this program virtually, in response to the significant student need. With the support of the City, BAM will continue to grow this high-impact, individualized program to include more students and more in-depth work.

- **Arts & Justice**

One of BAM's long standing after-school programs, *Arts & Justice* is a theater-based workshop series that empowers high school students to explore social justice issues through devised theater, media arts, and performance. This fall, BAM is offering this program free and virtually, and has expanded recruitment efforts to engage students from all five New York City boroughs. Young people from all across the City are working to create movement, poetry, songs and theater, with the support of BAM's dedicated and innovative teaching artists. The program also continued during the Spring shutdown in 2020; students met weekly with BAM teaching artists and facilitators on zoom to create poetry, monologues, and to discuss themes relevant to the young people's lived experience as Black people, as requested by the students.

- **In-School Dance and Literary Residencies**

BAM in-school residencies continued virtually during the Spring shutdown, and through the Fall of 2020. These programs include: *Word Sound Power*, a literacy-based program that uses spoken-word poetry and performance to empower students to find their voice and creative agency that streams live in the classroom and is led by a BAM teaching artist; *DanceAfrica in the Classroom*, which guides students through an exploration of African and Diasporan history and culture; and *(Re)Centering Theatre*, a new residency that builds academic skills through reading, criticism, and active interpretation of one theatrical work each year with an emphasis on works by underrepresented artists including women, people of color, and immigrants. In compliance with New York City Department of Education guidelines, BAM will deliver these programs via distance-learning platforms until it is safe to resume offering on-site instruction.

- **BAMkids Film Festival**

BAM's beloved annual BAMkids Film Festival presents over 80 films from 30 countries plus live performances and activities over a weekend at BAM's Peter Jay Sharp building. This fall BAM presented the *Best of BAMkids Film Festival* virtually, through an hour-long video on demand program of short animated works from 10 countries. These 12

films were geared to children from ages 3 - 6, engaging some of BAM's youngest audiences from home.

The City is well aware of culture's impact and critical role in the fabric of New York City - CIGs alone employ hundreds of thousands of workers, generate over \$120B in economic activity, and offer countless benefits to communities with its impact on better outcomes for education, aging, crime, health, and neighborhood wellbeing. These efforts are critical now more than ever as the City charts a challenging path of re-opening and of recovery. The same is true for the education programs the City is able to provide students and parents facing unprecedented challenges in life and in learning. Cultural institutions such as BAM have a vital role to play in bringing communities together. We ask that the City partner with us and continue to provide critical support needed in the FY21 and FY22 budget cycles, so that we may continue to provide essential arts education to our communities. The year ahead will prove challenging for so many in our City, and BAM is committed to continuing our programming and to finding new ways to creatively meet the evolving needs and challenges facing our City.

Thank you for your attention and for your ongoing leadership and support.

Katerina Patouri
Senior Manager, Capital Projects & Government Affairs
kpatouri@BAM.org

Coco Killingsworth
VP, Education and Community Engagement
ckillingsworth@BAM.org

Ellen Leszynski
Director of Institutional Advocacy
elczynski@BAM.org



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Blair Reavis-Tyler
Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 15, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Blair Reavis-Tyler, and I work with Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs at the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation in Midtown. I am also a graduate of the Fordham University/Ailey BFA program.

On behalf of my organization, I would like to thank the New York City Council members for your continued support across several program areas, and for selecting Ailey as a cultural provider for the Cultural After-School Adventures (CASA) program. Through the CASA grants and other funds awarded to Ailey by the Council, our 2020-21 school partners are excited and deeply grateful for the opportunity and financial support to participate in our remote virtual programs. A school principal has shared the following quote in regard to being able to conduct an Ailey residency remotely this year.

"I am so happy to hear that the residency can continue, and I know that our students will especially enjoy having this opportunity for connection and enrichment."

– Principal of PS 344X AmPark Neighborhood School, CASA participant

Our community partners have expressed feedback that the Arts have been and will continue to be a critical outlet and resource for their youth, especially during the era of covid-19. Our in-school AileyDance Kids residency program serves students in schools across NYC, with subsidies from the DOE. One of our long-time school partners commented that the DOE's budget cuts led to their students feeling upset that they might not be able to dance with Ailey this year.

The Council's commitment to equity in arts education is a leading factor in Ailey's annual reach each year. The average # of students in NYC DOE schools who participated in Ailey's programs over the past two years is just over 6,000 students reached annually. However, the impact of the pandemic on schools has resulted in fewer schools that are able to support arts education programs, and we are unsure if we will be able to reach 1000 students this year, an 83.5 % reduction in the # of DOE students served.

Disruptions to our programs and the discrepancy in the number we may reach this year could result in negative effects on those students missing out. The stress of the pandemic is having traumatic effects on New York City's students. Such severe changes to one's security and well-being can overwhelm a person's coping responses, in turn impacting motivation and energy level in class. The arts provide creative coping tools and space for social support that buffer against traumatic stress. New York City youth need the Arts to

nurture their emotional and physical well-being, as well as reinforce the principles they learn throughout their academic journeys, and so we are counting on your help to maintain a strong support network for arts education programs.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through the work of arts education programs. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Blair Reavis-Tyler

My name is Juan Carlos Salinas. I'm Director of Education at the Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, part of the City's 34-member Cultural Institutions Group.

Throughout COVID-19, JCAL has demonstrated its unswerving commitment to our city through three pillars of support—support for public life, for public health, and for public service.

This hearing is to illuminate COVID-19's impact on art and cultural educational programming in our city. Here I could simply tell a tragic tale, that the emergence and deepening of the global pandemic has been devastating to our nearly 50-year-old institution. Certainly it hasn't been easy. Our pioneering School of the Arts, the award-winning cornerstone of our mission, can't operate quite as it did before, with dozens of classes serving hundreds of young people all year long.

But from the moment "COVID-19" entered our vocabulary, JCAL never once blinked. Within hours of the shutdown—not days, not weeks—we paid our small army of teaching artists to conceive, develop and deliver arts-focused, high-quality online pop-up classes that were free for everyone and marketed specifically to students across Queens.

Then, with new senior leadership at JCAL starting this last July, we rolled out a comprehensive "community first, digital first" season of programs. For example:

Our Southeast Queens Jam Fest featured seven bands for a three-hour, socially distanced concert on the lawn of our Jamaica Performing Arts Center.

Our census work, funded by a grant from New York Community Trust, was linked to five more outdoor events, all with arts education themes.

Our Thursday Night Jazz series, generously supported by former Council Member, now Queens Borough President, Donovan Richards, as well as the full Queens Delegation to the City Council, has been live-streamed monthly from JCAL to its social media platforms, attracting 100 people per live concert, and thousands of views in playback.

Our 11th annual Making Moves Dance Festival, funded partly by the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts and private sources, was produced fully online—11 dance companies total, each garnering hundreds of audience members.

JCAL launched a virtual book club in Southeast Queens that attracted dozens of sign-ups and will return again next spring.

And there's more.

Our "community first, digital first" season features JCAL Education at Home, an ambitious pilot project of how-to arts videos produced by New York City's best teaching artists.

And next February, we launch Riddim Section, a live-streamed monthly music series that draws life directly from the cultures in Queens.

And we're producing a 10-Minute Film Festival for NYC-based filmmakers—with priority to Queens-based artists of color.

And there's JCAL Talks, a monthly speaker series over Zoom that spotlights thought leaders in arts and culture, education and in public life.

And we're partnering with the Southeast Queens Artist Alliance to keep our galleries activated for visitors, in accordance with state guidelines.

Despite COVID-19 hitting JCAL very hard financially, it will not ever stop our institution from finding fulfilling and amplifying its mission. We only hope that Council Members continue to keep crucial, critical, high-energy institutions like ours in the future. Thank you.



Tony Bennett
Founder

December 8, 2020

Susan Benedetto
President & Founder

Dear Members of NYC City Council,

Toby E. Boshak
Executive Director

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Toby Boshak and I am the Executive Director of Exploring the Arts (ETA), founded by Tony Bennett and Susan Benedetto, in Astoria, NY.

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The mission of Exploring the Arts is to transform the lives of young people through arts education. At the heart of ETA is providing equitable access to resources and opportunities for students, most of whom attend Title 1 schools. Since we were founded in 1999, ETA has partnered with 32 public middle and high schools in all five boroughs, creating, refining, and enhancing robust arts education programs. Since 1999, we have reached more than 20,000 students. With the school partnerships being the tentpole of our programming, ETA also provides direct service opportunities for students through Arts Internship and Scholar programs.

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With in-person learning on pause because of the pandemic, ETA is helping to bolster teacher capacity to teach through a socio-emotional lens, using arts the vehicle. We are convening teacher “professional learning communities” so teachers can share resources and best practices; we are curating professional development workshops – with our arts partners -- that bring social justice and socio-emotional learning to the forefront, and we are helping to bridge the digital divide by equipping students with resources and technology. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the conduit to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages.

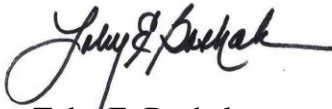
For this to happen, city agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences.

Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toby E. Boshak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Toby E. Boshak
Executive Director



December 2020

The Honorable Jimmy Van Bramer and members of the Council and Committee on Cultural Affairs:

Thank you for your time and interest in recognizing the need to hear from your cultural partners around the city about the vital importance of arts education for our city's youth and communities.

TDF aims to provide access and equity to the city's rich and varied theatre offerings and live performances through deep discounts and free programming. We serve 11,000 NYC school students each year for free, taking them to see dozens of Broadway and off-Broadway shows and providing in class workshops. Our Accessibility Programs provide meaningful and carefully curated opportunities for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families to see live theatre stigma free, as well as close captioned and ASL sign interpreted and audio described performances. Our Veterans Programs brings our cities heroes to live shows and facilitates conversation and community afterward. Our Community Engagement programs support hyper local theatre in the boroughs and support and facilitate community members' own theatrical and artistic roots for community centers and seniors. The TKTS Booth generates millions of dollars in revenue for the city's entertainment industry.

All of this came to abrupt halt on March 13th when Broadway closed down. We quickly took stock of our own situation, made drastic staff cuts, enacted austerity budgets, and lost 80% of revenue sources, but remained committed to the services we provide.

All of TDF's programming adapted to an online format. We are serving 6,000 students this year with teaching artists supporting teachers in their digital classrooms. Our accessibility programming is providing families with opportunities to take magic workshops online and chat with Santa up close and personal—no waiting-in-line required! Our veterans have been watching recorded productions and having talk-backs with Danny Glover and Tom Hanks through our partnership with Arts in The Armed Forces. Our Community Engagement programs have been curating digital performances to several senior facilities, and connecting underserved community members digitally once a month to share and discuss streamed shows. We remain dedicated to our programming, despite zero revenue and a skeleton staff. We are deeply thankful for the City Council's support of our Veterans and

Accessibility Programming, and ask that you continue to support us and the city's dire need for Arts Education funding.

Teachers have been asked to do impossible tasks this year: teach remotely; teach in person; teach hybrid; stay safe; and keep students safe. The effort takes its toll on their emotional and physical health. Students are Zoomed-out and isolated. We've found that teachers are immensely grateful and in need of Arts Education in their classrooms—it offers a welcome change of pace and engaging new content. Theatre Arts Education can center creativity, help students and teachers express emotion and trauma and give voice to internal and personal concern. Teaching artists offer support in classrooms that feel disconnected and lonely.

Arts funding has been drastically reduced, and we urge the Council to remember the vital need for this funding to be reinstated—we have a vaccine on the horizon that can address our collective physical health, but The Arts can be the healing balm for our collective mental health. Please support the city's cultural institutions like TDF, as we struggle to support and hold up the students, communities, and arts that make our city vibrant and wonderful.

Warmly,
Ginger Meagher on behalf of TDF
Director of Education
TDF
520 8th Ave. Suite 801
New York, New York 10018
gingerb@tdf.org

To Whom It May Concern,

I will upload my testimony at a later date.

Thanks!

Andrew Roitstein

Director of Education and Community Engagement

Orchestra of St. Luke's

450 West 37th Street, Suite 502

New York, NY 10018

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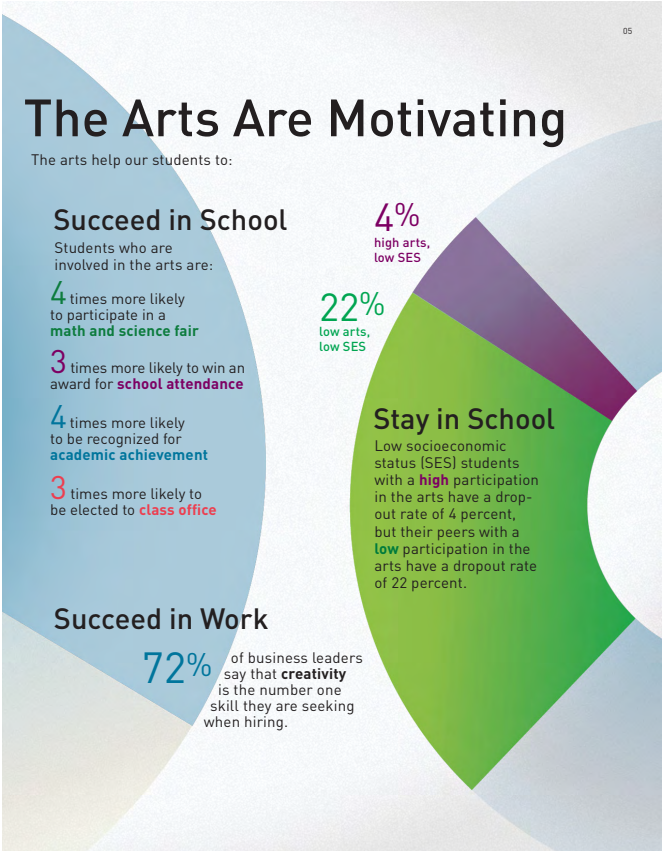
Committee of Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations

Dear City Council Committee of Cultural Affairs,

I write to you as a theatre director and writer who has been deeply affected by the budget cuts and the devastating effects of Covid-19 on the theatre community in New York. As an artist, one of the many jobs that I have relied on to survive for the past 9 years is working as a performer for The Shadow Box Theatre. My husband and I have been lucky enough to work together as a team for The Shadow Box Theatre for the past 9 years, meaning the loss of arts education programming in the schools has effected us both financially as a married couple as we've lost about 50% of our yearly income due to the loss of all Shadow Box shows.

Yet the reason for being here isn't just personal. It's about the many children who will not have access to theatre or arts education in their classroom because we will not be traveling to the schools. As traveling musician/puppeteers, we are able to access more underserved communities in the five boroughs because we bring the show to the school. Many times, we are the first point of contact for theatre for these children. Introducing children to the arts can create major impact down the line for these students.

Here are some facts from Americans for the Arts & Vans Custom Culture, 2017 — — — —>



Tuesday, December 15, 2020

The statistics are encouraging because they tell us what so many of us who do this work already know: Arts can make a huge impact on a child's life.

I urge you to continue to fund the arts. This year, the arts have taken some of the biggest hits from the effects of Covid-19. I have friends who have had to move out of the city due to the pandemic. I fear many of these artists won't come back and the impact it will have on our city's educational programs, when the artists who have left don't come back.

There is no greater joy than seeing a kid's face light up when they see a puppet come to life. Their imagination is sparked and they are reminded of the life that can be imagined outside of the classroom, outside of their smart phones, and outside their possibilities. Please consider funding these programs and continuing to fight for Arts Education in NYC by increasing the budget and creating emergency relief grants for the many organizations, like the Shadow Box Theatre who has been providing NYC shows since the 1960's, who need a lifeline to survive.

With much consideration,

Rebecca Aparicio



**Testimony to the Committee on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
John Calvelli, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs
Zo DeJesus & Nasfa Raisa, Discovery Guides
Wildlife Conservation Society
December 15, 2020**

Hello, my name is Zo DeJesus and I am a participant in the Wildlife Conservation Society's virtual Discovery Guide program. Like many other cultural organizations, WCS made the difficult, but necessary decision in mid-March to close all of our parks (the Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, Queens Zoo, New York Aquarium, and the Bronx Zoo) because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While this resulted in the immediate furlough of more than 500 youth employees who work in WCS parks, it also meant that in-person internships and volunteer positions needed to quickly adapt to the new virtual world.

WCS is a member of the City's Cultural Institutions Group. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, CIGs have been committed to contributing to the City and to New Yorkers by supporting public life, public health, and public service.

To that end, since March and the switch to virtual programming, the Virtual Discovery Guide program has engaged more than 300 young people in dynamic and meaningful programming while also providing social and emotional support to NYC youth. Summer 2020 Discovery Guides produced more than 350 unique digital assets such as games, activity sheets, and videos, which communicate conservation and science messaging in fun and creative ways. They also participated in more than 16 skill-building workshops and 11 career webinars with WCS staff from around the world. At the end of each season, Discovery Guides receive a stipend and when programming takes place in-person, metro cards are provided for transportation and a party is thrown for Discovery Guides in thanks and appreciation for all of their hard work.

The last 9 months have been incredibly stressful and challenging, with our world turned upside-down. Being a part of this program has provided a feeling of security and belonging in a time where most everything else has not felt safe. I have made good friends, laughed a lot, and found ways to channel my creativity and passion into teaching and inspiring others. If I wasn't a part of this program, I'm honestly not sure what else I would have done this summer. I just feel so lucky to have had something safe and meaningful to do and I hope that more youth in NYC can have similar opportunities.

Covid-19 Impact on Brooklyn Museum's Education Programs

The Brooklyn Museum is a member of the City's Cultural Institutions Group. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, CIGs have been committed to contributing to the City and to New Yorkers by supporting public life, public health, and public service.

The Brooklyn Museum's Education Division is committed to **strengthening public life** by providing opportunities for creative expression, critical dialogue, wonder, and joy. We are also committed to **public service** by nurturing dialogue across multiple perspectives, and by developing programs that center the needs and aspirations of diverse communities, especially those historically underrepresented in Museums.

We currently offer over 35 unique programs across four main areas: Adult Learning, Family & Community Programs, School Programs, and Teen Programs. Since the onset of Covid-19 in March 2020 we have faced great challenges attempting to balance the internal financial ramifications of the pandemic, while at the same time ramping up our efforts to support those communities most impacted by the crisis.

Here are some of the ways that our programs have been impacted:

Adult Learning Programs

- Over 30 year-old Museum Education Fellowship Program canceled for FY21
- Arts- based alternative to incarceration program, Project Reset, completed virtually, but City funding not renewed for FY21

Teen Programs

- Staff had to shift to support emotional/personal needs of teen staff who are primarily from BIPOC communities and were hit especially hard by the pandemic
- Paid internships for teens cut in half in FY21

Family & Community Programs

- Programs for babies and youngest early-childhood audiences canceled
- Staff supporting Access programs for audiences with disabilities reduced

School Programs

- Cuts to arts education in school budgets have impacted DOE's ability to partner with us in providing in-depth art-based opportunities for their students.
- Last year school tours and partnerships served over 30,000 children and teachers from across NYC. This year, while we have pivoted to virtual programs, we have been struggling to meet even half this goal due to the great upheaval faced by the DOE.

Challenges & Needs Expressed by our Key Audiences

Immediately after closing our doors on March 13th, the Education Division began reaching out to each of our key constituencies (Adults, Families & Community partners, Schools, Teens) through dozens of interviews and surveys, to assess the impact of the pandemic on their lives, and how we might best support them. Some of the core “needs” gathered by staff included:

1. The need for human connection and for retaining a sense of community. There is a pervasive need for activating strategies for mental health, social connectivity, and outlets for creative expression for children, teens and adults. In this regards access to the arts is not a luxury but an absolute necessity.
2. Dedicated programming for audiences with disabilities is paramount: people with memory loss, vision loss, hearing loss, with developmental disabilities & mental illness are feeling especially isolated during this time. School audiences with disabilities are also especially vulnerable.
3. We have heard from teachers that they are struggling with student motivation. There is the challenge of overreliance on technology without consideration of human behavior with regard to motivation and engagement. As one teacher we spoke to noted, “It was already difficult getting some of the kids to come to class when we were *in* the building; what makes us think we can get them engaged now, when it’s up to them to log on or not?” Parents have echoed the challenge of motivating kids to do the school work. Perhaps the most concerning thing our team is hearing from art teachers is that many teachers are not hearing from many of their students over several weeks.
4. Not all families have equal access to computers, Wi-Fi, and art supplies—one phone or laptop may serve many siblings, and may also need to be used by a working parent. Despite the provision of laptops and tablets from the DOE, there remains a lack of consistent access to technology across student populations in homes.
5. Beyond the issue of access to technology and Wi-Fi, there is also mounting data confirming significant racial disparities in how online learning is being conducted. According to recently released [data](#), POC students are receiving much less “live instruction” than white students. Overwhelmingly they are being given pre-recorded content and assignments to complete on their own which does not help engagement. 25% of BIPOC students had lower than 79% live virtual classes last Spring. Only 3% of predominantly white/asian schools fall under this category.
6. Teachers also reported feeling overwhelmed by the number of online resources suddenly available. For those who are new to remote teachings, they are overwhelmed with the amount of resources and could use support in identifying resources of the highest quality and accessibility to their students.

7. Out of school-time programming is especially critical for working families, and single-parent households. Since school time is now lessened and many afterschool programs have been cut—working parents are struggling to find opportunities for meaningful engagement for their children.
8. Job readiness and paid work opportunities for teaching artists, and emerging professionals are desperately needed to address growing anxiety related to job security. For our teen staff especially; as mostly low income and working class youth, many rely on the income they receive to support themselves and their families. Because many of their parents/caregivers lost jobs and/or are facing increased hardship, the income they earn from the Museum has had an even bigger impact.
9. Teens are also struggling with mental and emotional health in social isolation, and the physical health of their families, many of whom are essential workers. They need spaces to talk about these issues, be heard, and to understand the resources available to them.

How We Are Responding: Highlights

ADULT PROGRAMS

- We have continued our **Museum-wide paid internship programs** digitally and have expanded our Museum-wide paid internship program with added emphasis on developing skills for a changing landscape.
- CUNY students not accepted to the paid internship program, but showing promise, were invited to participate in a “**Career in the Arts**” **webinar series**, along with other young professionals.
- We have developed a new “**Art & Empathy**” **virtual series** targeting populations most impacted by the crisis, and inviting them to build community and resiliency by exploring themes of mental health and social connection through the collective exploration of an artwork.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

- We distributed 2,500 **Art Backpacks**, filled with quality art supplies and suggested projects inspired by our collections to local families.
- We partnered with **Campaign Against Hunger** to provide food and art materials on a weekly basis to local families.
- We have partnered with our marketing and social media team to contribute towards **weekly content including resources and art-based activities** for families stuck at home.

- We implemented our first ever **Online Summer Camp** providing families with six one-week camps serving 84 campers ages 8-13 (many of whom stayed for 2, 3, or 4 weeks), exceeding our earned revenue goals.
- We also partnered with **PBS's Camp TV**, and produced four 8-minute videos facilitating at-home art making for children ages 5-10, which aired this summer.
- We have maintained our **commitment to our teaching artists** by honoring our commitments to them and supporting them in the transition to virtual art-making programs.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- Appealing to our Institutional Giving partners to make **increased resources available to support our work with Title-1** and under-funded public schools.
- Expanding our **virtual offerings (workshops, trainings, resources) for K-12 Teachers** and educators.
- Providing **Virtual Guided Visits** in lieu of in-person tours for school groups
- Collaborating with teachers and school leaders to develop **multi-visit curricular units explored virtually through the Museum's collections and exhibitions.**
- Developing **interactive and engaging online digital resources**, that allow schools to explore our collections and special exhibitions on their own. Examples include a Comprehensive Arts of Asia Toolkit (including physical samples of materials, and a menu of related digital resources) being mailed out to hundreds of DOE schools.

TEEN PROGRAMS

- **Created new virtual initiatives** serving thousands of teens online including Quaranteen Tuesdays, a weekly social media activation for teens; teen staff performances during Virtual First Saturdays; and #Your2020Portrait, a national youth portrait competition in partnership with Instagram.
- **Hosted two large-scale virtual Teen Nights** attracting 518 participants combined. These events focused on youth art and activism, and featured artists globally including BIPOC queer and trans artists, studio visits, pop-up talks, live panel discussions, art-making, and performances.

BkM TEENS—testimony on impact of Covid-19

After closing our doors on March 13th, 2020 the Brooklyn Museum's Teen Programs department called and texted our 45 teen staff members to check on their physical and mental wellbeing. Teen Programs Manager, Lindsay C. Harris, activated her team to conduct surveys with each of them to assess their needs, and key areas of struggles. Here's some of what we heard from them:

- **Increased desire for Stability, Community & Creativity** - So much of their lives was changed, so holding onto the routine of weekly meetings, the community, and project based work was crucial.
- **Paid Employment and Professional Development** - As mostly low income and working class youth, many rely on the income they receive to support themselves and their families. Because many of their caregivers lost jobs and/or faced increased hardship, the income they earn has had an even bigger impact.
- **Health & Resources** - Their immediate concerns were also connected to their mental and emotional health in social isolation, and the physical health of their families, many of whom are essential workers. They wanted space to talk about these issues, be heard, and to understand the resources available to them.

From last spring to now, our Teen staff have continued to struggle with online schooling, and the personal impact of COVID-19 on them and their families. In particular, frequently cited issues include **Internet connectivity**, and **caring for younger siblings**.

Our staff have played a larger role in supporting their needs, beyond the confines of their work at the Museum. For example, we expanded the numbers of laptops and I-pads available to teens (we currently have 10 laptops and 6 I-pads), and are continuing to make these available to those who have still not received laptops from the DOE. Teen Programs Manager, Lindsay C. Harris, personally delivered laptops to 8 young people throughout the city during the pandemic, to ensure their ability to engage in our programs and in school. However, even when provided with these, some young people have still struggled to remain engaged due to weak internet connection at home, and growing demands on their time as they've become the primary care-takers of younger siblings also confined to online-schooling.

Even in the face of all this, our teens have developed innovative strategies and new free virtual programs to support thousands of other teens facing tremendous difficulties during the pandemic. Some of these have included Virtual Teen Nights; Quaranteen Tuesdays, a weekly social media activation for teens; teen staff performances during Virtual First Saturdays; and #Your2020Portrait, a national youth portrait competition in partnership with Instagram.



12/15/2020

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you to members of New York City Council for your continued support and for this forum.

I'm the Director of Education and Community Engagement at Orchestra of St. Luke's, which produces free educational concert series each year, and runs the Youth Orchestra of St. Luke's, YOSL. YOSL is an after-school program that partners with public schools in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood to offer free instrumental music lessons. Before the pandemic, we had 140 students enrolled from PS 111, PS 51, and PS 212, and Police Athletic League. YOSL has continued to offer online music lessons to our returning students. One parent's email says:

"It means the world that you are continuing to provide caring, excellent instruction for Liam and the other YOSL students in this time. Having his cello here and being able to continue with some sense of normalcy is soothing."

While we have been able to focus on retaining our students from previous years to enhance their self-expression and creativity through music, we are aware of the many younger students throughout the city who are not yet able to start an instrument at this time, due to the public health crisis we currently face. YOSL thrives on our partnerships with the performing arts teachers at each school, and it's clear that they need more support. The time that public school music teachers dedicate to helping programs like YOSL recruit new students and follow through on the well-being of our current students, is currently very limited. With further support for arts programs in schools, we will again be able to work more closely with our public school partners and begin to rebuild the next creative generation.

Thank you for your consideration!

-
Andrew Roitstein

Director of Education and Community Engagement
Orchestra of St. Luke's
450 West 37th Street, Suite 502
New York, NY 10018
212-594-6100 x117
OSLmusic.org
DiMennaCenter.org



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 16, 2020



Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Valerie Green, and I work at Dance Entropy, Inc. in Long Island City, Queens.

37-24 24th Street
Suites 211-212
Long Island City
New York 11101

718 - 956 - 3037
Info@DanceEntropy.org
DanceEntropy.org
Social: @DanceEntropy

**Dance Entropy Inc.
Board of Directors**

Lamel Adkins
Emily Bunning
Naomi Cosman
Scott Crowley
Valerie Green
Jeffrey Gross
Sharon Harsa
Adonis Madera

The mission of Dance Entropy is to create a platform for multicultural understanding through dance; nurture connections between dance creation and education; build community among dance artists; and foster physicality, creativity and empowerment in underserved communities. The professional nonprofit modern dance company Valerie Green/Dance Entropy and Green Space, a Long Island City-based studio that houses the company, serve dance artists, schoolchildren, senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, trauma survivors and audience members from all over New York City—a total of 4,000 individuals annually.

Dancers and choreographers of all ages, racial and economic backgrounds, and artistic specialties rent the studio at Green Space to hone their craft, and the Take Root and Fertile Ground programs offer performance opportunities for emerging and established artists performing to diverse audiences. Dance Entropy offers dance residencies at several NYC public schools, and the annual *Wild Kingdom* Young Audience Series tailors shows for elementary-aged children. Our youth audiences come from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, primarily African-American, Hispanic and Asian-American from Title 1 schools. Through the City's SU-CASA program, Dance Entropy is in residency at three Queens senior centers. Valerie Green presents her "Skimming the Surface" workshop to victims of various forms of trauma including abuse, rape, human trafficking, homelessness and anyone suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Dance Entropy has continued to offer classes online tailored for schoolchildren, senior citizens and the general public, as well as one-on-one sessions with Valerie Green and virtual performance offerings. The organization will also offer a 1-week Virtual Summer Intensive for all dance and movement-lovers. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations



GREEN SPACE
INCUBATOR OF DANCE IN QUEENS

37-24 24th Street
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to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Budget cuts would have a devastating impact on Dance Entropy’s ability to deliver essential arts services to the public, on top of the financial losses already sustained. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members’ work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Valerie Green
Executive Director
Dance Entropy, Inc.

Education Through Music

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

December 3, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Adam Arango, and I work for Education Through Music, providing access to music education in 48 public schools in all five boroughs of New York City.

The mission of Education Through Music is to partner with under-resourced schools to provide music as a core subject for all children, and utilizes music education as a catalyst to improve academic achievement, motivation for school and self-confidence. We work with students in the hardest hit communities. Our students are 55% LatinX, 28% Black or African-American, 8% Asian, 7% Caucasian, and 2% other. Without ETM to provide full-time music education during school hours, most of our 18,000 students would not have access to high-quality music.

Through the pandemic, ETM has remained an important resource for our school partners to keep music alive. The 2020-21 school year has been challenging on many fronts. School budget cuts meant a 30% reduction in income and school partnerships from the previous year for ETM, and the loss of live fundraising events has provided additional challenges resulting in reduction in force and less teacher resources available.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages.

In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities.

ETM politely requests that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived

experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam Arango". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Adam Arango
Director of Development
Education Through Music

Oversight - The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City

Hello all - my name is erin reid. I am a queer mixed-race Black woman, I have been a museum educator in New York City for over 3 years, and I'm currently completing my masters in K-12 art education. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I want to ground my statements in the reality that COVID-19 continues to disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and people of color due to racism and structural inequities in our healthcare, housing, and criminal punishment systems (to name a few).

Of course, arts and cultural education are also built upon these historical legacies of racism. This past year has highlighted this truth in sharp relief: mass layoffs in the arts (most significantly in arts education) have hit BIPOC cultural workers the hardest. And pre-existing budget inequities have soared and left art ed organizations centering BIPOC communities even more vulnerable than before.

Within museums and cultural institutions, BIPOC workers tend to be the most represented within front-facing staff--education, visitor services, security, shop staff--positions which usually represent among the lowest paid work and the most precarious labor. From my personal experience as a former educator at the Tenement Museum in the Lower East Side, the lay-offs of the entire part-time staff in July gutted a majority of the workers of color, and left behind an institution that was overwhelmingly white. There are no longer any educators of color at the Tenement Museum today.

I believe that we need foremost to value arts and cultural education more highly (in cultural institutions and in schools), and recognize the central importance of art education to the vitality of New York City. To me this means abolishing unpaid internships which privilege the white and wealthy, increasing wages for part-time and front facing arts education staff and hiring more people of color, and prioritizing funding to arts education programs and institutions that serve predominantly people of color. We must also demand that BIPOC workers are more represented within management-level positions in museums. Hiring practices need to shift.

On the whole, arts education needs to receive more funding. Arts programs within schools and cultural institutions have been underfunded and defunded for far too long, although they are the very lifeblood of the city. The NYPD budget swells while art funding is slashed and institutions are shut down.

Lastly, I just want to salute arts educators across the city for our particular ability to use creative thinking to strategize ways to reach our students and continue to offer robust education in new and innovative ways. Our adaptiveness and flexibility is what makes art educators some of the most well-positioned to deal with a crisis of this magnitude. In particular it is the continued resilience and radical capacity for imagination of BIPOC cultural workers that keeps us afloat. New York City needs our voices and our ideas. I'm hoping for a day when we are adequately celebrated, funded, and represented. Thank you.



CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS Committee
hearing
December 15, 2020
New York Hall of Science Written Testimony

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony, and for the opportunity to contribute to these hearings.

The New York Hall of Science (NYSCI) is a highly interactive science and technology center. In normal times, our museum serves nearly half a million visitors annually, including schools, families, and communities throughout New York City. The audiences we work with reflect the diversity of our home borough of Queens. We aspire to create impactful experiences that enable young people from diverse back grounds to feel confident and empowered as STEM learners.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, NYSCI, along with other city arts and cultural institutions, was required to close to visitors in March 2020. As a high-touch, highly interactive museum, NYSCI's Board of Trustees unanimously voted on June 18, 2020 to take a longer path toward reopening our doors to the public. Our own data, as well as that from national studies, indicates that visitors will feel comfortable returning when effective treatments and/or vaccines are available. Our accompanying loss in revenue and the consequent absence of work for a significant number of our staff resulted in our having to lay off 60% of our employees. Our current plan is to reopen in the summer of 2021 after a significant percentage of New Yorkers have received vaccinations.

In the wake of COVID-19, New York City's arts and cultural institutions have been called upon to deeply examine and reimagine their work, and NYSCI is no exception. Like other organizations in the Cultural Institution's Group, NYSCI is committed to contributing in ways that strengthen the *public health, and public life, and public service* of the City as a whole. NYSCI's educators, community engagement team, youth development staff, exhibit designers, and researchers have all pivoted in extraordinary ways to support our communities over the past ten months. What follows are the steps we have taken to ensure we remain connected to the people of New York, and especially those who live in our home borough of Queens.

Public Health. Early on in the pandemic NYSCI took the lead in bringing together other local nonprofits to promote healing and recovery in the Queens communities most afflicted by the pandemic. The Elmhurst/Corona Recovery Collaborative (ECRC/ <https://ecrc.nyc/>), is comprised of twenty local non-profit organizations that are working to ensure that families have access to food, health and healing programs, and educational and cultural experiences designed to build resilience. We're proud of the fact that participating organizations have distributed over 45,000 meals, provided access to Covid-19 testing and flu shots, and will soon, hopefully, be at the forefront of helping residents understand and have access to vaccinations.


Public Life. To bring a bit of joy to the people of Queens, NYSCI partnered with Rooftop Films and the Museum of the Moving Image to launch the Queens Drive-In which opened in August 2020 and closed just after Thanksgiving. This was a new programming venture for us, in line with allowable activities and safety protocols under the New York Forward reopening restrictions. At the outset of this project, we made a decision to give-back to our local communities. To that end, we donated 5% of net revenue to Elmcors, a community-based organization founded in 1965 that supports Elmhurst and Corona with a residential mental health facility, a senior center, and programming for youth. On Sunday, November 15th, in collaboration with Council Member Moya, the partners celebrated Elmcors and presenting a check for \$9,000 to Saeeda Dunston, Elmcors' Executive Director. In all the drive-in hosted 77 screenings engaging 5000 visitors. Thanks to the support of Sharon Lee, Queens Borough President and Council Member Moya, 2 in 5 screenings were offered as free community screenings, serving over



2,000 community residents. We are deeply grateful to our local elected officials for their support and enthusiasm for this initiative.

Public Service. We have continued to engage New York City teachers and school administrators during this unprecedented time. Specifically, we have:

- Implemented an Introduction to computational Thinking professional learning workshop online for over 40 early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals from PS 13 in Corona.
- Conducted interactive virtual science workshops with over 400 students from schools and community-based organizations on various science topics.
- Conducting online teacher professional development for over 1400 educators, including supporting teachers in delivering online learning.
- Developing a free remote learning resource called Science Learning Series, consisting of 15-minute videos demonstrating science concepts aligned with standards.
- Developed a free remote learning resource called Science Learning Series, consisting of 15-minute videos demonstrating science concepts aligned with standards as well as with
- Provided STEM Coaching and remote learning adaptations to teachers at PS62.
- Implemented a paid internship program for 30 high school students on computational thinking, digital making and coding.



Through our NYSCI Neighbors program of community work, our community outreach has worked with families from Corona and Elmhurst to ensure they have the technology and know-how to get their children set up on the DOE's remote learning platforms. NYSCI has also provided enriching virtual resources to families so that children can learn at home. These activities have engaged over 300 families and included:

- Engaging families through bilingual "Making at Home" videos and live Zoom sessions which feature creative interactive learning activities that can be done with household items.
- Engaging parents and children through a virtual Zoom series entitled STEM through Literacy, focusing on connecting literacy to design-based science activities using everyday materials.
- Offering a Virtual Homework Zone where families and children can continue to receive homework help;
- Creating a bilingual (English/Spanish) story time geared towards early learners that guides parents through a family activity, making connections to STEM learning.
- Distributing over 1,500 do-it-yourself activity kits to local families in food relief packages.

NYSCI's Friedman Center for the Development of Young Scientists has transitioned in-person student programming and events to virtual platforms. For the 85 youth, known as "Explainers" and who are predominantly from Queens, we have engaged them in:

- Regular training and professional development sessions help youth deepen their science communication skills and broaden skills and confidence in STEM subject matter (Daily, M-F).
- Working groups that leverage Explainers' expertise and experiences to update program materials, develop virtual STEM focused content, and support the evolution of NYSCI's exhibits and activities.
- Skill-building workshops in college readiness and career topics for Explainers and students across NYC.
- Career conversations featuring professionals who help young people expand the ways they think about STEM careers (e.g., Career Conversations).
- Developing videos that highlights the museum's exhibits and demonstrations to engage NYSCI's audiences while the museum is closed: (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBWIGuxNBstEHxE5yG5Naeg>).



We appreciate the Council's hard work on behalf of New Yorkers, and we thank you for hearing our testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Margaret Honey", written in a cursive style.

Margaret Honey
President and CEO
New York Hall of Science



December 15, 2020

Thank you to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. My name is Flannery Gregg, and I am a movement director and dance educator.

On March 12th of this year, Broadway shutdown. I was working as the associate choreographer for a new musical, "Sing Street on Broadway." March 12th was our first day in the theater after months of rehearsing in the studio. I was looking forward to the kind of prolonged financial stability a gig like this provides for a freelance artist like me. I was also thrilled to be growing in my field, gaining knowledge to pass on to young performing artists.

As an artist who works multiple dance jobs at one time, I am also the rehearsal director for Monica Bill Barnes & Company, a small dance company based in the City. In 2019 we worked with students in the Hunter College Dance Department. Throughout the year we did multiple residencies, or longform workshops, that culminated in showings and a performance. The students performed with us at the 2019 Fall for Dance Festival at City Center and nailed it. Through the sweat and hot lights I could hear a roaring applause. It was the largest stage the students had ever performed on.

Since the pandemic hit, the students and I had to learn how to adapt our craft for the online, video world. Our dance company was able to rehearse for an online show with the same Hunter students this summer. We called the show "Keep Moving."

The show included audio recordings of some of the students' stories, the challenges they were experiencing, and their resilience as they danced in their families' living rooms with all of the furniture moved to the side or in their basements next to the washing machine.

For many students, their dream was to become a working artist in New York City. However, without any housing or financial support, many had to move back home away from the five boroughs. For other students, finishing a college dance degree online felt like an impossible task.

College students ask me how I've lived as a working artist. I'm honest, I don't want them to romanticize the artist struggle in the City. Since I was self employed for the majority of 2019, I only qualify for the minimum amount of unemployment.

In March, I went from making \$1,700 a week on Broadway to making \$184. This drop in income makes it extremely tenuous to live and stay in New York. I thankfully still have access to health care through my husband's job. He is a frontline worker at Weill Cornell Hospital.

I'm here today to work towards a future where artists are able to fully practice their craft and where students can easily participate in arts education, in normal circumstances and especially during a pandemic.

Artists should be able to sustain an arts practice and be able to lesson plan without worrying about paying for groceries. The City needs to lead the Country by example and urgently be in service of the arts and arts education.

- Funding: Small dance organizations in New York City have proven their importance again and again in connecting dance students with professionals. We need more grants and funding from the City urgently to support small dance companies and freelance artists in our educational programs with students of all ages. It's crucial that the students can enter the professional world with the connections needed to thrive.
- Open Culture Bill: While the Open Culture Bill will allow shows to go on in New York City streets, dancers, especially college students and dancers early in their career still need free, affordable, and safe spaces to practice. We cannot practice dancing outside on hard surfaces for too long without having long-term side effects to our bodies.
- Digital tools and internet access: While larger arts institutions are able to move their programming online and make money through ticket sales, smaller dance organizations and freelancers like me are having a much harder time doing so. We need free internet for all New Yorkers so our students, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds, can attend virtual classes. We need free or affordable digital tools and platforms to put on shows and sell tickets as a significant source of income.

It is through the arts that we share stories, reimagine ways of living, cope, heal, and remind each other of our humanity. New York City as we know it will not exist if artists and art education are continued to be sidelined in COVID-19 recovery.

Thank you,

Flannery Gregg
Movement Director, Dance Educator, Performer
427 W 45th Street
#5RW
New York, NY 10036

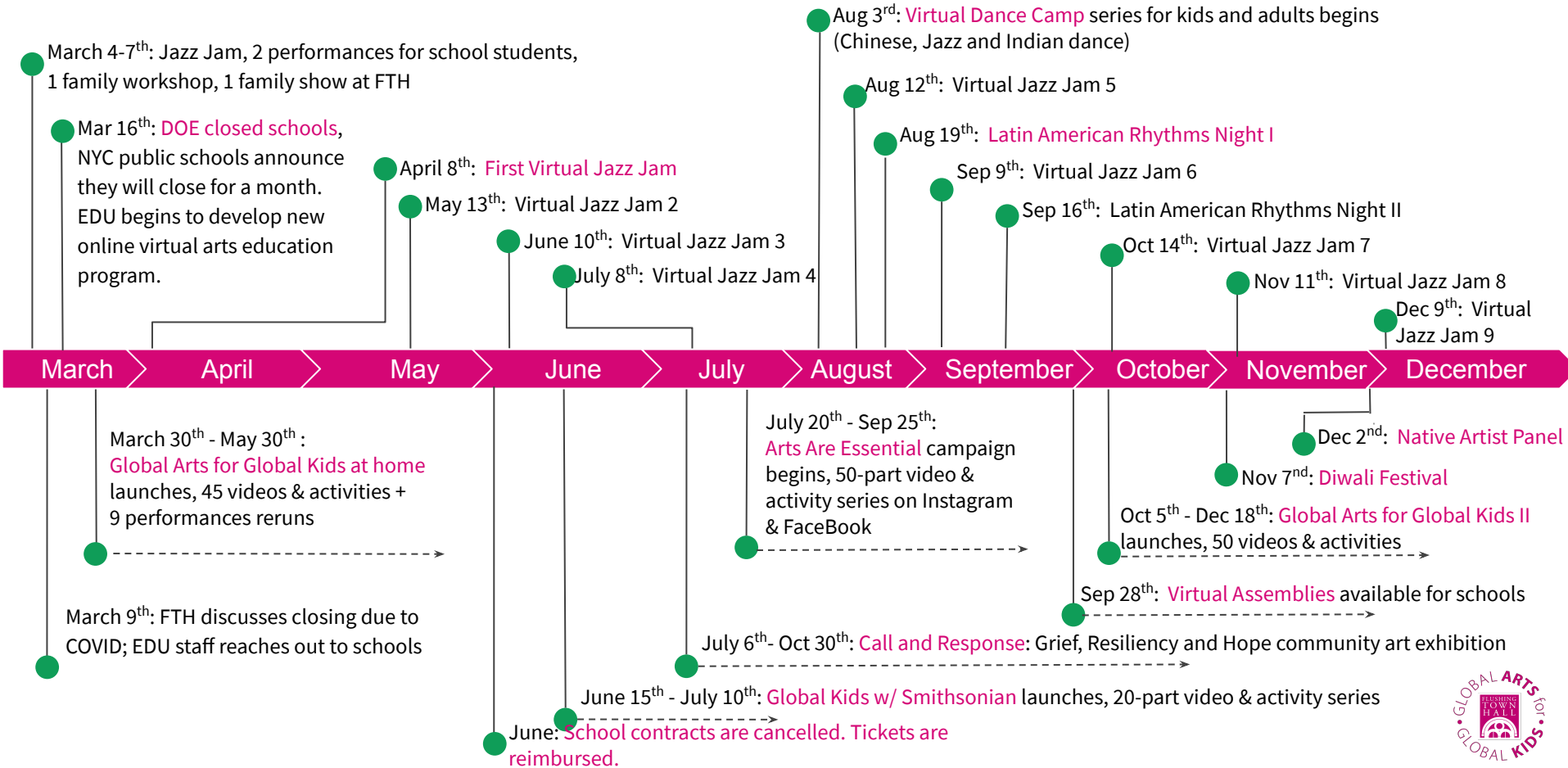


***Impact of COVID-19 on Arts and Cultural Education Programs
at Flushing Town Hall
from March 2020 to December 2020.***

Summary:

- In March 2020, Flushing Town Hall went dark and the NYC DOE closed schools for in-person learning due to COVID-19.
- Schools **cancelled arts contracts** and **FTH reimbursed schools for trips**. Performing Artist contracts were cancelled.
- From March 2020 to December 2020, Flushing Town Hall Education offered **182 FREE virtual arts education videos, performances, panels, exhibition and activities**.
- These programs were funded by PPP, private grants, and donations.
- These virtual programs reached over **30,000 audiences over Facebook, YouTube, Zoom, and Instagram**. Some schools and senior centers incorporated FTH EDU virtual content into their arts education curriculum and programs.
- In 2021, the **only school arts partnerships** that are currently booked are the **8 CASAs** with 8 individual schools, funded by DCA.
- Students, seniors, and families need the arts in order to process trauma, restore joy and build resiliency. Schools need arts funding!

2020 Timeline of FTH EDU Pivot to Virtual Platforms and School & Family Programs To-Date



FTH at Home: Global Arts for Global Kids

- **FREE** 45-part virtual workshop series geared towards students and families with 45 videos & 45 post-video activity worksheets, launched March 2020.
- **Diverse topics included:** Colombian drumming, Chinese dance, Indian dance, African drumming, Pop-Up Books, Visual Signs of Gratitude, Mexican dance, Stories from Quarantine, Jazz Dance
- **This program employed** 16 FTH staff members and 10 Master Teaching Artists. FTH Education staff and teaching artists curated content, wrote lessons, produced and edited the videos and activities.

Global Arts for Global Kids Screenshot of Video as it appears on FTH Website:



FTH at HOME: Global Arts for Global Kids (Week ...)

Copy link

FLUSHING TOWN HALL

FTH AT HOME

GLOBAL ARTS

FOR GLOBAL KIDS

WEEK #5-4

f YouTube

Global Arts for Global Kids Post-Video Activity Worksheet Sample:

FLUSHING TOWN HALL @ HOME



EXPLORING MEXICAN DANCE

CLIMATE & CLOTHING IN VERACRUZ

La Bamba, presumably connected to the Spanish verb 'bambolear', meaning 'to sway or swing', is one of the most recognized songs and dances from Veracruz, Mexico. In this traditional dance, the dancing couple (who are newlyweds) tie a huge ribbon into a bow with only their feet. La Bamba was made popular in the U.S. and around the world from a 1958 adaptation by Ritchie Valens, one of early rock and roll's best-known songs. Learn the song in Spanish & English at: www.mamalisa.com/?t=es&p=5083



Do you know how is the custom in Veracruz influenced by its climate? Veracruz is located on the east coast of Mexico, where the climate is tropical. So people wear light clothing and the dancers usually perform in their elegant garb.

Women wear a wide white, lace dress with accessories inspired by Spanish culture including a *mantilla*, a hair comb and a hand fan. The dress is so elegant that it is often also used as wedding dress! The men wear white pants, a Cuban *guayabera*, a hat and a *paliacate*, a traditional bandana to wipe up the perspiration after an exhausting dance number.

LET'S COMPARE DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF LA BAMBA SONG

Can you describe different dance styles and instrumentation in each video?

Rock Version
by Ritchie Valens



<https://youtu.be/-WoMCOTpkY8>

Traditional
Version



<https://youtu.be/IFuHi2k5D0>

Dora
The Explorer
Version



<https://youtu.be/QdMqmwYXRaU>

Worldwide
Version



<https://youtu.be/k5dkwQY-tk>

*Contents of this worksheet are for educational purposes only.



Global Arts for Global Kids

Impact

- Incorporated into the curriculum of **15** NYC DOE schools during the Spring 2020 school year
- Received **8430** views on YouTube and **477** engagements on Facebook
- Replaced EDU school contracts and DCA funded after-school programs: CASA

I watched several of the lessons and they are terrific. Thank you again for providing such wonderful access to our students.

-----Principal Denise Fuccillo, PS 214 Flushing

I have been using the programs all summer with my students and enhancing it with art from all these countries. It's been a Global Journey, and the parents and students love it!

-----Joyce Ruocco, PS4



Louis Armstrong Legacy Virtual Jazz Jam

- **FREE** monthly live virtual jam on FB Live and Zoom; open to amateur and professional musicians of ***all ages***.
- Led by Carol Sudhalter and 3 house band members, with remote technical support, administration and promotion by 5 FTH staff members.
- **Funded by the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation**, all participating musicians donate their performances.



Louis Armstrong Legacy Virtual Jazz Jam: screenshot of Participants Performing together.



Virtual Jazz Jam

Impact

- Reaches **local, national** and **international** musicians, with musicians from across NY, the US, as well as Italy, France, Germany, Trinidad, Australia and New Zealand.
- To-date **136** musicians have played on **9** virtual jazz jams (not including the house band members who play each month as well)
- Jazz Jam featured in **20** articles and **21** calendar listings since April
- Armstrong Foundation renewed their funding
- Averages about **800** per month on FaceBook (the FB live remains “evergreen”)

Global Arts for Global Kids with the Smithsonian

- **FREE 20-day** virtual program, exploring the Smithsonian's Year of Music collection & video archive, with topics including: Blues, Rock & Hip-Hop; Latin Music; Jazz: and Folk & Country
- **This program employed 6 FTH Staff** and was curated by FTH Director of Education & Public Programs; activity curriculum written and edited by FTH EDU staff.
- Special thanks to Jennifer Brundage, National Outreach Manager at Smithsonian.
- Program targeted students and families.



Screenshot of Global Kids with the Smithsonian Webpage and Sample Activity Worksheet

Day 2: Keyboard Owned by Ray Charles

John Hasse, PhD, Curator of American Music at the National Museum of American History, presents a Yamaha KX88 keyboard used by Ray Charles and discusses Ray's comments on playing the piano.



Check out this post-lesson activity about Music Sensitivity: <https://bit.ly/2MgAPb2>

FLUSHING TOWN HALL @ HOME
GLOBAL ARTS FOR GLOBAL KIDS WITH THE SMITHSONIAN

CHUCK BERRY: FATHER OF ROCK N' ROLL

The video below on the left you will see Chuck performing "Johnny B. Goode". Did you see Chuck duck walk near the end? The clip below on the right is from *Back to the Future* (Starting after 2:28). How was Marty's playing different than Chuck's? How was it similar?

Chuck Berry version
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=17086-4f8k>

Back to the Future version
https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=T_M65X9D9tE

Do you know?

- Chuck was famous for his style of dance, in particular for the duck walk. To do the duck walk, spread your feet slightly apart, bend down like you would for a squat. Now walk like that.
- "Johnny B. Goode" is considered such an important part of the history of music in the United States that it was among the pieces of music included in the Voyage 1 space probe as a possible introduction to the culture of Earth if an alien species ever found it.

*Contents of this worksheet are for educational purposes only.

Global Arts for Global Kids with the Smithsonian

Impact

- Reached **4243** audiences on Facebook upon the program concluded on July 10
- Jennifer Brundage and the Smithsonian staff were so impressed with program that they shared it on Digital Digest email list which goes to an additional **23,000** people; reaching a national audience



Community Art Exhibition

Call and Response: Grief, Resiliency, and Hope

- Outdoor community art exhibition located on the FTH fence, July to October 2020.
- **Amateur and professional artists created artwork to help them process the global pandemic and racial and social injustices.**
- Nine FTH staff members would print received art work, laminate, hang it, catalogue it, publish the artwork online. FTH also created and gave out **FREE art kits** for students.

Call and Response artworks on FTH fence



Call and Response

Impact

- Over **60** pieces of art and poetry were contributed.
- **67** free art kits were given away
- Program reached the U.K. and students from the ARC Centre in Stockton on Tees, UK, participated.
- The exhibition artwork was stolen on September 21st! But it was rehung on September 28th with copies of the originals and new work added.
- Exhibition will be **re-visited in February 2021**, in time for the Lunar New Year.

You've done the most awesome and empowering service to your community through the work you've been offering during closure.

Our team spent this afternoon fully immersed in your website, virtual tour, and online activity, and were hugely impressed and inspired.

----- Sonya Curle, ARC Centre, UK



#ArtsareEssential Campaign

- 4 EDU Staff and 6 FTH Master Teaching Artists joined in a city-wide effort to advocate for arts and cultural programs.
- **50**-part video series on Instagram and FB.
- Teaching Artists performed **1-minute** arts activities to demonstrate why arts are essential to them--- whether it is to process trauma, restore joy our build our resiliency.
- EDU staff wrote complementary activity worksheets.
- **Content** was in available in **English, Spanish, Mandarin** and **Korean**.



6 FTH Teaching Artists



Global Arts for Global Kids II

- *GAGK Series II* features **all new content with diverse art forms**: Indian dance yoga, Mexican folkloric dances & wardrobes, creating mini art museums, Jazz dance, shadow theater, dances of the Ivory Coast, world drumming in English & Spanish, fairy tales, Chinese dance & culture and toy theater.
- Students watch **5** pre-recorded videos on a new topic each week; and follow along with the accompanying activity worksheet.
- Program of **50** videos and activities is **FREE**; TA's fees paid by PPP and private funding.
- Content curated by FTH Director of Education & Public Programs; written & videotaped by **10** FTH Master Teaching Artists; activity worksheets developed, video edit & administered by EDU staff and TAs.

Global Arts for Global Kids II

Meet the Artist & Jam with the Artist Workshops:

- New enrichment series **for schools and families:** live 45-minute virtual workshop with teaching artists.
- Students can either “meet the artist” before learning with the pre-recorded content and/or “jam with the artist” after spending a week on the *GAGK* lessons.
- Each option is \$150 for 30 students.
- Lessons include strong cultural, emotional and social components and curriculum connections.
- Program is available by reservation at education@flushingtownhall.org, through reservations with the EDU staff.



Virtual Assemblies for schools & families:

- Virtual assemblies are 45 minutes of live & pre-recorded performances & demonstrations with FTH master teaching artists, followed by interactive Q&A.
- Available for classrooms, school groups or families .
- Supports NYS Common Core Learning Standards & Blueprint Benchmarks.
- Program is available by reservation at education@flushingtownhall.org
- Topics include: Local Native American Culture, Traditional Korean music & dance, Colombian Cumbia Roots, Shadow Theater of Family Stories, and more.



FTH at Home: Latin American Rhythms Night I & II

FTH at HOME: Latin American Rhythms Night I

Martin

Harold

Sebastian Cruz

Grupo Rebolu

Pablo

Gabrielle



Morris

Anna Mayor

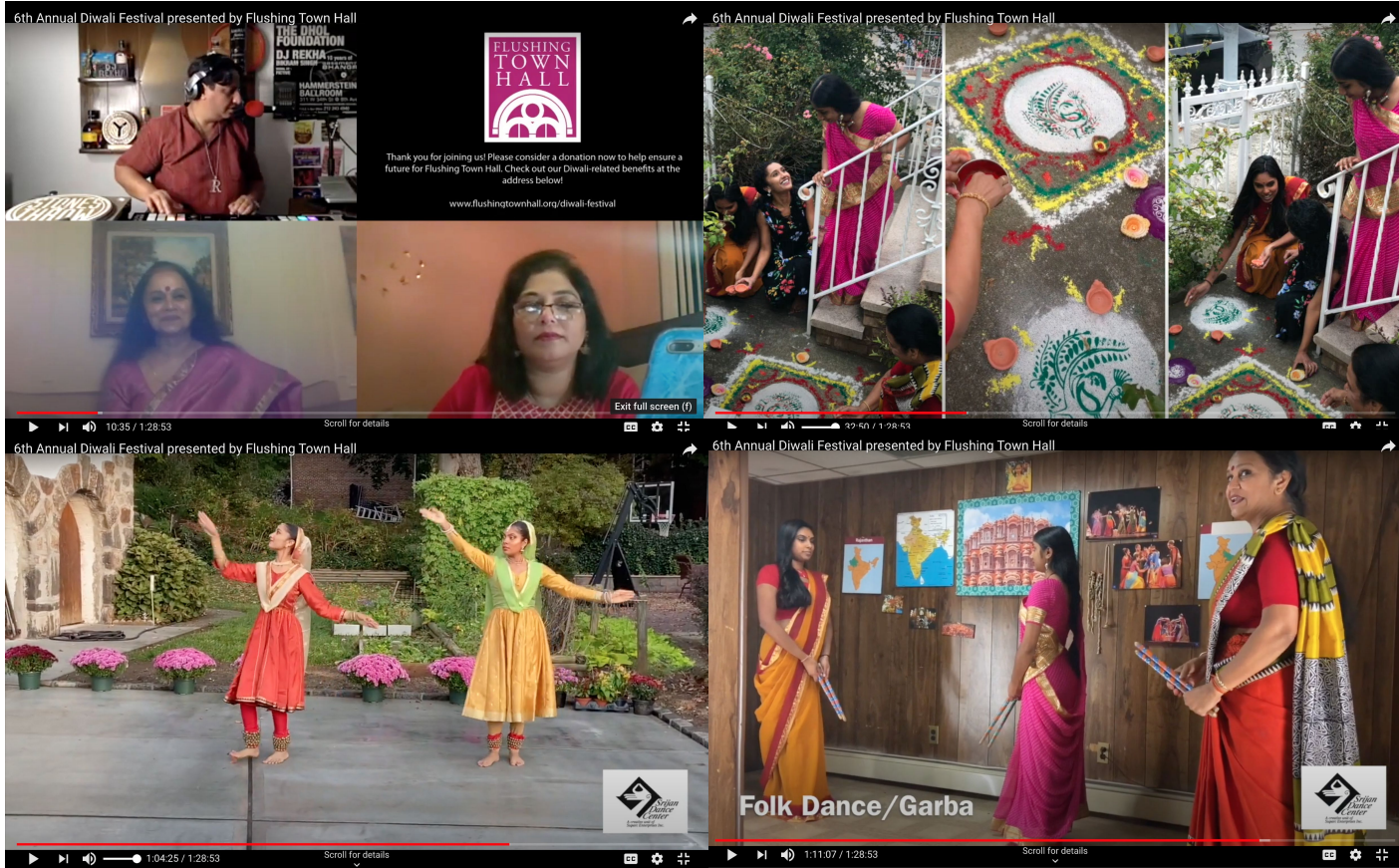
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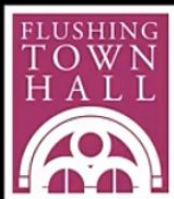
Scroll for details



FTH at Home: Virtual Diwali Festival



FTH at Home: Native Artist Spotlight Panel: Queens & Long Island



Tohanash Tarrant



Gabrielle Hamilton



Denise Silva-Dennis



Tecumseh ceaser



Jeremy Dennis



Lydia Chavez



FTH Arts Education Funding & Employment Impact During the Pandemic:

- Nearly all FTH DOE contracts were cancelled in Spring 2020.
- FTH relied on private donations, grants, and PPP loans to cover the costs of all free virtual arts education programming.
- To-date FTH has 1 paid program with a DOE school, funded by their PTA; typically FTH would have 30 school programs at this time of year.
- Most schools tell FTH EDU that they have no budget for the arts.
- Most of our master 30 Teaching Artists are unemployed or underemployed.

We Believe:



- Students of all ages need the arts to make sense of the world, especially in chaotic times.
- The arts help students develop creativity, celebrate diversity, interpret the human condition, and be their authentic selves.
- Arts Education helps build more resilient, inspired, and courageous communities.

Challenges, Creative Solutions, and Needs:

- We fully understand and acknowledge the momental crisis that the pandemic presents--- locally, nationally and internationally.
- We know that school budgets are uncertain, and as a result FTH EDU has seen nearly our arts partnerships eliminated.
- We believe the arts are essential in processing trauma, developing creativity, and building resilience in students.
- Flushing Town Hall Arts Education has developed creative programming for virtual learning, but our **school partners need funds to fully access all of our arts education programs.**
- No artwork, nor song, can change the past, but we believe **the arts can help us rebuild a resilient, inspired New York that our students can thrive in.**



TESTIMONY OF PUIYAN TAGLIANETTI,
VISITORS SERVICES & EDUCATION COORDINATOR
SNUG HARBOR CULTURAL CENTER & BOTANICAL GARDEN

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FY21
HEARING OF THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES &
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

***The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming
in New York City***

December 15, 2020

Good day Speaker Johnson, Chairperson Van Bramer and Members of the Committee. My name is Puiyan Taglianetti and I am the Visitor Services & Education Coordinator at Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden. Thank you for giving me your time today to learn about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Cultural Institutions Group – the CIGs -- and on Snug Harbor's programs and services. We are grateful to the New York City Council and the Mayor for recognizing the essential nature of the arts and culture sector to the resiliency and economic recovery of New York City.

Snug Harbor is a proud member of the CIGs – a coalition of 34 cultural organizations who share a public-private partnership with the City of New York and are located in all five boroughs. Since New York went on PAUSE in mid-March, the CIGs have provided essential programs and resources to advance and support public health, public life and public benefit. Despite the closure of our physical spaces, we renewed our commitment to our missions in service to the public—and in many ways expanded them—to meet the needs of the moment, while still providing a full suite of educational and cultural offerings.

As the Visitor Services & Education Coordinator at Snug Harbor, I am here today to testify to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on my organization – impacts that are shared by many across the arts and culture sector. My position supports volunteer and engagement programs, as well as school-based learning -- services that directly benefit the public health and

life of our communities. Snug Harbor's engagement and education programs support our three-pronged mission to advance the arts, horticulture and urban agriculture.

During this pandemic, Snug Harbor has continued providing life sciences education to public elementary, intermediate and high schools on Staten Island. Annually, we serve over 30,000 New York City students, more than 60% from Title I schools. We worked throughout the spring and summer with a Regional Enrichment Center, serving the children of front-line workers in a program that combined the arts with life sciences learning. Remotely and in person, we have guided pre-K through college students in hands-on, transformative learning experiences.

With support from the City Council through A Greener NYC, Snug Harbor engages emerging adults, including college and high school students, alternative learning students and young adults leaving the criminal justice system, in green education and workforce development opportunities. Work experiences include learning sustainable farming practice on our Heritage Farm, environmental and ecological immersion in our 10 acres of state-mapped wetlands, horticultural support across our 83-acre campus, and working with local partners to address community needs. Participants gain hard and soft skills while developing a peer community.

Although Snug Harbor's grounds have remained open throughout this pandemic, we had to pause in-person volunteer programs in the spring. Snug Harbor is a certified Points of Light service organization, thus this was a particularly painful decision that strained our capacity and connectivity. Instead, we created virtual opportunities, developing research and writing projects with Wagner College, City Access New York and the Department of Education's Work Learn Grow students. At the conclusion of these projects, college students will present to high schoolers for near-peer guidance on the skills necessary for academic success, and Snug Harbor will have the first draft of a Volunteer Management Handbook.

Following City and State guidelines, we welcomed our volunteers back to campus in September. Participants from the Department of Probation's Youth WRAP program, Lifestyles for the Disabled, City Access New York and New Ventures charter school worked side by side on environmental stewardship, life sciences education, team building and community asset-mapping, including looking at resource sharing, community development and social and

environmental advocacy. We launched the Snug Harbor Youth Volunteers initiative in partnership with City University's Powell School of Global & Civic Leadership, in which graduate students mentor local high school students in environmental stewardship.

Snug Harbor, the CIGs and the New York City cultural community know that our City is facing unprecedented financial challenges. We ask that you not overlook the critical role that our organizations play in the daily civic life of our communities in supporting public health, public life and public service. Partner with us, use us. We have the relationships. We can reach into our communities deeply, meaningfully, and engage our audiences to help New York City to reclaim its position as the cultural capital of the world and a magnet for 65 million annual visitors – and their wallets.

Thank you.



December 15, 2020

Good morning, everyone.

My name is Jerome Korman and I am the Music Director at National Dance Institute (also known as NDI), which is headquartered in Harlem. In 1976, ballet star Jacques d'Amboise founded NDI in the belief that the arts have a unique power to engage and motivate individuals towards excellence. Ever since, NDI has transformed the lives of more than 2 million children.

First let me say, in this time of crisis, NDI is here...standing with New York City...standing with our school partners...standing with our young dancers. Partnering with our schools has never been more complicated, but it has never been more necessary. Across the board, the principals of our schools have told us that the students need music and dance. They need education in—and access to—all the art forms...more than ever. Sadly, due to scheduling and school finances, NDI is not presently serving all of our usual 42 schools—which has significantly impacted our organization, our teaching artists and most importantly: the students.

Arts education is essential, ESSENTIAL! Dance is an important language on its own, but dance through NDI, always accompanied with live music (even in the Zoom paradigm) also supports the social and emotional well-being of our students. NDI has a role to play in the schools right now, and we are continuing our work through a lens that puts racial equity and social justice front and center through training, hard conversations and implementation. If 2020 has taught us anything it is that New York City needs to access it's heart and soul so we see each other as equal and catch those that fall through the cracks. The arts are the perfect vehicle to support this work. Whatever the city needs to do to help support arts education and keep the arts alive in our schools, now is the time to act! What will the consequences be if children do not have access to arts education during this time of crisis when the ability to express thoughts and emotions is more important than ever? If NYC allows the gap of inequity to widen so that only children of financial means have access to learning in and through the arts—and to the personal development, empathy, exuberance, emotional engagement and healing that only the arts can provide—what does this mean for our future as a city?

The students are doing their share! We must do ours. As our in-school program continues to roll out, the students are engaging in the most inspiring ways. NDI works mostly through Zoom and the students' cameras are on. Attendance is good. They are dancing in their bedrooms, in the kitchen, in front of their grandparents...everywhere. Our teaching artists, both dancers and musicians, have risen to the occasion. We continue to learn how to manipulate technology and



live with sometimes wonky connectivity. We pivoted to the digital realm almost immediately last March to be able to continue to deliver world class programming.

As Jacques said, "With limitations comes creativity." During the COVID-19 pandemic, NDI has continued its mission via creative online programming. We continue to serve our Celebration Team. The highly motivated public school dancers on the Celebration Team receive free training every Saturday. We launched ndiLIVE!, a platform of free online classes. We created an online learning hub for our In-School Program Partners and have offered online training through the NDI Collaborative. Additionally, we offer free dance classes for our DREAM dance program—which provides children with disabilities the opportunity to perform—via weekly live classes as well as through our free on-demand series DREAM Project@Home.

While most of our programs are free, we have lost tremendous revenue during this time and can't sustain future revenue cuts.

We believe arts organizations are essential to the fabric of New York City. Please fund the arts programs that our communities need to continue to thrive during this time and beyond. Thank you.

Submitted by:

Jerome Korman

Music Director

National Dance Institute

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**Testimony to the Committee on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Zo DeJesus & Nasfa Raisa, Discovery Guides
Wildlife Conservation Society
December 15, 2020**

Thank you Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Cultural Affairs Committee. Our names are Zo DeJesus & Nasfa Raisa and we are participants in the Wildlife Conservation Society's virtual Discovery Guide program.

As you know, WCS has the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks that include the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and Queens Zoo. With a combined collection of over 17,000 animals, our parks connect with more than 4 million visitors, including over 397,000 school children. We provide thousands of teachers and school administrators with the training and support needed to develop STEM learning opportunities for all of their students. In addition to the education and enrichment that our facilities provide, we also serve as a viable economic engine for the City. WCS employs over 4,000 employees across 60 countries, including more than 2,500 full, part-time & seasonal staff working in New York City. As one of the largest employers of youth in the Bronx and one of the largest youth development programs in the City, WCS employs and supports over 1,400 youth ages 14-24 in a myriad of opportunities that create life sustaining change in our surrounding communities.

WCS takes seriously its commitment to the neighborhoods it resides in. Our work with these communities has been holistic, addressing the full spectrum of needs for youth and young adults. Our educational programming is spread across multiple departments within the four boroughs, creating seismic shifts in our organizational culture and common best practices for youth. Prior to this pandemic, WCS has provided essential services through programming and partnerships that has positively impacted youth and families in underserved communities throughout the city. Through our *Community Access Program (CAP)*, we provide thousands of seniors, youth, individuals with special needs, and community based organizations with complimentary access to our parks. Additionally, our *Urban Advantage* program, now in its 17th year, would not have been possible without the continued partnership and support from the New York City Council. This unique partnership between the DOE and eight science-based cultural institutions -- which both the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium are a part of -- continue to reach tens of thousands of students and hundreds of teachers, resulting in positive impacts on science learning in middle schools across the City.

Since the start of the pandemic, WCS, along with our Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) colleagues have been providing support and resources to the greater cultural community. We have collaborated and shared our resources to, for example, organize data that encapsulates the social and economic impact of culture in the countless communities we serve, therefore, using that data to illustrate and advocate to the City, State & federal levels in order to ensure we can weather this storm and move forward. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, WCS and the CIGs



have been committed to contributing to the City and working hand in hand supporting New Yorkers as it relates to public life, public health, and public service.

Like many other cultural organizations, WCS was directed in mid-March by the City & State to close all of our parks (the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and Queens Zoo) because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also meant that in-person internships and volunteer positions needed to quickly adapt to the new virtual world.

These last 9 months have been incredibly stressful and challenging, with our world turned upside-down. As we are facing the uncertainty of what this city will look like in the future and the social inequities that many of us are being exposed to, the programs being offered like the Discovery Guide program, remain essential and relevant to nurturing and fostering leaders for generations to come. While our physical parks had been closed, culture never closed its offerings. Being a part of this program has provided a feeling of security and belonging in a time where most everything else has not felt safe or consistent. I have made good friends, laughed a lot, and found ways to channel my creativity and passion into teaching and inspiring others. If we weren't a part of this program, we are honestly not sure what else we would have done this summer. We just feel so lucky to have had something safe and meaningful to do. It is our hope that more youth in NYC can have similar opportunities.

Recognizing the emerging challenges we were facing as youth in NYC, WCS quickly developed a response that included free counseling services, weekly video chats and office hours with counselors. Additionally, WCS has shifted its newsletters sent to 3,000 youth to include information about parks during closure; online events and activities to further engage them; and COVID-19 information and resources related to our mental and physical health. The youth who receive this information all formerly either volunteered, worked or interned at WCS. Lastly, in response to feedback from youth about in-person programming, WCS pivoted all of our volunteer, internship, and skills training programs to virtual platforms, ensuring that safety is prioritized, while continuing to provide enriching opportunities for youth.

The Virtual Discovery Guide program has engaged more than 400 young people in dynamic and meaningful programming while also providing social and emotional support to NYC youth. One central part of the Summer 2020 Discovery Guides program was a collaborative project to create a series of Virtual Quests. Designed from the in-person Quest program in which zoo and aquarium visitors stop at a series of interactive stations, the Virtual Quest program is hosted on a website, and produced more than 350 unique digital assets such as games, activity sheets, and videos, which communicate conservation and science messaging in fun and creative ways. Youth helped create and manage these offerings, facilitating over 600,000 interactions.

We also participated in more than 16 skill-building workshops and 11 career webinars with WCS staff from around the world. Many of the more experienced Discovery Guides return after several seasons to become Discovery Guide Leaders and receive a stipend for their work and take on leadership roles.



We thank you for this opportunity to testify today, and for your leadership on behalf of the City of New York during this crisis.

City Council Hearing on Arts & Cultural Education - Testimony Alex Chadwell

In February of this year I was making music with over 200 kids a week in 3 different boroughs. On Mondays, we met at Lincoln Center as part of the New York Philharmonic's Very Young Composers program. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I took the 4 train and Bx35 bus to Highbridge Voices to spend 3 hours with 4th through 10th graders. On Wednesdays, I took the A train to Bed-Stuy to play guitar with 4th and 5th graders at P.S. 40. To end each week, I took the 1 train to Dyckman, walked toward the river where PS 5 sits on the banks to conduct a percussion orchestra. That all came to an abrupt halt on March 16th. Only one class continued online - my C4 (Composing and Creating Collaboratively Class) class at Highbridge Voices. I lost half of my weekly income - students were deprived of the few spaces that had been carved out in their days for intentional aesthetic experiences.

I now facilitate online arts education (it's possible! And meaningful!) for 2 hours a week. I approach the weekly music classes with 7th/8th and 9th/10th graders in Highbridge with the twofold goal of providing prolonged and consistent contact with musical and generative experiences so as not to let atrophy the skills already developed, and providing reliable respite from days overrun with anesthetic experiences (too much homework and screen time, anxiety and monotony of staying home, etc.) It should be noted that, though my roster has 15 - 20 students listed, most weeks only a handful are able to join. The organization has heard from many families that they lack the technology that would allow them to participate meaningfully. I implore you to earnestly address the oppressive virtual divide.

The budget cuts to arts and cultural education is .02% of the entire NYC budget. That .02% withholds arts education from hundreds of thousands of K - 12 students in NYC schools, the vast majority of those students being black, indigenous, and people of color. There is intention in my using the word "withhold" - it is active. When arts and cultural education programming is withheld, it is premeditated.

This is undoubtedly an unprecedented time of uncertainty, distress and anxiety. It is also a moment of opportunity; for students to deliberately use technology in order to master 21st century proficiencies, to stimulate the creative problem solving that is inherent in arts education, and to continue to instrumentalize arts education as a panacea to the anesthetic experiences of "competency-based" education. The potency of arts education has always been and continues to be in the collateral learning; the learning and development of essential skills along with equally essential social - emotional skills. Perhaps most significant, arts in education provides intentional space for students to make, allowing them to see themselves as artists and

creators. Artmaking provides individuals with tangible methods for realizing one's agency and changemaking potential. As bell hooks writes, "The function of art is to do more than tell it like it is-it's to imagine what is possible."

**Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
92nd Street Y
December 15, 2020**

Thank you to the New York City Council for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on behalf of arts education. **My name is Ava Lehrer, and I am Director of the Center for Arts Learning and Leadership at 92nd Street Y, a nonprofit cultural and community center located in Manhattan.**

92Y's Center for Arts Learning and Leadership (CALL) has used this unprecedented time to expand upon 92Y's mission of connecting students with limited exposure to arts education with exceptional artists and thinkers. Under "normal" circumstances, we serve 16,000 NYC public school students and teachers each year, connecting classrooms with celebrated writers, musicians, dancers and visual artists from around the world through dynamic school-based residencies, performances at our cultural center, and internship programs for youth pursuing careers in the creative industries. **Our school community typically spans 93% of NYC public school districts with 76% of partner schools in Title I status.**

Immediately in March upon announcement that the NYC DOE would be transitioning to remote learning, we began surveying principals about their needs and developing innovative ways to continue providing students at our many high-need partner schools with impactful arts learning. Our staff quickly trained our Teaching Artists in remote instruction and developed remote programming for schools.

The experience and fluency in online instruction that the CALL team gained in a very short time allowed us to develop the **Young Leaders Series—a model that takes the amazing work and presenters already central to 92Y's programming areas and brings them into the range of educational settings this moment requires, from virtual to hybrid.**

This school year, Young Leaders is connecting thousands of students and their teachers in grades 1-12 with leading figures in the arts and humanities in order to help students discover their own artistic and intellectual passions, identify resources to pursue those passions, and contribute to determining the future of their world. Through Young Leaders, students are engaging in dialogue and discussion on the issues that matter most to them—what it means to truly confront the history of racism in America; how young people can effect change in their own communities through engagement in local politics; how the arts can play a role in healing us as individuals and as a society. Students not only attend interactive virtual field trips with these leading figures but also participate in related workshops with 92Y Teaching Artists. 2020/21 featured presenters and topics include:

- Award-winning author/playwright **Zadie Smith** on life in quarantine
- Tap dance troupe **Dorrance Dance** on the legacy of rhythm dance and artmaking during the pandemic
- Six-time Grammy Award winner **Christian McBride** on jazz, a uniquely American art form
- New York Philharmonic clarinetist **Anthony McGill** on performing chamber music
- Poet **Claudia Rankine** on communicating across the racial divide in America
- Writer, professor, social commentator **Roxane Gay celebrating poet Audre Lorde**
- Cuban saxophonist and Grammy Award winner **Paquito D'Rivera** on Latin jazz
- Memoirist and social entrepreneur **Casey Gerald** on social inequality in America

- **Amanda Litman**, Executive Director of Run for Something, on the tools young people need to effect change at the local level
- World-renowned musician **Sharon Isbin** on classical guitar
- Musical ensemble **The Knights** on breaking down barriers between audience and performer

While we recognize the tremendous challenges faced by the City in FY21, my request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Cultural Affairs, or Department of Youth & Community Development.

At this time of unprecedented disruption in the lives of NYC youth and their school communities, our programs have served as the pillars of our partnering teachers' curricula during a semester unlike any other. The Young Leaders Series has inspired students to continue logging on for school and to feel hopeful about the possibilities for the future—and their role in determining what that future will look like. As a student who participated in the virtual "field trip" with political activist and organizer Amanda Litman shared with us: "Because of this event, I have never been more sure that politics or a political career is one that I want to pursue."

Deep budget cuts to the Department of Education, Department of Cultural Affairs, and Department of Youth & Community Development would be disastrous for arts education, the cultural community that is part of this city's fabric and a key driver of its economy, and most of all to the young people whose lives are already painfully disrupted by the current crisis.

We thank you for the support you have already provided, and we urge you to continue to support NYC's cultural community and its youth. **We also urge you to provide flexibility with funding as cultural organizations like 92nd Street Y adapt to the needs of each school, including flexibility with CASA funds that are so crucial to sustaining our school communities.**

Sincerely,



Ava Lehrer
Director, Center for Arts Learning and Leadership
92nd Street Y

Brooklyn Conservatory of Music

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

December 15, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Dorothy Savitch and I work at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music (BKCM) in Park Slope.

The Brooklyn Conservatory of Music aims to transform lives and build community through the expressive, educational, and therapeutic powers of music. Since our founding 123 years ago, BKCM has grown from a formal music conservatory into an educational and cultural hub for New York City. We believe that all individuals, regardless of age, skill level, or financial means should have access to high-quality music experiences and their wide array of developmental, emotional, psychological, and social benefits. Before the start of the pandemic, BKCM provided music education and music therapy to over 7,000 New Yorkers, with programs taking place onsite at our home in Park Slope, Brooklyn and offsite at public schools, social service centers, and community organizations across all five boroughs of NYC.

BKCM has been at the forefront of delivering innovative music education, music therapy, and social change-focused programs that respond to the evolving needs of our community. When New York City public school budgets reduced arts funding in the 1980s, we stepped in to fill the void by creating Music Partners, our flagship in-school program that brings music, community, and joy to New York City public school students.

As schools increasingly requested music classes for special needs students, we recognized the unique opportunities inherent to serving this population and created our renowned Music Therapy program in 2003. This program has become a valuable resource for parents of special needs individuals across the City and a training ground for innovative music therapists as well as for students with developmental delays, autism spectrum disorders, and trauma- or poverty-related stresses. Both programs grow out of the strength and expertise of our preeminent onsite Community Music School and Suzuki programs.

As with so many of our peer organizations, the ongoing crisis around COVID-19 has placed considerable stress on BKCM's operations. Though we have found innovative ways to engage with our community remotely, gradually reaching more and more of our students and clients over the course of the last nine months, there are still substantial parts of our constituency that we have not been able to serve on a remote basis. The reality is that the bulk of these constituents

are young people at our partner schools and community organizations that have been hardest hit by the pandemic and don't have access to music education or music therapy without our programs. The pandemic has shed new light not only on how critical arts and cultural programming are to the well-being of our communities but also on the deep and pervasive inequities that prevent this programming from reaching those who lack access.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to restoring New York City's vibrancy. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to do what we do best: provide opportunities for creative engagement, expression, and growth, and promote the well-being of New Yorkers of all ages.

In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for the arts education programming that is so essential to the cultural fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their futures. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards creative engagement as an integral part of our communities, cultures, and lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster growth, wellness, and resilience should be the last cut, not the first.

Please remember that, through the work of our partner schools and organizations, countless youth across New York City discover a passion for music, theatre, visual art, dance, writing, and media arts, and build important life skills they carry with them for the rest of their lives. These young people represent the future of our city's cultural and economic vitality. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Savitch
Music Partners Director

Written Testimony of the Impact of COVID-19 on Arts and Cultural Education Programs in NYC
Submitted by Laura Gravino
Director of Education, Bloomingdale School of Music
The City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs
December 15, 2020

Good afternoon and thank you for providing this opportunity to present Bloomingdale School of Music's impact of COVID-19.

My name is Laura Gravino and I am the Director of Education at Bloomingdale School of Music, located by the Columbia University Campus, serving the Upper West Side community since 1964. We serve students ages 8 weeks to 80 years old, reaching well over 1000 constituents on an annual basis through music opportunities, and last year we awarded \$236,000 in financial aid and scholarships.

In March 2020 we made the decision that we would follow the DOE's lead and close our physical doors. We quickly focused on our faculty members to find out if they were ready and able to teach online. Many of them, who'd lost other income through performance work, stepped up to use their own equipment to teach lessons. We reached out to our students to confirm that they would continue lessons and classes with us. We shifted our partnership work to online platforms to keep continuity for students both in school and adults in retirement. We were able to retain 88% of our student population in Spring 2020 and 62% for Fall 2020.

The work that went into transitioning to online learning was difficult but it was important to keep a sense of normalcy for our community at large.

We have worked to only support our students during this time, but also our faculty, talented teaching artists that have lost so much of their income due to deep cuts in the arts and culture sector at large. Our commitment at Bloomingdale was to retain all our faculty with as close to their normal work load as possible, while acknowledging that some students may not want to continue their lessons online. We created opportunities for faculty to teach new classes for the summer session as well as the fall session in hopes of making up for any loss of personal income. We were able to offer over twenty new classes for our community, assure ensembles the chance to continue working together with peers and provide performance opportunities through online platforms and recorded video options.

COVID-19 has meant that we cannot meet in person, but has challenged us to rethink the work we do, make accommodations to continue the work and still deliver the same quality product to all of our constituents. This is not an easy task, it's hard to match the energy of an in person lesson, it is hard to keep students engaged through a screen and for many of our faculty it is nearly impossible for students to have the same experience online as they do in person, particularly for those who are beginners at their instruments. Our faculty have not been provided with new equipment such as USB microphones or high quality webcams as we cannot afford to supply them with these. All are using their own personal devices at their own expense, where a

device used to last about three years, it may only have a life span of one year because of daily use.

The Arts and Cultural Education sector is facing unprecedented challenges, and Bloomingdale is no exception. The COVID-19 health crisis has forced numerous cancellations, but has made clear the extent to which organizations like Bloomingdale School are an essential part of our community, but we are not receiving enough support from the city to sustain them in the medium or long term.

We need your support by advocating for the necessity of arts education during this pandemic. We need your support by providing our school leaders with the resources to continue working with arts partners.

We need your support by restoring all of the arts education funding that has been cut.

Support for organizations like ours in this trying time can help ensure that we continue to provide high level music education to our community, no matter the personal economic situation of our students. The arts and arts education community needs you right now, so we can be there for you in the years to come.



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Testimony

To

The Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
New York City Council
December 15, 2020

Submitted by David Shookhoff, Director of Education, Manhattan Theatre Club

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Founded in 1989, Manhattan Theatre Club Education was the first education program created by a major New York City theatre company. Since then, we have been providing an array of programs and learning experiences to high school students in all five boroughs, connecting them with the power of live professional theatre as a means of deepening their knowledge and understanding of themselves and the world. We awaken minds, ignite imaginations, open hearts, and change lives. From the earliest days we focused in particular on students in alternative schools and settings, including detained and incarcerated youth on Rikers Island, at Passages Academy, and in other youth detention centers.

In almost all cases our programs are built around informed encounters with the work on our stages, on and off Broadway; students attend these plays after extensive classroom preparation by our teaching artists and partner teachers. Since MTC produces primarily new plays, challenging works by today's leading writers – Tarell Alvin McCraney, John Patrick Shanley, Lyn Nottage, August Wilson, Qui Nguyen, Nick Payne, and a host of others – are in effect the living texts with which our students engage. We help them connect deeply and personally with these works, suggesting how the plays on our stages illuminate their lived experience. In our playwriting residencies, the plays students see serve as the springboard and inspiration for original plays they write and then see performed by professional actors for an audience of their families and peers.

When our stages went dark and the city's schools closed last March, MTC Education pivoted to remote service provision. We launched a Student Monologue Challenge, inviting students to submit one-minute monologues on the prompt, "There's Something I Need to Say to You..." We received more than 350 submissions, from which we published a selection on our web site every Saturday, and then chose ten to be performed on video by established professional actors like Taylor Trench, Jordan Boatman, and Gaten Matarazzo. Stargate Theatre – our summer theatre company that hires young men with a history of involvement with the justice system to write, rehearse, and perform an original theatre piece in our black box theatre – became a digital program, culminating in an original videoplay, *The Divide*, that received more than 15,000 views. Similarly, we moved *Write Now!*, our after-school playwriting program, to Zoom and produced virtual performances by professional actors of the completed efforts of the student participants. We created an online Family Drama Playwriting Workshop Series, a series of 14 short videos on

different aspects of the playwriting process intended for students, families, and teachers. We also launched Theatre Thursdays, 90-minute one-off drop-in workshops on topics like improvisation, monologue writing, auditioning, and movement and choreography.

This fall, we moved all our school partnerships to a remote format. Our teaching artists now visit the classrooms virtually and in lieu of matinees, we have built our work around archived videos of past MTC productions like Tarell Alvin McCraney's *Choir Boy*, August Wilson's *Jitney*, and Nick Payne's *Constellations*. To be sure, we have encountered logistical and technological challenges, among them scheduling artist visits as the schools move from hybrid to all-remote attendance and uncertain or non-existent internet access for significant numbers of students, especially those in under resourced communities or in detention centers. I'm pleased to report that we're learning as we go, working out the kinks, and have already completed several successful residencies. Teachers and students thus far have used words like "exciting," "inspiring," and "fabulous" in their evaluations of our partnerships. One student reported, "I feel as if the assignments [from the teaching artist] pushed me to dig deeper to find the true meaning or message and make connections to real life situations." At the conclusion of a recent playwriting residency, one participant stated, "I'd never written a play before; I didn't think I could do it; now I can't wait to write another."

In addition to our current and anticipated school-based work, we have and will continue to conduct online professional development workshops for teachers. We are also developing strategies with the alternative school superintendency (District 79) to reach students in cohorts of schools and programs experiencing significantly reduced attendance. The idea is to provide short and long-term learning opportunities to, for example, aggregations of students enrolled in high school equivalency programs from all over the city, thereby assuring a critical mass of learners in our residencies from schools that individually are experiencing only 20% attendance rates.

In sum, working with our school partners, we are adapting to the new realities and challenges and I'm cautiously optimistic that we will be able to continue bringing rich and robust theatre learning experiences to the city's youth throughout the year. That said, formidable short and long-term obstacles remain, including the persistent digital divide mentioned above and the prospect of severe cuts to school budgets, which will impair our partners' ability to meet even the modest, highly subsidized fees we charge. For our part, we have reduced our rates this year in order to help our partner schools deal with the unprecedented challenges they are facing. I urge the City Council to do whatever it can to ensure equitable access for all students to arts education and that funds for arts education and cultural partnerships are not affected disproportionately by whatever belt-tightening measures the City adopts in the face of a looming economic crisis.

Thank you.



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American Airlines Theatre • Stephen Sondheim Theatre • Studio 54 • Black Box Theatre and Laura Pels Theatre at the Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre

Monday, December 14, 2020

Re: Impact of COVID-19 on Arts and Cultural Education Programs in NYC: Bringing Arts & Culture to New York City Public School and Enriching the Lives of Students

To: NYC City Council's Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations,

Honored Committee Members of the New York City Council,

My name is Mitch Mattson, I'm the Director of Career Training for Roundabout Theatre Company, a nonprofit organization that spotlights classic plays and musicals from the past, cultivates new works of the present, and educates minds for the future.

On behalf of our leadership, staff, and the theatre communities we serve, it is an honor to address you today. This year, Education at Roundabout is investing \$2.5 million in arts education services in NYC public schools and communities. Over 85% of that funding comes from the private sector. In partnership with the NYC DOE, our initiatives serve over 10,000 students and educators across the five boroughs each year. We are proud to be making such bold investments in our City.

This investment in student access to arts programming has not stopped because of Covid19. Roundabout believes in the importance and value of direct arts services even while our theatres are closed. In the spring of 2020, we continued remote arts programming with schools. In the summer of 2020, we facilitated our Roundabout Youth Ensemble programming, a free, eight-week, high school theatre program that provides students with creative outlets and leadership opportunities. And when our theaters closed in March, we worked with the artist unions to provide streaming opportunities for classrooms to view our productions. Last year's programs encouraged over 3,250 students to take ownership of their learning and give them pathways for success in their early careers. And this year we are set to do even more remote engagement with students and teachers.

With our CASA grants, middle and high school students are receiving individualized, hands-on support from Roundabout's professional Teaching Artists in the form of synchronous arts mentorship sessions and workshops. Students are attending virtual productions and readings, and each CASA program will culminate in a virtual event for the school and surrounding community. Thank you for your continued support of the CASA programming.

Additionally, the trickle-down of financial uncertainty has meant that some school administrators have not continued arts programming support. We understand that the city and schools are in crisis; however, we can help. With continued and expanded partnerships schools and arts



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organizations can work together to find creative solutions to help communities. Without arts and culture, students will take that much longer to recover from this traumatic time. The arts have been shown by research to aid in mental health and social emotional outcomes (Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision Making, Relationship Skills). This work is essential.

We kindly request your support in the following ways:

OUR SCHOOLS SHOULD...

- Underline the social emotional learning benefits of arts programming for students and make arts programming a priority in school communities.
- Provide access to arts opportunities for curricular support, creative expression, and communal growth for students and teachers.

OUR DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHOULD...

- Articulate that the arts are an essential part of each student's education and encourage school leaders to direct resources to partnerships with schools.
- Hire more arts certified teachers across the school system, as there are fewer than 225 certified theatre teachers serving the 1,800 NYC public schools.

OUR CITY COUNCIL SHOULD...

- Increase financial support for arts programs to the DOE.
- Continue support of CASA and career training workforce programs.

In closing, we ask that the Council continue to offer financial support for arts programs which provides much needed and state mandated access to arts education for students. This support should be to support schools and cultural organizations that provide direct services to students and teachers. I would be happy to speak with you further and answer any questions.

Thank you for all your work during these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

Mitch Mattson

Director of Career Training

mitchm@roundabouttheatre.org

NEW 42

Making extraordinary performing arts a vital part of everyone's life from the earliest years onward

229 W 42nd Street, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10036
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The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City.

Testimony from Courtney J. Boddie
Vice President, Education & School Engagement
New 42/New Victory Theater

I am Courtney J. Boddie, Vice President, Education & School Engagement at the New 42/New Victory Theater, where we are committed to making extraordinary performing arts a vital part of everyone's life from the earliest years onward.

In a regular season, New Victory partners with more than 200 NYC schools, social service agencies and partner institutions to engage and inspire 40,000 students in grades Pre-K — 12 with live, international productions on our stage. We are the largest provider of live performing arts in New York City, serving over 200 schools and after schools, and 40,000 students year round.

Since March 16, 2020, the New Victory provided weekly virtual content for educators and parents to engage in the performing arts for the rest of the 2019-20 school year. In the 2020-21 school year, the New Victory Education Program has transformed to be completely virtual and is built to be as flexible as possible for any learning model.

For a majority of our public school partners, New Victory Education will be the only performing arts programming they receive this year. *"We think that the Virtual Partnership program can help us fill a void left by the pandemic and budget cuts. Our school has a motto: family, equity & joy. We try to infuse our curriculum with joy because we wish for our students to see learning as something to which to look forward. Sometimes the arts are one of the first things to go but we have made an effort to keep art in our curriculum because we believe our students should have access to the arts no matter what budget cuts we experience."* - Lorena Sjogren, PS 595, Bronx.

Lorena is representative of the Arts Champions we partner with in the schools. The teachers we work with are under a world of pressure, stress and anxiety, but they show up every day for their students and the New Victory is determined to do whatever we can through our programming to support our partner teachers by offering asynchronous and live virtual engagement with our New Victory Teaching Artists to work directly with their students. In addition, we hold ongoing Community Conversations and Professional Learning Labs for teachers to be inspired, develop new arts-based teaching skills and peer-networking for much needed curricula support and strategies.

New Victory has also made a commitment to view its work with young people through the lens of racial and social justice. Education staff and New Victory Teaching Artists are meeting regularly to work on embedding anti-racism practices into our work, and have identified New Victory's team-teaching model as a way for Teaching Artists to be not only co-facilitators, but also co-conspirators and engaged witnesses in the classroom in order to best take care of the students we serve. The performing arts creates an open space for young people to explore the world, express their thoughts and feelings through radical healing, despite, or because of, racial trauma and social toxicity, striving towards joy, liberation and hope. New Victory Teaching Artists are prepared to listen, support and be present for whatever arises.

New 42 recently partnered with research firm WolfBrown on a five-year longitudinal research study on the intrinsic impacts of the performing arts on children. New 42 identified several under-resourced, arts-deprived schools and established a multi-year residency program—New Victory SPARK (Schools with the Performing Arts Reach Kids)—at each site, thereby creating a community where impact data is directly linked to New Victory arts engagement. The data demonstrates the following major findings:

- 1) Over half (55%) of SPARK students imagined an optimistic future for themselves (graduation, jobs, etc.), compared to only a third of their peers (34%).
- 2) 95% of SPARK students reported they could collaborate with two or more of their peers, compared to only 78% of students who were not in SPARK.
- 3) A sample of SPARK students showed a statistically significant increase in their ability to empathize and understand the lives of others, unlike students not in SPARK.

The data clearly indicates that participating in the performing arts provides young people a myriad of benefits. Unfortunately, COVID-19 is causing deep reductions in arts programs at many NYC public schools. New Victory Education is committed to meeting the need schools have for robust arts education programming, and to ensuring that every student is able to experience the joy of live performance and engagement.

We know the City is facing extraordinarily difficult budget choices, which have led to a drastic cut in arts education funding. We heard from our long-time partner schools that they want and need the New Victory Education program in their schools this year, but for the first time ever, they simply couldn't afford the very modest cost. For this reason, (and despite the organization's significant loss of revenue), New 42 has made the New Victory Education program completely free to New York City public schools this year.

New 42's own budget reductions due to the pandemic have meant that there is a 40% decrease in payroll for its Teaching Artist staff. This unfortunate situation contributes to the overall income loss for our Teaching Artists, who work most closely with our various communities, as most have also lost income from other arts-related work. Teaching Artists across the City are reeling from income loss during this difficult time. [NYC's 4,500 Teaching Artists Have Been Hit Hard By Pandemic Cuts](#)

The New York City Council has a crucial role in working toward equity for ALL New Yorkers and the cultural arts sector are your partners in this responsibility. Work with us to serve all New York City students who deserve everything we can provide.

Thank you to the New York City Council *Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations* for your support providing time and space for testimonies on this important topic.

Thank you,



Courtney J. Boddie



Where creative learning
meets community change

HOOK ARTS MEDIA TESTIMONY TO THE NYC COUNCIL HEARING
Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Relations: [The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City](#)

December 15, 2020

My name is Maria Soriano, the Director of Education at Hook Arts Media, a nonprofit arts and education organization based in Red Hook, Brooklyn.

For more than 25 years, we have worked with NYC educators to reform an educational system that has largely failed many BIPOC students. We have helped open three public high schools, designing culturally responsive arts programs that increase student engagement and introduce students to pathways to higher education and career planning.

In mid-March, when the City was put on PAUSE, we transitioned to virtual programming and reconfigured our arts education programs accordingly. We developed new online teaching modalities, delivered equipment to students, and partnered with schools to structure our programs within their new virtual school days.

We are grateful to the Arts in Education Roundtable and the Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation for offering valuable resources on Google Classrooms and trauma informed teaching respectively; these and other sessions we offered informed our professional development sessions to ensure that our teachers mastered the technology and trauma-informed teaching skills to best facilitate our students' educational experiences.

We continued to hold our after school and summer filmmaking programs, which pay students minimum wage stipends while they master the pre-professional filmmaking skills necessary to enter the film and entertainment industry. Despite the challenges, our students still managed to collaborate on and create their own original films, many of which were focused on the intersectional crises in which we're still actively embroiled, specifically: police brutality, the growing population of the under-housed, and systemic violence against BIPOC LGBT+.

Despite the important role arts, culture, and education play in NYC's economy, many of us who continue to work in this industry throughout the pandemic do so under threat of shrinking resources that put our jobs and ability to support the very same young people for whom we've already sacrificed greater economic opportunity at risk. Nonetheless, the NYC arts and education community does this work because we understand how vital it is to decolonizing opportunities that so often evade youth at the margins of our society. We do it because we get to see young people seize upon inspiration, follow their dreams, and redefine their futures.

The data speaks for itself.

"... youth of low socioeconomic status with a history of high arts engagement had better grades and higher college enrollment and attainment rates than youth without such involvement. In addition, the NEA found that high school students who had in-depth arts engagement:

- Had higher GPAs than students with low levels of arts engagement;
- Enrolled at higher rates in competitive and four-year colleges than low-arts-engaged students; and
- Were three times more likely than their arts poor peers to earn a bachelor's degree"

- Stringer, Scott. "State of the Arts: A Plan to Boost Arts Education in New York City Schools." Office of the New York City Comptroller. April, 2014.

- Catterall, James S. et al. "The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies." National Endowment for the Arts. March, 2012.

Though students are struggling to engage in online classes, those that do come regularly are finding creative outlets for their emotions, and a sense of community with their peers and teaching artist. The socio-emotional engagement and artistic expression is so needed at this time of intense isolation for many students. Please see this video made by one of our film students, Alfred Edwards, to advocate for funding for arts programs that have changed his life.

<https://vimeo.com/430159868/e0983e4ab1>

One new model we are piloting this year as school budgets for arts education have been slashed, is to offer afterschool internship classes in the arts through which students can receive Learning to Work pay. We are opening classes to multiple high schools which helps spread the cost of the program and reduces the per student fee.

We're all learning to adapt to these new challenges, but some of the current shifts in policy and funding threaten to further marginalize the students who've already endured inadequate educational experiences. Now is the time to invest in the ever-changing needs of the next generation of community members and the cultural sector that offers the transformative arts programming that supports their growth as actively engaged, creative, and forward-thinking leaders.

Thank you.

Maria Soriano
Education Director
Hook Arts Media
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Where creative learning
meets community change

Martha Bowers
Executive Director
Hook Arts Media
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Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts
New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs
Oversight Hearing on the Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Education Programming in NYC
December 15, 2020

Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee,

My name is Siri Horvitz, and I am the Director of Government and Community Relations at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, a member of the City's Cultural Institutions Group. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, CIGs have been committed to contributing to the City and to New Yorkers by supporting public life, public health, and public service.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss how the pandemic has impacted efforts of cultural organizations like Lincoln Center to bring arts education to children across New York City.

Education has always been a core commitment of Lincoln Center. We believe access to arts education is key to all learning, helping to build skills vital to success such as creativity, communication, critical thinking, and empathy. And, crucially, the arts help children process difficult emotions—something vital during the period of isolation and loss that our city's children are currently going through. These individual benefits lead to community ones, too. According to Americans for the Arts, low-income students who are highly engaged with the arts are five times less likely than their peers to drop out of school, and twice as likely to graduate from high school. The benefits to students also expand to the communities in which they live: participating in arts education programming reduces crime rates by an average of 4-5%.

Prior to the pandemic, Lincoln Center built a reputation as an arts education leader, based on enabling young people to access art, whether onstage, in the classroom, or in the community. Our school partnerships engaged approximately 10,000 students annually across the five boroughs, and our community engagement programs enabled meaningful access to the arts for thousands more. When schools closed in March, some of these connections were able to continue virtually, but many of them, due to capacity, broadband, and other barriers, ended abruptly, requiring Lincoln Center to explore other ways to ensure continued access to the arts.

The dual suspension of in-person education and performing arts programming due to COVID-19 led Lincoln Center to create a virtual platform, *Lincoln Center at Home* (<http://lincolncenter.org/lincoln-center-at-home>), to share high quality performing arts and arts education with all New Yorkers. This free, one-stop digital space features two series programmed specifically for young people, to make sure that children and young adults are able to not only enjoy performances, but also have access to arts education and express their creativity during the pandemic. The first, *Pop-up Classroom*, features Lincoln Center teaching artists leading interactive 30-minute arts lessons on topics ranging from puppet design to singing opera to interpretive dance. The second, *#ConcertsforKids*, complements the more instructional *Classroom* by providing a specially recorded, 30-minute concert by professional musicians representing a wide range of disciplines and cultural backgrounds.

The early phases of *Lincoln Center at Home* taught us many lessons about digital-only programming. After initially trying to recreate in-person programs as closely as possible for access via online platforms,

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which yielded mixed results, Lincoln Center began to fully redesign programs and workshops with digital in mind, which has resulted in stronger, more impactful work.

The reshaping of two of our highest-impact education programs demonstrates our success designing digital programming. *Middle School Arts Audition Camp*, a two-week intensive in partnership with the Department of Education (DOE) that prepares middle schoolers from Title I schools to audition for the city's prestigious performing arts high schools, became a virtual summer camp for almost 200 students, featuring more than 800 coaching sessions and 50 group learning sessions. *Activate*, our professional development conference for teachers and arts professionals, pivoted to supporting teachers during their transition to remote learning. Topics, including "Accessibility in the Digital Space" and "Effectively Engaging Students Online," were designed to provide a safe space for teachers to test and optimize their skills going into the new academic year.

Harnessing online technology has enabled Lincoln Center to engage children and educators on a scale that was impossible with its in-person arts education work. That said, the scalability of digital arts programs isn't just a tool for growth: it also allows us to better serve New York City by lowering the barriers to access experienced by residents of the outer boroughs, for whom distance created one barrier to attending performances in-person at Lincoln Center prior to the pandemic. In places like Richmond County and the Rockaways, coming to a show at Lincoln Center means taking a bus or a train for upwards of 90 minutes each way, travel time nearly equal to the length of the performance itself—that's taxing, whether you are 8 years old or 80. Being able to watch a concert celebrating Beethoven's birthday or click into an arts education workshop from your couch makes world-class art within reach for many more New Yorkers, and can inspire them to seek out the classes, performances, and artistic communities that already exist in their neighborhoods.

We're thinking about how the lessons learned during this difficult period can shape our work moving forward. Digital programming has shown enough potential in increasing reach and lowering barriers to entry that it will continue to be a component of our work in the arts education sphere going forward, alongside in-person work when it can safely resume.

While digital programming presents opportunities for arts and cultural organizations to continue to ensure that the City's students benefit from access to arts education, it is imperative to recognize that many of these students are impeded by inequitable access to the tools they need for online learning. Far too many of our City's students lack proper technology and access to reliable and low-cost or free broadband. When the pandemic began, many New York public school students didn't have the technology they needed to participate in remote learning; while the DOE has worked hard to get devices to those who need them, there are still many who need help. I urge you to continue pushing to ensure that every student has the technology they need to access their education.

In addition to hardware access problems, hundreds of thousands of students have no ability to access the internet at home. According to the Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, approximately

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500,000 households in New York City lack internet access. This is a significant equity issue, both in our current digital-only moment and going forward, as technology becomes more and more vital to the learning process. We ask that the Council continue to advocate for an expansion of broadband access in New York City, including by joining your state counterparts advocating for Governor Cuomo to sign the Comprehensive Broadband Connectivity Act, which passed almost unanimously through the Assembly and Senate earlier this year.

It is also important that the DOE does all it can to support educators and provide guidance to schools and education-involved non-profits alike. One of our biggest challenges in continuing our existing school partnerships virtually during the 2019-20 academic year and working with students this summer and fall have been that teachers and administrators have almost no capacity to plan and build arts education into their practice. Speaking to educators during our *Activate* series, we heard from many who were struggling to plan out their lessons and engage their students, let alone incorporate arts education into their curricula. As a result, we've begun to design our programming to be usable by anyone—teachers, students, or parents—to respond to that lack of bandwidth. We've also experienced our own planning difficulties: designing an effective arts audition camp was harder this year because there was no public plan for performing arts high school auditions, and as of now, there is still no clarity on that process. The pandemic has made it extremely difficult to work with schools on arts education, so we have had to adapt to account for that.

COVID-19 has impacted Lincoln Center, like the rest of New York City, in unprecedented ways. For our educational work, it has required us to build our capacity to meaningfully engage with students and teachers using digital technology. This has been challenging but it has also been rewarding, in that the pandemic has helped us to understand the virtues of online arts education and consider how it can become a permanent part of our portfolio. Lincoln Center has been committed to arts education for more than 60 years and will continue to serve as a leader in the field, whether through in-person or digital programming. To support our efforts, we ask you to continue to do everything you can to ensure all New Yorkers can access resources like ours and those of our peers, by ensuring broadened access to broadband and technology, and advocating for arts education's role in public school curricula.

Thank you again for your continued leadership during this crisis and for your support of New York City's young people.

Respectfully submitted,

Siri Horvitz
Director, Government Relations
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Hello Commissioner Casals, Majority Leader Cunbo and Chair Van Bramer,

I was honored to be amongst the panelists during Wednesday's hearing but had to leave for family reasons. I am continuing my testimony here, written for you and the City Council to consider.

My name is Melissa Riker, I am artistic director and choreographer of Kinesis Project dance theatre, a large scale outdoor dance company based in NYC. Our home office is in District 10 with Ydanis Roderiguez and our rehearsal studio is in District 2 with Carolina Rivera.

I would like to thank the City Council for unanimously passing the Open Culture bills put forth by Chair Van Bramer and Majority Leader Cumbo. These bills will help arts workers and arts organizations create an immediate future.

The issue I am here to acknowledge goes much deeper than if people can perform and teach more than a year after the city went on Pause and 9 months after most of the city re-opened.

As an artist in residence at Nord Anglia International School on 2nd Street, I have choreographed the musicals, taught dance classes but also led my students through creative problem solving. For instance: in a special STEAM day that was school-wide, I built a class around gestures and communication. Later in the day, they used these new skills building robotics and in conversations about self-driving cars.

Dance, communication and clarity were the first steps used to understand the humanity behind the science.

As we discuss impact - please note BOTH populations these choices are often talked about as "resilient" -- Children are so resilient, artists are creative and resilient.... YES. Yet BOTH of these populations have now been traumatized. *Please consider the individual when you think of the sector and its teachers: dance, choreography, movement does not exist without the people.*

Consider the life of a dancer in NYC. This person has likely trained in an art form their whole life, or if discovering the form later (in their teens) has dug in and rose to the occasion to train vigorously to match the skills of those around them. This same individual comes to NYC because it is the capital of Dance in the USA; struggles to find paying work as a dancer, but manages, and if this individual is truly talented, and can both perform and teach - may be able to find work teaching with The New Vic, Lincoln Center, or with any number of small dance companies that are beneficiaries of CASA granting.

This dancer is then in rehearsal 4 hours 5 days a week, teaching 4 times a week and more than likely taking on yet another job in order to meet the demands of NYC rent.

Perhaps their other job was bartending? Then as of March 15, 2020 every single way this determined, creative, talented person has made their living shut down.

Maybe the bar reopened over the summer - but that was a part time job, not the reason they are here.

The reason they were here was DANCE and TEACHING DANCE; Here we are in December, and dance is still shut down; while we are seen as part of the Arts and Culture that will rescue NYC, we have not been considered in how we as artists, teachers and makers will survive until we are asked to rescue everyone else by inspiring them.

Serving people drinks improves the moment, teaching dance changes children, for the better, forever.

Please consider

1. Supporting the individual artist and dance companies that serve this city through CASA by stabilizing the Arts Budgets of the schools we interface with.
2. Push the state to accept the Dance/NYC Field wide ReOpening Dance NYC Guidelines so dance artists and workers have a way to serve children, and the diverse training, and creative release our city needs.

Thank you for taking action to keep the arts in NYC,
Melissa

--

Melissa Riker
908-370-2027 | Artistic Director/Choreographer | www.kinesisproject.com
NAISNY Dance AiR5 | SUPPORT DANCE [HERE](#)



WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP
RELATIONS

New York City Council, New York, New York

Chair Van Bramer and members of the Committee, thank you for providing the opportunity to furnish written testimony on the issue of the impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City.

This testimony provides information about some of the arts and cultural education work that the Museum of the City of New York has engaged in to serve New Yorkers during the pandemic, as well as challenges faced and the creativity adopted to overcome them. The Museum is a member of the City's Cultural Institutions Group. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, CIGs have been committed to contributing to the City and to New Yorkers by supporting public life, public health, and public service.

Amongst its 300,000 annual visitors prior to COVID-19, the Museum served 50,000 students, educators, and caregivers with curriculum-based field trips, workshops, seminars, and family activities— providing access to engaging, valuable arts- and history-based content. Since the Museum closed on March 13, 2020 in accordance with city and state guidelines, the Museum made a rapid and successful transition to digital education programming.

In Fiscal Year 2021 starting in July we have served 16,771 students, families and educators through virtual programming and are projecting that we will serve 30,000 by the end of the fiscal year. In addition, we have provided 19 programs to the general public reaching an additional nearly 8,000 people. Recordings of our programs and a vast array of [lesson plans](#) and other educational materials remain available on our website and continue to be viewed by thousands online.

All Museum education programming is scheduled to remain online at this time. We continue to provide virtual field trips for students and have just announced a new slate of Spring offerings for our city's K-12 educators and students. For families and community members, we have two arts offerings running concurrently. The first is a series of art-making videos that encourage children and their families to create New York City-inspired craft projects using everyday materials while they learn about the art, architecture, and cultural history of the city. The second is a slate of programs that invite NYC artists to share their work and stories of their personal journeys with kids of all ages in live, virtual sessions.

Examples of some of our specific arts and cultural education programs and impacts include:

- An interactive [Earth Day](#) series for children including a recorded story-time and art-making projects, which has received nearly 8,000 page views to date. As a point of comparison, when held onsite, this annual event typically serves an average of 200 attendees.

- The first [Virtual Museum Mile](#) on June 9 with each of our partner museums hosting live and pre-recorded programs, virtual exhibition tours, live musical performances, and activities for families streamed on websites and social media platforms throughout the day
- Students attending our very popular *City as Canvas: Graffiti Art in NYC* [virtual field trip](#) have taken inspiration from the stories of how East Harlem style masters such as Dez, DAR, Sharp, and Delta mentored one another as they used creativity as an outlet in the face of community crisis, and have enjoyed learning how their careers have evolved, including Dez who is today a DJ and featured on Hot 97.



Lee George Quiñones. Howard the Duck. 1988.
Museum of the City of New York.
Gift of Mr. Martin Wong, 1994. 94.114.1



Portrait of Daze.
Photograph by Tom Warren,
tagged by Christopher "Daze" Ellis 1983.
Acrylic on gelatin silver print.



- This summer, the Museum launched its [MCNY Kids Create](#) video series featuring NYC artists. On August 18, [photographer Janette Beckman](#), best known for capturing youth culture in her photographs of hip hop, punk, New York street life, and the recent demonstrations for Black Lives, walked children through the creative process of how to tell stories through the camera and answered their questions about her life and artistic process. On September 1, prolific artist [Christopher "Daze" Ellis](#) shared with families about his time as a young artist growing up in New York City and participated in an interactive drawing activity. For all programs, parents and caregivers were able to submit their children's artwork for the artists to view via social media or a dedicated form on our website. Though these sessions were initially presented live online, they remain available as resources on the [Museum's video channels](#), and have garnered over 4,000 views to date.
- During the summer we were also able to provide a carefully designed outdoor space for [Dancing Dreams](#) to provide dance classes to 36 students with medical or physical challenges. These classes have occurred at the Museum for the past seven years.
- The Museum has a strong history of serving PK-12 educators and administrators through lesson plans, lectures, workshops, week-long courses, and collaborations with the New York City Department of Education, the majority of which are free to participants. The population served continues to reflect a broad and diverse spectrum of educators, who regularly share that they would not otherwise have access to the current scholarship provided via the written materials, guest lectures, and exhibition content developed by the Museum. In FY2020, 1,800 educators attended a program onsite, and following our digital pivot, 796 participants were served via new and reformatted [virtual educator programs](#) between April and June, plus an additional 1,119 educators served between July and November.

- At this moment of crisis and change, the Museum started a public collecting effort and exhibition entitled [New York Responds](#) documenting history in real time by crowdsourcing stories of how all five boroughs are experiencing both the COVID-19 pandemic and the uprisings for Black Lives. This project showcases the power of art as both a tool for documentation and a vehicle for reflection and healing. The resulting exhibition – presented both at the Museum and online – will be used in our public and educational programming as we collectively examine the impact of this moment on our city, our neighbors, and ourselves
 - 10,000+ submissions were received under the #COVIDStoriesNYC initiative between March and September, and 5,000+ under #ActivistNY from June to September. Images were then selected as featured outdoor content and created a foundation of the indoor exhibit. A Community Jury provided recommendations on the selection of objects to ensure shared authority and representation in the exhibition’s content across New York City’s broad range of communities.
 - A new collaboration with StoryCorps has also been launched as part of this effort, enabling oral history documentation of New Yorkers’ experiences. This initiative has a special focus on educator engagement to support teachers bringing oral history projects to their classrooms to document their own experiences.

We are proud of the way the Museum’s staff were able to quickly adapt to new teaching models and platforms—drawing on significant existing digital resources to provide continuity and quality of programming that has been well-received as attested by participant numbers and responses. We have been able to provide not only needed content, but models for our city’s educators and the cultural field on how to teach and present in the digital sphere.

Every time I participate in a program at the Museum, our students benefit tremendously from the new ideas and materials that I bring back to my classroom and my colleagues.

Middle School Social Studies Teacher, The Bronx

The Museum of the City of New York has taught me more about remote learning/teaching than any other PDs I’ve attended!

High School Arts Teacher, Manhattan

We also remain committed to telling the stories of all New Yorkers, and to showcasing the rich diversity of the city and the creativity it holds. Our programs feature the voices of figures whose contributions to the city have for too-long gone overlooked, while nurturing in students an interest in history, the sciences, and the arts through creative expression and critical thinking. We encourage students to examine the city’s past, so that they may understand the present, and envision their role in shaping the future.

Thank you!....The program was great - I loved that panelists asked many high-level questions and then read aloud student responses - and we had a rich discussion in the afternoon after the visit. As always, I know I can count on the MCNY to speak the truth of racism and anti-racism to young children, and I so appreciate that. All of my students were excited to see themselves in New York City’s history.

3rd Grade Teacher

However, this has not been achieved without significant challenges with many remaining. Losses across funding streams from earned income fees and philanthropic contributions, reductions in personnel, and the nature of the digital environment has limited the programs that can be offered and taxed the remaining staff.

Online programming models require additional staff and technical and safety protocols to ensure a smooth delivery of content and a secure environment for all participants, as well as paid subscriptions to a number of virtual platforms, digital tools, and necessary accessibility features. In addition, all education staff have had to undergo intensive training to be able to effectively engage learners in virtual programs.

While family programs and professional development programs have been well attended, the inability to provide on-site field trips and the current turmoil in the education and school landscape means that the number of field trips has significantly dropped. This loss of revenue-generating education programs has had a huge impact on our income going into and through FY21 and as a result, we have had to put on pause several large-scale, free education programs including: our Saturday Academy (our American History course and SAT prep program), our LGBTQ Teen Summit, our annual Teaching Social Activism Conference, and our family day programs, such as our annual Halloween Scavenger Hunt, which each year welcomed over 250 kids, parents, and caregivers, the majority from our local East Harlem and upper Manhattan neighborhoods.

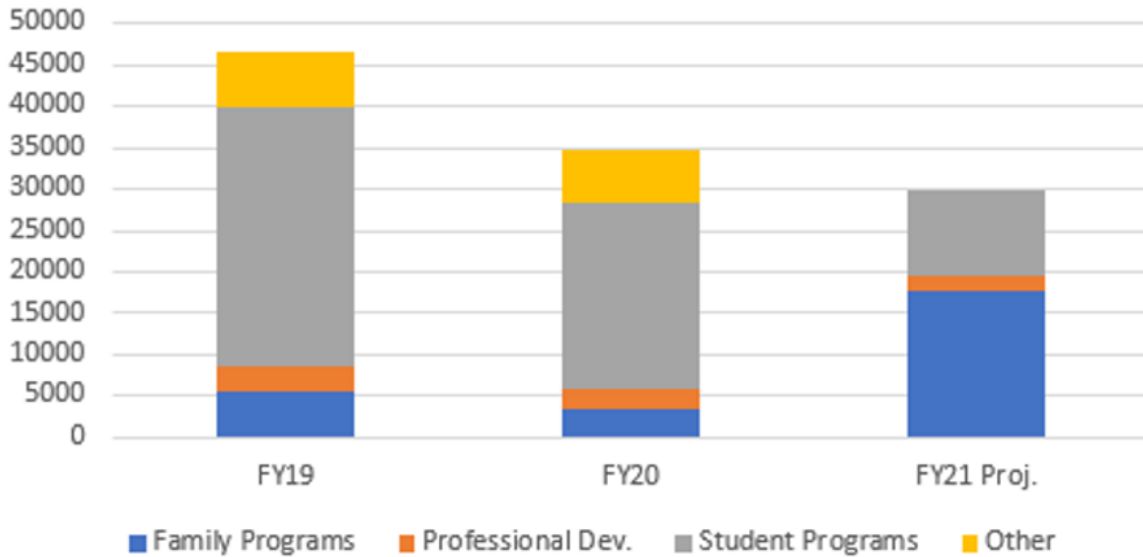
Demand is high for accessible programming. While the number of programs we can offer has been reduced, we have proven that virtual programming has had the two-fold benefit of enabling us to create and present original content in new ways while also having a larger geographic reach—and in many instances exceeding the capacity of our onsite classrooms and auditorium. We also launched a new digital hub for the museum to respond to the demand for easily accessible content, and we created a [Digital Education Hub](#) that enables educators, students and families to find all of our resources for learners of all ages. This lays the groundwork for future development and exploration as we continue in this sphere. We are also looking toward the time when we can welcome learners back to our building for group programming. It is our recommendation that in moving forward with both spheres in mind that the city give attention to clear messaging that it is safe to return to the city's cultural institutions once the restrictions are lifted.

Countless individuals and families have come to rely on our services. As we think about recovery, we will have our sights clearly on the vital role we can play in developing a more equitable City through:

- employment: our creative sector directly employs over 293,000 people, paying \$30.4B in wages. Stabilizing our workforce and giving renewed urgency to our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) program will dismantle systemic barriers to being a truly inclusive organization and will have a profound impact on New York City's economy
- being an economic driver: our sector is responsible for \$110B in total economic activity
- local service: through our exhibitions, online resources, and education and public program we are a place for learning about our history and for exploration and identification of creative solutions for building a better city. The CIGs provide access to nearly 24 million New Yorkers and tourists annually, with 4.2 million free visits and 1.5 million K-12 student visitors.

The committee heard testimony on December 15 of CIG colleagues from across the five boroughs that also attests to our ability to provide innovative programming essential for the education, health, and well-being of New Yorkers and especially those communities who are finding the pandemic requirements especially challenging, namely school children and seniors. We have all worked hard to provide this continuity while grappling with financial, operational, and staffing and resource challenges. We affirm that #CultureNeverClosed and the Museum and all members of the CIG remain committed partners to the city in this transformed educational landscape.

Changes in Education Program Participation



MCNY Education Goes Digital

NEW! Virtual Engagement Hub
www.mcny.org/DigitalEd

- #MCNY Kids
- Virtual Student Programs
- Virtual Educator Programs
- Online Resources & Lesson Plans
- *Stories* Virtual Teaching Blog Posts

Whitney W. Donhauser

Whitney W. Donhauser
 Ronay Menschel Director & President

Written Testimony to the New York City Council

City Council Hearing on the Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational Programming in New York City.

To: Chair James G. Van Bramer

Members: Joseph C. Borelli, Laurie A. Cumbo,
Mark Gjonaj and Francisco P. Moya

Re: Su-Casa Funding for 2021

Music is life, especially now and especially for our senior citizens who find themselves isolated not only physically from family and friends, but also often by the challenges of technology as well. Along with struggling to maintain the needs of daily life, obtaining food and medication, cooking, keeping house, seniors are struggling emotionally with the separation from the love and warmth of the people who love and care for them.

Having first walked into the JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center about a year ago, not that I admit to being a senior, the first group I discovered was the in-person chorus under the direction of Cheryl Warfield, a Bronx Opera teaching artist. As I participated in the rehearsals, I found satisfaction in learning and joining with the other singers in working towards the goal of presenting a concert to a live audience at the Center. Our 2019 holiday concert was a success and a joy for all. However, as you know, it all changed in March of this year. In spite of the difficulties with the advent of virtual gatherings, Ms. Warfield successfully transitioned a core group of the chorus to a joyful and satisfying online experience and resource. Our first virtual concert in June was a hit with all. In our second term, even more singers joined us. In the midst of the desert of loneliness created by this pandemic, the virtual chorus of the JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center is a life-giving life-saving oasis.

We happily look forward to our regular rehearsals with the time to connect to people who share our love of music and singing and our willingness to put effort into learning and growing our skills. Finding new friends is a wonderful bonus. Ms. Warfield is an excellent teacher, knowledgeable and encouraging and eager to bring out the best in everyone. She is generous with her attention, advice and time. At the end, we are uplifted by the result of our efforts by being able to perform for our family and friends and all who sign on to enjoy a joyful experience. At the same time, we are saddened when current session ends.

The support of Su-Casa is vital to the continuation of this excellent program. The growing number of seniors who make the effort to join rehearsals online are finding their special gifts and their voice through singing. They are becoming at ease with using the technology, are heartened with the camaraderie of people working together for a worthy goal and with the satisfaction of continuing to learn and expand their knowledge, discover their talents and develop their skills artistically and share the results with an appreciative audience.

I look with hope to you, the members of the City Council, to ensure that this mind- and spirit-nourishing program continues for seniors and teaching artists alike.

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**Testimony of Nancy Kleaver, Executive Director, Dancing Classroom
Before New York City Council's Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
Intergroup Relations, related to The Impact of COVID-19 on Art and Cultural Educational
Programming in New York City**

Good morning, Councilmember VanBramer and Committee Members.

My name is Nancy Kleaver. I am Executive Director for Dancing Classrooms, a 26-year old organization that cultivates life skills in young people through the art and practice of social dance.

In 2019, pre-COVID, we were on track to serve over 150 schools across all five boroughs, and almost 17,000 NYC public school students. We also support a network of 17 affiliate sites. Through our work, students are introduced to dances from around the globe and their histories, while learning to connect with themselves, their classmates, and the larger world, developing respect and compassion for all people. We are not just a program, we are a movement of educators committed to the health and wellbeing of the next generation of global citizens.

When the pandemic hit last March we pivoted almost immediately, producing free dance experiences for teachers and families and bringing our weekend programs to Zoom. Thanks to emergency funding from NY Community Trust and individuals who believe in our mission, and being one of lucky organizations to be funded in the first round of PPP loans, we were able to translate our intensive 20-session, dance residency for 4th-8th graders into a remote learning offering called *Dancing Classrooms: Homeroom Edition* and pilot it with longtime school partners for free. Knowing that schools were not able or allowed to offer much if any synchronous instruction, we created high quality pre recorded lessons and Google Classrooms extension activities and were available for live TA check-ins as often as teachers could accommodate.

11 schools and 33 classroom teachers, representing all 5 boroughs, invited us to offer *Homeroom Edition*. What we found was extraordinary. Not only can children learn social and partner dances over video. They can focus, collaborate, reflect on their feelings and show real progress towards the SEL and dance learning goals we have in-person as well. As the principal of PS 48 M, Camilo Mejia said...

“Thank you. In the middle of all of the madness, you came up with a program that can be as successful virtually as it is in person. Dancing Classrooms is not just a passing program. You are part of 48.”

As Mr. Mejia mentions, Dancing Classrooms, like most of our peer arts education organizations, we are not just a vendor or a program. We become part of the school family and their identity. Students look forward to experiencing our programs when they reach a certain grade at their school and our TAs have met whole families of students and sometimes generations through our longtime relationships with schools. This makes our role even more critical now, I believe. When children are experiencing such loss and all their routines are out of whack, we, the arts community, can be a beacon of hope, something familiar and exciting to look forward to.

This fall, in addition to honing *Homeroom Edition*, we have created fully synchronous, hybrid, and socially distant versions of our residencies as well. We are offering free social dance classes for educators twice a week. And we are partnering with city council members through CASA and CII funding and community based organizations to bring our program to students in afterschool spaces. We are meeting students and teachers wherever they are. We are ready to go.

In a normal year, we would be wrapping up residencies in about 50 schools right now. Knowing how challenging this year would be, we conservatively projected working at 20% of our normal programming capacity, that's a loss for our organization of about \$1 million that goes directly to paying our teaching artists and program-related staff.

At this point, even delivering $\frac{1}{5}$ of our normal services seems like a herculean task. We have called literally hundreds of school partners from over the last 3 years. They are thrilled to hear from us and wish to get their students dancing again. But school leaders are concerned that the rugs will be pulled out from under them any minute -- that they will have their budgets cut further along in the year unexpectedly, that school closures will upend their schedules yet again. Some are under the impression that they are not “allowed” to partner with arts providers or too bewildered about how to weave our services into their online learning portals and protocols to move forward. This all has caused paralysis at a time when our young people need us grown ups to take action. We are losing more students to loneliness, depression, anxiety, and obesity

with every day that goes by. They need the health and SEL intervention of the arts now more than ever before.

The arts education community is uniquely prepared for this moment. As a field, we have been investing in SEL, Trauma Informed Care, and CRSE for years, embedding those practices into our work. Let us be a guide and support to teachers right now in the effort to help our kids persevere and heal.

To this end, I implore the Dept of Education and City Council to take the following steps:

- Acknowledge the deep bench of experienced educators and youth workers you have in the NYC cultural sector and encourage principals to work with arts partners like ours to support their SEL and wellness goals. Our TAs at Dancing Classrooms, which are representative of the field, are a diverse group of professionals. More than half of them have 10+ years of experience teaching in NYC schools. This is their profession and passion. At a time when the DOE is short on teachers and struggling to accommodate the SEL needs of its students, it makes no sense to leave our Teaching Artists behind. Let's put them to work!
- Ensure that everyone—from superintendents, to principals, teachers, and the administrative staff that deals with budgeting and contracts—understands that arts instruction must continue as part of every child's academic program. It is not a frill. It is a NYS mandate. That has not changed because of the pandemic, it has only become more urgent.
- Confirm arts education budgets for the 2020-2021 school year at the school and central levels, allowing principals to allocate resources for arts learning and make it clear to principals that allocating their funds to the arts is supported by their superintendents.
- Assist administrators in understanding how to schedule learning opportunities with arts partners remotely. Create a task force with members of the arts education community to develop some standard best practices for getting remote arts learning partnerships off the ground.

We are here, waiting in the wings, ready to leap into action. Please help us reach and support our city's young people.

Thank you so much for this forum and for your leadership. I wish you and your loved ones all a healthy and peaceful holiday.

On the Vulnerability of Teaching Artists as a Labor Force: We Are Not Your Cultural Uber Drivers

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted employment for myself and many other culture workers in NYC. As a professional trumpet player and teaching artist, I've been proud to work as a musician and educator at The Juilliard School, Carnegie Hall, the New York Philharmonic, and in the theatre world on Broadway and at Radio City Music Hall. I'm a member of both the Arts in Education Roundtable, and Local 802 Musicians Union. I want to thank both of those organizations for doing such important and critical work in advocating for cultural workers during this crisis. Today, I want to speak to the vulnerability of a particular subset of the cultural labor force—teaching artists.

As a teaching artist I've been proud to work for multiple cultural institutions in the city over more than a decade. This is a difficult time for many of us—we were among the first to get laid off during the pandemic, and it seems likely we will be among the last to be rehired as we look towards a recovery. And yet, many teaching artist communities I'm a part of have been meeting regularly during this pandemic period. Over text messaging, and during impromptu zoom meetings, we're asking ourselves, how we're going to rebuild post-crisis? We're asking how are we going to diversify our faculties to be more representative of this city? We're feeling a bit shattered as we confront our own vulnerability as a labor force. We feel unseen and undervalued. It seems a number of cultural institutions in this city view teaching artists as cultural uber drivers. This has been a painful reality to confront during the crisis.

We wonder how we can help city leaders, arts leaders, cultural institutions, board members, funders, and other teaching artists to reimagine more equitable and empowering labor structures for teaching artists' post crisis. How can we address the fundamental invisibility of teaching artists as a cultural labor force? How can we strengthen employment practices in the city to better protect vulnerable cultural workers? As we rebuild post-crisis, we would be deeply grateful for your support in becoming allies for teaching artists as an important part of the cultural labor force in NYC.

With Gratitude,

Paul Murphy
Teaching Artist Faculty, New York Philharmonic (12 years)



December 18, 2020

Councilmember Jimmy Van Bramer
47-01 Queens Boulevard, Suite 205
Sunnyside, NY 11104

Dear Council Member Van Bramer and Members of the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs,

Thank you for your advocacy and leadership on behalf of the arts and culture community and for our most vulnerable communities during this time of crisis. I am writing on behalf of the board, staff, and young artists of the **People's Theatre Project (PTP)**. With an operating budget close to \$1M, we are the largest performing arts organization based in Upper Manhattan, relied upon by our neighbors of all ages in our predominantly Dominican neighborhood. We are an anti-racist organization that creates ensemble-based theatre with immigrant communities to further the movement for social justice. A leading provider of Creative Youth Development programs, PTP serves hundreds of youth and children every year through the PTP Academy, a multiyear leadership program dedicated to the holistic development of immigrant and BIPOC youth, and the PTP Partnerships, our in-school theatre program that encourages students to celebrate their identities and cultivates listening and communication skills through ensemble-based theatre.

When the pandemic shut New York City down last March, our program staff and teaching artists pivoted quickly. They adapted the curriculum to be taught remotely, and attendance remained high at 95% through the end of the school year. Parents and our young artists alike told us that PTP's programming provided regular doses of joy and normalcy amidst the chaos caused by the pandemic.

Thanks to your continuous advocacy this past year, PTP received more than expected in our FY21 DCLA CDF allocation. Additionally, we secured emergency funding from the NewYork-Presbyterian/Hispanic Federation Northern Manhattan Recovery Grant, the New York Community Trust NYC COVID-19 Response and Impact Fund, a NYSCA/NEA CARES grant program, and a PPP loan, the latter of which is being recognized as revenue on our FY21

budget. These funds enabled us to close FY20 without a deficit and are sustaining us through FY21.

So far this fiscal year, PTP has served 416 immigrant youth through the PTP Academy and 379 children and youth through the PTP Partnerships. While these numbers only include the youth directly served by our teaching artists, PTP also spearheaded a collaborative virtual summer camp in July 2020: we brought together 13 Uptown Arts & Culture organizations and served over 200 youth with 4 weeks of virtual cultural programming.

As we look towards FY22, however, PTP is approaching the brink of scarcity. We are currently anticipating a large deficit, which will impact our ability to deliver the programs that are so essential to our children and families. Especially as many of our children will return to classrooms for the first time in over a year, the arts will be essential as they begin to recover from the trauma of loss experienced during this pandemic.

City funds are vital in our ability to serve immigrant children and youth in Upper Manhattan, many of whom are Multilingual Learners in Title 1 schools. With so many students struggling to engage in virtual learning, arts programs are some of the easiest and reliable ways to engage students online. In addition to teaching them integral 21st century skills, it also keeps them growing in social-emotional learning. Once we are on the other side of the pandemic, arts programming will help them heal from the trauma physically, emotionally, socially, and mentally.

We understand that the city is in crisis. At PTP, we are more than willing to collaborate with you to find creative solutions. We simply ask that you invest in arts education *now* because it will pay immediate and future dividends in the lives of the immigrant youth we serve. **Once we come out of this, our souls will need healing too, and it's the essential work of our arts and culture community who will see us through the reawakening.**

Thank you,



Mino Lora
Founding Executive Director



Abe Johnson
Education Director

NYC Council Hearing, 12/15/20

The Impact of COVID-19 on Arts & Cultural Educational Programming

Good morning everyone. I want to thank CM Van Bramer & Dept of Cultural Affairs for this opportunity and their ongoing support. My name is Ali Abate and I am the Director of Education at Queens County Farm Museum (QCFM).

I want to share with you how Queens Farm impacts our city and how we have been affected and have adapted to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

INTRO:

- Queens County Farm Museum is one of the longest continually farmed sites in NY state, with a 323 year legacy of growing food in NYC
- 47 acre historic site / urban farm
- We pride ourselves as a site that is open daily, free to the public 354 days of the year
- pre-COVID, we serve over 400k visitors annually through school field trips, public events and daily visitorship
- In a non-COVID year over 100K of the farm's annual visitors are students who participate in our acclaimed School-to-Farm Education Program
- These students come from every New York City Council District in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens. Often, their visit to Queens Farm is their first visit to a working farm.
- Queens Farm serves 54% of Queens elementary schools that serve NYCHA communities, 51% in Manhattan, 40% in Brooklyn and 36% in the Bronx.
- Our School-to-Farm Edu programs provide opportunities to see, smell, touch and taste farm education. These programs are inquiry-based, incorporating STEM and history - enriching students, their families while supporting classroom curriculum that is aligned with NYS learning standards.
- We work with elementary age students, but also middle schoolers, AP Enviro Science students, as well as students at the college and graduate level. We also have a vibrant Adult Education program to serve folks 18 and older who are looking to build skills and continue life-long learning.

How is COVID affecting QCFM:

The deepest impacts to our organization due to the pandemic are felt by the loss of in-person education:

- 106,000 students were not able to visit this year (based on 2019 attendance)
- 113 program dates lost since the start of COVID (days when field trips would have taken place)
- Over 400 hours of lost educational time (school-to-farm field trips and week-long STEM camps)
- We suffered staff reductions totaling 61% of farm staff, unemployed due to loss of programs
- Revenue loss that represents about 1 million dollars

These numbers represent a huge loss for our city - lost enrichment opportunities for students, teachers and parents - and lost opportunities for outdoor learning in a unique environment that supports classroom learning, child development, a connection to nature, and promotes healthy eating and well-being.

They also represent a huge loss for our dedicated staff of educators, who benefit from and sustain themselves as professionals in arts & culture from this programming and who are also suffering the financial burdens of lost employment.

What QCFM is doing in response to COVID has been a combination of virtual programming and offering a much reduced amount of in-person programming.

- We created free virtual learning through social media, sharing 100 consecutive daily #barncam posts, that began March 23 with over 201,000 impressions while the farm closed to the public
- Created remote curriculum support for teachers through a resource guide and converted curricula for digital use
- Synchronous & asynchronous virtual tours for schools
- Provided outdoor experiences for programs that could travel
- CASA - we maintained connections with our CASA schools sending them virtual tours and off-screen activities that students could do at home; preparing for new CASA partners for this school year
- Farm Camp - in partnership with Commonpoint Queens we provided seven weeks of outdoor camp programming to small pods of students with hands-on farm activities this summer - including planting, weeding, harvesting, egg collecting, and culinary activities - as well as arts & crafts, outdoor games and water play. We saw through these programs the power of farm education and how grateful our participating students and families were for this program during this challenging, unprecedented year.
- We expanded virtual connections with University partners to continue research in public history and how to expand awareness of plant diversity for native pollinators

Thank you for this opportunity and your time. We look to the Council to help us in bridging these losses during this time of continued uncertainty, and as we work to heal and move forward toward a healthier, brighter future.

Good morning, Chair Van Bramer, esteemed Committee and glitter lovers everywhere! I am Sidney "Dr. Dance" Grant, Executive & Artistic Director of BALLROOM BASIX USA and no stranger to the City Council, having spoken at a variety of Council and Borough testimonies, with our students presenting our dances — and the manners that make the movement matter so much! We are proud to say that our vital work is a vivid example of the funding success that you've fought so hard for!

Our FY20 CASA funding award from Council Member (and now Queens Borough President) Donovan Richards enabled us to create one of the VERY FIRST outdoor dance event, our powerful parody THE MACORONARENA, on Rockaway Beach: <https://youtu.be/jGr-HrHEhlk>

Council Member Moya, your generous CII funding enabled us to do the same in Queens at the end of June where willing students & parents from our 3 partner schools in YOUR district came together — with masks and gloves — to dance in Corona Park. For these young people, it was literally their FIRST TIME seeing one another since the crisis had begun in March, and many said that it said was the HIGHLIGHT of their school year! https://youtu.be/qz_sUsfrN9U

Council Member Borelli, we were proud to have extended an invite to you and your office this past August for our social distanced dancing in LaTourette Park. And in September, we were the 1st arts organization in New York to teach ON SITE in Staten Island on the very first day of school — <https://youtu.be/J3yfuJegNko> — in your colleague Debi Rose's neighboring district. She not only attended our special event, but actually posted (on YouTube) a "Macoronarena challenge" to the Speaker Corey Johnson — <https://youtu.be/GooWgCDmh5k> — who I had the good fortune of dancing with exactly one year ago as part of our performance with the students whose schools were so generously awarded discretionary funding from Council Member Daneek Miller, whose Holiday Toy Fair we were absolutely thrilled to participate in.

Commissioner Casals may be proud to learn that in addition our festive swing and merengue, our District 27 students, Senior Teaching Artist Miss Zoe and I performed a dazzled those in attendance at the community center with a captivating "Tango Argentino" that day.

We have met with Council Member Gjonaj's office for CASA funding, and Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo and I had a chance "meeting" in the elevator, and then again a few months later in the hallway, at 250 Broadway — so you both know how passionate my organization is to bring light and joy to young people and their families through the education and etiquette of Ballroom, Latin & Line Dancing...and we will be in touch with all of you about our social-distanced "Macoronarena" celebration this Holiday and New Year's season, so get ready to get your district's groove on!

In closing, I would like to thank Mr. Van Bramer for continuing to fight so hard for arts funding. In his opening remarks today, he brought up PEW research studies, citing how educational outcomes are enhanced when children have arts experiences to compliment their learning. It bears mentioning that COVID-19 has statistically increased depression, isolation and, sadly,

even abuse. Therefore, I wholeheartedly agree, as he said, that “we MUST provide these vital opportunities to uplift and inspire kids” and I hope that you and your colleagues will recognize that FY22 funding will be critical to us and others who suffered devastating losses in the crisis.

But “when times get tough, the tough get creative”... and we are committed to continuing to harness our creativity to bring our unique blend of “fun, fitness & fancy footwork” to schools, teachers, families and communities, now and throughout this uncertain future. Energized, enthusiastic and entertaining arts education is always a worthwhile investment for that future!

Sidney "Dr. Dance" Grant

Founder & Executive/Artistic Director

BALLROOM BASIX USA, Inc.

(work) 212-876-8660 (cell) 929-353-3520



Cohort C at PS65R—Academy for Innovative Learning—dancing the "Macoronarena" along with District 49 Councilwoman Debi Rose (far left) on the very first day of school!



Testimony to Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Submitted to Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations on Dec 15, 2020
Prepared by Dance/NYC

On behalf of Dance/NYC (www.dance.nyc), a service organization which serves over 5,000 individual dance artists, 1,200 dance-making entities, and 500 non profit dance companies based in the metropolitan New York City area, including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color) dance workers, immigrants, and disabled dance workers. Dance/NYC joins colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking the Committee for your leadership during this time and in requesting:

- 1) For the City to provide sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in schools and communities, including quality arts education for every child in every school;**
- 2) For City budget cuts not to fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs;**
- 3) For the City to allow flexibility with Cultural After School Adventures (CASA) programming due to the pandemic; and**
- 4) For the City to provide dance specific COVID-19 guidelines (which are not gyms) that clearly and specifically address the unique conditions that dance studios and education spaces operate in.**

Dance education provides powerful opportunities for students to create, perform and understand movement as a means of artistic communication and impacts students' short- and long-term learning experiences. It can play a significant role in their personal and academic growth. Dance education is integral to the City's performing arts ecosystem and the survival of dance education



organizations has implications beyond the walls of any one business. Dance education, especially in the public school system, often gives children an entry point into dance training in environments where they might not otherwise encounter it. This is especially true in communities of color, where access to dance education is already limited and a predominate number of closures are those run by and for communities of color.

During this pandemic, it has been made evident that artists are necessary workers, as dance educators have remained active providing online dance classes, digital performances, developing and providing mental health support, providing recovery and mutual aid support to their neighborhoods. This is in addition to making countermeasures to ensure the ongoing payment and care of their staffs, while experiencing steep revenue drops. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Dance organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to ensure the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages.

In order for a partnership between dance organizations and schools / afterschool programs to happen, City agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities. Department of Education budget cuts in arts education enacted earlier this year have already decreased artist staffing. According to SMU Data Arts and the Department of Cultural Affairs' *COVID-19 Impact on Nonprofit Arts and Culture in New York City* report, some of the greatest reductions to artist employment have come from Arts Education organizations, which collectively reported decreases of over 2,100 artists, or 78% of artist staffing, during this period. We request that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for dance



education and the arts and cultural community that is part of the fabric of this City. These are key pipelines for the dance sector, professional programs and Broadway. Dwana Smallwood, a former star of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater who founded her own dance studio in 2013 in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, was recently quoted in *The NY Times* ([nytimes.com/2020/11/18/arts/dance/new-york-dance-studios-coronavirus.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/18/arts/dance/new-york-dance-studios-coronavirus.html)) as having said, “We are the people who plant the seeds into these huge organizations and teach and mentor our kids to aspire to American Ballet Theater, to New York City Ballet, to Ailey. We are the ones on the ground, finding and cultivating those children, providing them with confidence and brain stimulation and letting them know there is something to aspire to besides the four corners of your block.”

Dance organizations are facing extended difficulties due to the pandemic. Many schools who are offered CASA programming are not accepting the programming initiative due to concerns of students spending even more time online, staring at a screen. Let us not take it out on young people or their access to dance education. As such, we are requesting that the City encourage schools to accept the programming and allow for budgeting permitting access to these programs for a wider audience. We are requesting that the City allow for CASA programming to not occur as an after school activity but have the possibility to be offered on weekends, which will address the concerns of extended one day screen time and still allow for access. Another option, would be to allow for CASA programming to occur as a part of the school day which would increase audience and serve the entire school. Flexibility in access to programming is essential due to the pandemic.

Dance education organizations have pivoted their **in-person programming to online for a fraction of the revenue** they would have collected and at the same time fixed costs including rent and salaries remain unchanged. Dance/NYC understands the key role data has, as such we have been conducting comprehensive research on the impact the coronavirus is having on our



sector. In Dance/NYC's *Coronavirus Dance Impact Survey* (www.dance.nyc/covid-19/Impact-Survey/Overview), more than 70% reported experiencing cash flow and rent issues. We have also documented a mass exodus of teaching artists leaving the City due to lost performance opportunities and inability to generate enough income to cover basic needs such as housing, food and health care. Additionally, there is an increase in costs associated with digital accessibility. Currently, the CASA initiative allows teaching artists to rent equipment but does not allow them to purchase their own digital equipment using these funds. The consistency of renting is equating to greater costs than purchasing their own equipment. Flexibility in the spending of the CASA funds is greatly needed. If the City does not intervene, we will be losing our dance education which is something from which we will not recover for many years to come.

Arts education is necessary for community building and mental health, both of which are largely at risk due to social distancing measures. According to SMU Data Arts and DCLA, community-based arts organizations (especially those that focus on cultural and ethnic awareness, folk arts, and community celebrations) in the City have reported losses of 12% , unanticipated expenses of 12%, and have lowest level of Working Capital relative to expenses at 1.6 months heading into the crisis. In Dance/NYC's *Coronavirus Dance Impact Survey*, one organization shared, "We're deeply concerned with the health crisis (physical and mental), loss of jobs and food security for people living in our community who were already vulnerable before COVID-19. Our programs have always served as a place of solace as the arts offer spaces for people to heal and seek solutions. It is important that we exist to help people weather the crisis psychologically and compliment organizations who are offering social services for displacement, health care and food." Let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences.

Across the City, dance studio owners face similar situations, struggling to keep their businesses afloat and frustrated by a lack of clear reopening guidance from the City and State. In particular



the conflation of dance studios with gyms. Dance/NYC, Gibney and several collaborators have drafted comprehensive reopening guidelines for the dance sector including dance educators which we would be more than happy to share with the Council for their support.

Artists are necessary workers, we need your support to continue to be active and equitable members of the NYS educational workforce. Without intervention from the committee, dance education institutions will continue to suffer enormous losses and face catastrophic economic challenges which we may never recover from, especially those for and run by our most marginalized communities.

For Dance/NYC and its constituents, the most urgent priorities are:

- 1) For the City to not disproportionately make budget cuts to the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs to allow for sustained funding to support arts education.**
- 2) For the City to allow flexibility with Cultural After School Adventures (CASA) programming and funding allocations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- 3) For the City to provide swift rent relief legislation.**
- 4) For the City to provide dance specific COVID-19 guidelines (which are not gyms) that clearly and specifically address the unique conditions of the dance sector.**

We thank you in advance for your consideration and commend New York City's ongoing efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 and look forward to the opportunity to work with you to ensure that dance education can continue to thrive in years to come. The time to act is now.

##



GET CLOSER TO DANCE

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 17, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Heather McCartney, Director of School & Family Programs, and I work at The Joyce Theater in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan.

The mission of The Joyce Theater Foundation is to serve and support the art of dance and choreography, to promote the richness and variety of the art form in its fullest expression, and to advance the public interest in, and appreciation of, dance and the allied arts of music, design, and theater. The Joyce's programs embrace the entire spectrum of movement styles and traditions, from the time-honored to the untried, and are designed to encourage, sustain, and educate a diverse audience.

Central to The Joyce's mission is encouraging the next generation of dance artists, audiences, and enthusiasts. Pre-pandemic, each year, since 1984, a wonderful diversity of the best dance companies in the world were discovered by close to 1,500 students from more than 20 local schools that partnered with The Joyce. The 2019-20 academic year had 1,800 students from public and charter schools scheduled to engage in dance education but were interrupted during the shutdown of our theater. In April, Joyce School & Family Programs successfully transitioned to completing the remaining lessons online. However, by September our five teaching artists were furloughed and one department associate was laid off due to the lack of work as a result of cuts to school budgets.

It pains me to note that our independent schools are onboard to resume and fund their Joyce partnerships while our public school students are deprived of their arts education. This dichotomy of access exacerbates the disparity between students of color and those of affluence and privilege in our city in the most profound ways. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city.

The Joyce Theater Foundation receives important funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs that helps to support our school programs and arts education. This week a renewed commitment was received for which we are deeply grateful. We simply request that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural



GET CLOSER TO DANCE

community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first. And in order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained and dedicated funding to support arts education in our schools and communities.

Despite the 100% decrease in income from schools, The Joyce stands ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. To date, The Joyce has offered opportunities for constituents near and far to enjoy virtual performances, talks, classes, and more through [JoyceStream](#) for free, low cost, or donation-based fees, with more programming planned in 2021.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Heather McCartney
Director of School & Family Programs



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info@togetherindance.org

Board of Directors

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Wednesday, Dec 16, 2020

Dear City Council Member Van Bramer and Members of the Cultural Affairs Committee,

Thank you for all the tireless work you do for New York City and its residents. This has been a trying year for all of us, and NYC has stayed afloat. We are a powerful, conscientious lot, and we will emerge from this pandemic better, as long as we continue to put people first.

My name is Katie Palmer. I am the new Executive Director of Together in Dance, a small arts education organization which, through Creative Movement Dance and Musical Theater, empowers individuals to use their creativity and work collaboratively to connect to the world around them. I began my tenure as Executive Director on July 1 of this year - it has been a chaotic time to take over a company, but I am so looking forward to all the opportunities.

Together in Dance builds community among students, families, and educators in NYC's public elementary schools who learn together so that the arts continue to be an integral part of their lives. Even in a pandemic, even through virtual teaching, the arts are still a crucial part of people's lives. If anything, students need the performing arts even more in these turbulent times! Creative Movement creates space for the body to process emotions, and Musical Theater offers pathways through song to connect with other human beings. The empathy inherent in what we do is always critical and invaluable, but it's even more integral now.

Together in Dance continues to reach school children virtually, making musical theater magic through Zoom as the students belt out songs in their private spaces. Our Creative Movement students are discovering that the "limitations" of the Zoom box are actually gifts of creativity and opportunity. Best of all, the students relish their time together, in spite of the virtual space. They notice each other's contributions to the group and offer supportive compliments so each student feels seen.

Even while we know this to be true, we are only able to reach a fraction of the population Together in Dance typically works with. Our programming in public schools has currently decreased by 70% from the 2018-2019 school year. Principals are unable to meet with us to plan because they are dealing with crisis after crisis, constantly shifting schedules, and unknowable budgets. Those students without technology at home are not able to engage in online arts

learning. Our Teaching Artists - performing artists in the City who use Together in Dance to supplement their earnings - are more dependent on us financially, but we have so little work to spread around.

The way forward is so uncertain at a time when the arts are most needed. Together in Dance has a tremendous service for which there is great need, but the resources are shrinking. Arts Education as an industry is scrappy and resourceful. We are capable of doing so much with little. Please help us.

Please continue to voice your commitment to the cultural sector and arts education in particular. Please allocate more emergency funding for the cultural sector, and arts education in particular, to continue to sustain until the pandemic is over.

Please provide an increase to budget line items directly impacting the Arts so we can fulfill the role we are meant to play for this City: centers of community, healing, and joy.

Please look at every choice you make through an Equity lens: how are you bringing down barriers with every decision?

Please ensure you are considering the full person as you decide where money goes.

I hope I captured a small part of your mind and heart. Thank you, again, for everything you are doing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie B. Palmer".

Katie Palmer

CITY COUNCIL OF NEW YORK CITY TESTIMONY - December 15, 2020

UrbanGlass seeks your support to ensure that arts education remains a vital part of the fabric of New York City, at a time when our community is in need of deep healing. For more than 40 years UrbanGlass has provided community, artistic engagement, education, and has been an economic engine for New York City. Continued funding from the City Council, through CASA, SU-CASA and discretionary funding initiatives is an existential question for many like UrbanGlass in the cultural community, and we hope you will safeguard the Council's budget to ensure the continuation of these important funding opportunities.

Established in 1977, in the midst of an explosion of experimentation and creativity in New York City, our founders designed a communal space in which the costly equipment needed to work with glass would be accessible to the artists and students of New York City outside of university art programs and factories. Our founding made glass available to a wide range of people in New York City for the first time. Due to the incredibly expensive equipment, real estate costs and expertise required to build and maintain a professional glass studio, public-access studios like UrbanGlass remain incredibly important, and incredibly rare, around the globe. Without public-access spaces like UrbanGlass, opportunities to learn about the creative possibilities of glass would be unavailable to generations of artists and students in New York City. **Similarly, the opportunities for healing and catharsis found in the meditative, creative and often high-stakes pursuits of the glass studio - like mosaics, stained glass, glass blowing, bead making, and neon bending - would no longer be available to the veterans, seniors, and public school students of New York.**

UrbanGlass is the only non-profit, public-access glass organization in New York's five boroughs and the largest in the world. Our educational programming serves nearly 2,500 students each year, of all ages and skill levels. Thanks to our partnerships forged through CASA and SU-CASA programs, UrbanGlass has had the opportunity to connect with area students and seniors for in-depth creative explorations. While these participants are our neighbors, they are commonly people who would not have considered visiting UrbanGlass on their own. These programs have the unique power to meet seniors and students in venues where they are already comfortable, opening pathways for creative expression otherwise unavailable. City Council discretionary funding offers a critical means to bridge the accessibility gap for the community at large to Arts and Cultural institutions across the five boroughs.

For the past five years, UrbanGlass has been the proud recipient of City Council Initiative Funding. SU-CASA and CASA programs have enabled the organization to bring the arts to members of our community who derive incredible benefit from creativity, but would not have the opportunity to experience UrbanGlass on their own. We have served nearly 500 seniors with a curriculum of mosaics in their local senior centers; several of whom have become regular visitors and participants in our free public programs.

In 2019 we enjoyed our first CASA placement at PS9 in Brooklyn, and were blown away by the response from the almost 100 students who participated through the length of our engagement. Please enjoy the proud faces of these amazing students as they showcase their unique mosaic creations:



The Department of Cultural Affairs and Councilmembers Cumbo and Levin have for many years provided critical support of UrbanGlass' Bead Project, and the amazing community that has grown from this program. Since 1997 UrbanGlass' Bead Project has served more than 400 economically disadvantaged, New York area women, with a free curriculum in entrepreneurship and jewelry design. At the end of 10 weeks and 40 hours of instruction, Bead Project participants graduate from the program with a newly

formed small business, armed with strategies to grow their business and a supportive community of fellow graduates and program alumni to grow with.

After a year of trauma and loss, with disproportionate impacts seen in BIPOC communities around the City, these funding avenues have become more critical than ever. Our neighbors are in desperate need of healing, of outlets for creativity, or opportunities for optimism. I hope that the City will ensure the continuation of these critical funding streams, that not only bring arts and culture to new communities, but offer needed opportunities for catharsis through creativity and community.

We look forward to partnering with you to help NYC recover.

Sincerely,

Devin Mathis

Executive Director

About UrbanGlass

Established in New York City in 1977, UrbanGlass fosters experimentation and advances the use and critical understanding of glass as a creative medium. We offer year-round access to and education about glass and its creative possibilities, through our 17,000 square foot state-of-the-art public-access glassmaking facilities and gallery space in Downtown Brooklyn. As the largest non-profit dedicated to glass as a creative material in the United States, we proudly serve over 15,000 artists, students, and members of the public annually.

Our robust programs include our studio, a comprehensive public-access glass facility; artist fellowships, providing emerging and established artists from all backgrounds the opportunity to incorporate the material into their body of work; classes and scholarships to appeal to students at every level; the Bead Project, a program for low-income New York area women seeking a creative outlet and the entrepreneurial skills to develop a small business; and Open Studios, which bring the public into our facilities to learn about how glass is used in the creative process and watch artists at work. Additionally, UrbanGlass provides opportunities for contemplation, scholarly discourse and education about the material through our printed magazine, *GLASS: The UrbanGlass Art Quarterly*, and companion blog *The Hot Sheet*, and a dynamic calendar of free public programs including exhibitions, artist talks, studio demonstrations and performance.

Our History

UrbanGlass was founded on Great Jones Street by a group of recent art school graduates as the New York Experimental Glass Workshop in 1977. Created in the midst of an explosion of experimentation and creativity in lower Manhattan, our founders designed a communal space in which the costly equipment needed to work with this material would be accessible outside of university art programs and factories. Artists shared the overhead expenses of studio space and access to the unique tools, equipment and expertise required for experimentation and education in glass. The Workshop's founding made glass available to a wide range of artists in New York City for the first time.

In 1981, The New York Experimental Glass Workshop became UrbanGlass, and in 1991 we moved into a 17,000 square foot studio in Downtown Brooklyn. Almost 25 years later in 2013, we completed a three-year full facility renovation that dramatically overhauled our studios and exhibition space, expanding our footprint to include a 3,000 square foot gallery and artist-supporting retail space on the building's ground floor.

UrbanGlass is a proud anchor of the Brooklyn Cultural District, providing state-of-the-art facilities and educators for everything from glassblowing to neon tube-bending, and is the go-to resource for artists seeking to advance their craft. Our comprehensive, open-access studio addresses a critical need in the New York City creative community by providing material and technical resources coupled with professional support and learning expertise. In our 43-year history, artists including Kiki Smith, Robert Rauschenberg, Maya Lin, Tony Oursler, Doug Johnston, Tauba Auerbach, and Titus Kaphar have come through our doors to study this medium and incorporate it into their practice.

Forty years after our founding, the costs of operating an independent glass studio in New York have only risen, making the need for our programs more urgent than ever. Annually, our studio and education programs serve more than 4,000 working artists and students, including eight artist fellows and residents. In a typical year, our studios are open to artists six days a week, 51 weeks a year, from 10 AM to 9 PM. Since March 2020, our necessary closure due to COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on UrbanGlass' ability to provide in-person programs. While we have had to suspend the majority of our studio-based programs in 2020, we are looking forward to offering these programs again in 2021.

Onsite, K-12 and University students from across New York City partake in hands-on learning through our studios and exhibition programs. Our Bead Project is a transformative scholarship program for low-income area women to learn the art of glass jewelry making, with parallel coursework in entrepreneurship to develop a small business plan. UrbanGlass provides public education opportunities to people of all ages and skill levels through our extensive, year-round workshop program; including more than 200 classes in our studios. While, offsite partnerships with veterans services, senior centers, and public schools engage our neighbors.

Public engagement and discourse is offered through our year-round, free public programs, and magazine GLASS Quarterly. Free exhibitions, artist talks, performances, and Open Studios, serve a broad cross-section of our New York City neighbors. We are a destination for family-friendly activities as well as master level artists seeking in-depth engagement platforms. UrbanGlass' facilities are ADA compliant.

ADVANCE | MORE OPERA

The Association for the Development of Vocal Artistry and Neighborhood Cultural Enrichment
Manhattan Opera Repertory Ensemble
Ansonia Station Box 231152, New York, NY 10023

Testimony to the New York City Council
City Council Hearing:
BLM, Anti-Racism, Structural Racism, and the Arts

Tuesday October 20, 2020

Submitted by
Cheryl Warfield
Performing and Teaching Artist, Producer and Founder of ADVANCE/MORE Opera

Greetings. Thank you, Chair Van Bramer, Majority Leader Cumbo and Members of City Council for reading my testimony and for this hearing on Black Lives Matter and the arts. I am writing to you as an interested party by virtue of being born female and of color.

I am Cheryl Warfield, a professional opera singer and a long-standing member of SAG-AFTRA, Actor's Equity and my parent union, the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA). I am also the founder of the Association for the Development of Vocal Artistry and Neighborhood Cultural Enrichment (ADVANCE), a 501(c) 3 grass-roots non-profit and the artistic director of MORE Opera.

ADVANCE/MORE Opera showcases outstanding and diverse talent while providing outreach and educational programming to youth and seniors in underserved communities. As an African American performer and arts administrator, I am determined to contribute to the musical education of young people, showcase black themes, and highlight the diversity of what is often inaccurately considered as an "elitist" or European art form. As a producer of color, I strive to spotlight outstanding professional talent from all backgrounds who otherwise may be overlooked or ostracized. For 20 years in New York City, ADVANCE/MORE Opera has mounted dozens of public performances and conducted educational workshops and no-cost community choral training to hundreds of young people, adults, and seniors.

I have also been a teaching artist for 20 years, working with children of color in schools in all five boroughs. When Majority Leader Campo challenged arts and culture leaders at the June 22, 2020 hearing on arts funding to seize the moment during the Black Lives Matter movement to find positive solutions through arts and culture, I heeded that call, and designed and taught a free summer music program, "BLM: Songs for George – the Music of Protest" for NYC school students under the auspices of Culture at 3's "Summer in the City" arts program.

Back in the 1990's when I moved to New York from Ohio to sing at the Metropolitan Opera, I was fortunate to find modest housing within walking distance of Lincoln Center. It never occurred to me at that time that I could later be penalized for living in zip code 10023. Yet time and again since I began producing arts and educational programs in New York and applying for funding, I was told by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council that I lived in an "arts saturated" zip code making it less likely to receive funding in spite of the fact that my proposals targeted minorities and underserved audiences within walking distance of my home like the Amsterdam Houses in Lincoln Center's backyard and the Manhattan Valley community.

Cheryl Warfield
October 20, 2020
Page 2 of 2

More recently, I learned of a COVID-19 related foundation grant for New York non-profits that would have been beneficial to my organization, but when I entered the zip code, my organization was ineligible. Zip codes have been used by many grantors to identify underserved communities, but inadvertently discriminate against subsets within communities of underserved people living within more affluent zip codes. Let's face it: whether you agree that the U.S. is the richest or one of the richest countries in the world, that does not preclude our nation from having families below the poverty level. And just because the Upper West Side is currently being depicted as a NIMBY, elitist and racist community does not mean that ordinary people and artists of color and poor families do not live there.

I ask that the Department of Cultural Affairs find a better methodology to allocate arts grants in the future because using zip codes as a determination to allocate City funding discriminates against so many residents in need of services in zip codes such as 10023, 10024 and 10025 and certainly has disadvantaged my fledgling BIPOC arts organization. I suggest that a methodology like the State's new COVID-19 hotspot zones within a zip code be utilized to identify BIPOC communities in need throughout the City.

I look forward to continued conversation about race and the arts and thank you for reading my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Warfield
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MW2yGc7iTkq>