

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

Oversight Hearing

"Exploring Live Theater's Contribution to New York City's Five Boroughs"
testimony by Commissioner Kate D. Levin, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

Good afternoon. I am Kate Levin, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), and I am accompanied today by Deputy Commissioner Margaret Morton, and Assistant Commissioners Susan Chin, Kathleen Hughes, and Tim Thayer.

There is no doubt that theater is central to New York City. As Bob Holman, the poet who founded the Bowery Street Poetry Club, once said: everyone around the world can name at least two streets in New York City – the first is, of course, Wall Street, but the second is always Broadway.

As you know, Broadway, specifically, falls under the purview of the Mayor's Office of Film, Theater and Broadcasting, and I know that Commissioner Oliver is also here to testify. I will restrict my comments to the nonprofit theaters that are part of DCA's constituency.

Let me begin by giving you a summary of the direct support that DCA is currently providing through the Cultural Development Fund (CDF) administered by our Programs Unit, through the Cultural Institutions Unit, through our Capital Unit, and through Materials for the Arts.

Cultural Development Fund

For Fiscal Year 2008, our Programs Unit received 296 CDF applications from groups who present live theater. This is a jump of 68 organizations from the 228 that applied last year.

These 296 applications were 28% of the 1066 total CDF applications that we received, and interestingly, 77% of the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York's 382 members.

As was true of the total pool of CDF applicants, theater applications were split almost evenly between those with budgets under \$250,000 and those with budgets over.

The vast majority of the applications – 232 of them – came from Manhattan (and it is interesting to note that 25% of the applications came specifically from the Speaker's district). However, remember that this count is based on where the groups receive their mail – not where they deliver their services. Many of those theater companies rehearse and perform outside of their home borough.

Brooklyn had the second highest number of applicants, with 30. The Bronx and Queens had 10 groups each, and Staten Island had 9.

For Fiscal Year 2008, we funded 243 groups (or 82% of the theater applicants) with just under \$9 million (or 26% of the total available dollars).

But application and funding numbers alone do not fully illustrate the vibrancy of the theater community in New York. A much better gauge for the health of theater in New York City is how much of it is being presented. One need only look back over the past several months to get a sense that theater is growing.

Not only was this past summer the tenth anniversary of the New York International Fringe Festival – which brought more than 200 companies from all over the world to present over 1300 performance in some 20 venues over 16 days – but New York City also gave rise to two important new theater festivals.

The Latino International Theater Festival of New York launched their inaugural TeatroStageFest, which featured theater artists from New York, Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain presenting 42 performances and 6 academic panels at 8 venues that were seen by over 3,000 people. Over 178 artists – including 42 international artists and 15 local theater companies – participated, as did 1,000 students in the Playwriting-in-The-Schools Program.

In addition, New York City hosted the first National Asian American Theater Festival that was organized by three New York City Theater companies: Ma-Yi Theater, NAATCO, and the Pan Asian Repertory Theater. This inaugural Asian American Theater Festival consisted of 33 different productions by some 100 artists at 14 presenting venues (including the Snug Harbor Cultural Center in Staten Island, Queens Theater in the Park (Q-TIP), and Pregones Theater in the Bronx), and reached over 8,000 people.

Cultural Institutions Unit

Seven of the 34 cultural facilities owned by the citizens of New York City regularly present live theater as part of their seasons. In addition to Q-TIP and Snug Harbor, which I just mentioned, these also include the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), New York City Center, Flushing Town Hall, Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, and the Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival. Collectively, they receive nearly \$11.6 million annually in support through DCA.

Although new festivals are welcome additions to New York City's theatrical community, it is also wonderful to see long favorite programs flourish and expand.

The Public Theater has seen such success with both its Shakespeare in the Park and Joe's Pub programming, that they have combined these initiatives and are currently presenting Joe's Pub in the Park, which included the 40th anniversary concert of *Hair* earlier this week.

City Center has expanded its wildly popular *Encores* series into the summer – Patti Lupone starred as Mamma Rose in *Gypsy* for City Center’s first *Summer Encores*.

And BAM is about to begin their 25th anniversary Next Wave Festival, which will feature the United States premiere *Krum*, created by Poland’s TR Warszawa. (It is interesting to note that Warszawa will then return to New York in June to present a hotly anticipated *MacBeth* at St. Ann’s Warehouse.)

Capital Unit

We are currently scheduled to invest \$275.5 million in capital projects at 74 organizations that will directly benefit the theater community in New York City.

I am happy to see that Virginia Louloudes is here, and I trust she will speak to some of the building projects for which the City has partnered with the Alliance of Resident Theaters/NY that benefit the field as a whole.

Our capital projects include investing in long-standing staples of New York’s theatrical community – at the Atlantic, Playwrights Horizons, and Second Stage – as well as investing in projects at newer organizations that push and expand our understanding of theater – 3-Legged Dog, and the Chocolate Factory, for instance. We also invest in theaters that serve their specific neighborhood communities: Afrikan Poetry Theater’s three-floor facility on Jamaica Avenue in Queens that will allow them to drastically expand their public programming.

We are ever eager to invest in projects that encourage collaboration between our cultural groups, so are especially happy that the Wooster Group will find a new home in the Baryshnikov Arts Center. In addition to creating new performance space, this, importantly, is a project that will also create new rehearsal space. Having companies and space to present art are vitally important, but so is having the space in which to create and rehearse. The new community educational facility for which we are partnering with BAM will include a 269-seat theater for local and youth groups.

In addition through the HUD monies that we administer through our Community Arts Development Program (CADP), we are reaching theaters like Brooklyn’s Gallery Players (who have new audience seating) and the Nuyorican Poets Café (which has newly accessible restrooms), to the Henry du Jur Playhouse and the Manhattan Children’s Theater (two groups with whom CADP is currently working).

Materials for the Arts

Finally, through Materials for the Arts, we have over 450 groups who are registered to receive good and materials. Given the constant need that groups have for props and set dressings, this is one of the most valuable services we provide to the theatrical community.

In fact, the Holy Family Parish Players of Staten Island were recently quoted in the press as saying that they would not be able to continue without MFTA's support. I took a look at the Parish Player's last trip to MFTA, and they want home with a keyboard synthesizer, paints, plexi-glass, a lamp from The Museum of Modern Art, and theatrical curtains that had been donated by the Blue Man Group.

Contributions of Live Theater

As is true for nonprofit culture in general, there are three primary "returns on investment" that we receive from live theater: quality of life, brand identity, and economic impact.

Quality of life? Theater is certainly one of the primary elements that makes New York City such a great place to live, work, and visit. Conferences hosted in New York City regularly report attendance that is a third higher than those hosted elsewhere. People like coming to where the theater is.

Brand identity? *Avenue Q*, *A Chorus Line*, *Hair*, *Rent*, *Talk Radio*, *Urinetown* – and 76% of this year's Tony Award winners – are all plays that originated at New York City nonprofit theaters. As much as the Mets and the Metropolitan Museum, these are the things that come to mind when someone says "New York City."

Economic impact? Nonprofit theater accounts for nearly a tenth of the annual \$3 billion in direct expenditures by nonprofit cultural organizations in our City. Theater, like most performing arts, is especially labor intensive, so easily 60% of those expenditures go to artist fees, wages, and benefits to people working here.

Department of Education

Theater is also making an important contribution to our public schools. Unlike music and visual art, theater as a stand-alone art form is relatively new to New York State. It has only been since February 2004 that New York has had a recognized K through 12 theater teaching license. (Previously, theater had been the purview of English teachers.) This is why we have fewer licensed theater teachers compared with the other art forms. However, because we have such a robust theater community in this City, our schools have more partnerships with theaters than with any other art form.

These range from the New Victory making \$2 tickets available to every production, to organizations including Lincoln Center Theater, Manhattan Theater Club, and the Theater Development Fund, which combine free and reduced price ticket programs with an artist residency program.

Theater is quickly catching up to the other art forms in our schools. Not only will an exit exam in theater be piloted this year (which would entitle students who pass it to an arts-endorsed diploma, the equivalent to a Regents diploma), but our public schools are in the final stages of completing a three-year sequence and a nationally normed test in technical theater. This is both a standards and a performance-based test, and will result in our students having a leg up in getting jobs as carpenters, make up technicians, in scene and costume shops, and as theater electricians. We created these tests here in New York City, but they will be made available to school systems across the country.

In closing, I would like to thank Council Member Recchia and all the members of this committee for their continuing efforts and attention to our City's theaters, as well as to the cultural field as a whole. I look forward to our continuing collaborations, and my colleagues and I are now happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

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**Testimony of the NYC Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre & Broadcasting
to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
Intergroup**

**Update on New York City's Theatre Industry and the activities of the Office of Film,
Theater and Broadcasting**

September 25, 2007

Good afternoon. I am Katherine Oliver, Commissioner of the NYC Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the City's theatre industry.

The Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting (MOFTB) was founded in 1966, with a mission to develop and increase employment and investment in New York City's entertainment industry. Theatre is a major component in this industry, and in keeping with our mission, MOFTB is committed to cultivating this sector. As part of this effort, we have worked to create and promote other existing incentives that support the theatre industry, including the "Made in NY" Discount Card and the Commercial Rent Tax Exemption and Sales Tax Exemption.

Another component of the MOFTB's commitment to the theatre industry is its involvement with the Summer Play Festival and its subsequent educational panels. As a promotional partnership, the SPF works in conjunction with the MOFTB to curate these panels, provide a venue for the panel, and provide outreach so that potential audiences are aware of the events. The MOFTB has provided free advertising space as exemplified in the office's "Made in NY" Marketing Incentive program, and has announced SPF participants and productions on its website.

Promoting the Theatre Industry Through Incentives

As most of you know, the Commercial Rent Tax Exemption offers theatrical productions in parts of Manhattan an exemption from rent tax for the first 52 weeks of production, and has been in effect since 1995. In that year, New York City enacted a new law under a subsection of the Commercial Rent Tax. The incentive applies to productions which use taxable facilities and are located on or south of the south side of 96th street in Manhattan. We promote this incentive on our website and look forward to finding additional ways to collaborate with you on sharing this incentive with the theatre industry.

In addition, we continue to make revisions to reflect progressive changes in the incentive structures such as the recent one in 2005, when the City adopted rules interpreting the statute to include dance plays among the theatrical works that qualify for the tax exemption and to further define when the production of a theatrical work begins. Under the new rules, productions which move from outside Manhattan or from a non-profit to a commercial theatre are entitled to start their 52 week clock afresh. Incentives such as these give more support and longer life to our vibrant theatre community.

The MOFTB also promotes the Sales Tax Exemption which can be an incredibly useful incentive for participants. Sales tax on most goods and services used for the production of live theatre in New York is exempt. This includes tangible personal property and services.

We recently extended an existing program to theatre, in an effort to bring down the cost of not-for-profit theatre productions. The Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting provides "Made in NY" Discounts Cards to theatrical productions. The card, which is produced in conjunction with HSBC Bank USA, N.A., provides discounts from over 760 partners – and the number continues to grow. These vendors cover anything from accounting services to catering to flowers & gifts, restaurants, and more. While the cards do expire, they can be renewed quarterly and are available by simply coming to our offices and filling out an application

To be clear, one of the MOFTB's missions is to increase business for the local theatre industry. Having a "Live Theatre Week" in New York City would certainly be a positive step in that direction. In the past, we've supported film festivals and other cultural events around the city's five boroughs (including the Summer Play Festival) through our "Made in NY" Marketing Incentive program.

The Marketing Incentive program provides free advertising on bus shelters and other media throughout NYC. It's something that, based on availability, the MOFTB could potentially offer in support of "Live Theatre Week". Additionally, we release a monthly, online newsletter to over 15,000 subscribers. The MOFTB newsletter has the potential for calls to action and other supports.

Finally, it isn't unusual that a film, television, or commercial production will be active in the vicinity of a theatre. The MOFTB is committed to negotiating the needs of the theatre, which often include noise and traffic coordination, and the production.

Educational Initiatives

In 2006 (and past years) the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting and the Living Room for Artists/Summer Play Festival produced four panels addressing careers in theatre management, theatrical production and support, and acting. The panels examined "Careers in Theatre Management," "Careers Backstage," "Actors and the Casting Process", and "Producing 101: How to Get a Show Up and an Audience In". The panels were free and took place at the Acorn Theatre in Theatre Row on Saturday mornings. We welcome your feedback on additional ways that we can invite your constituents to join us for these panels.

In addition, while these panels typically take place in the fall, the MOFTB and SPF held another panel that served as a case study to creating a musical. "Grey Gardens: The Creation of a Musical" featured a conversation with the show's lyricist, Michael Korie, director, Michael Greif, and producer, Randall Wreghitt. The MOFTB is currently

working with SPF on the fall 2007 lineup of panels, which we hope will be just as, if not more successful than in previous years.

**Testimony to the
City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations**

Councilman Domenic M. Recchia, Jr., Chairperson

Wednesday, September 24, 2007, 1:00 PM
Council Chambers, City Hall
NYC

Presented by
Virginia P. Louloudes, Executive Director
Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York (A.R.T./New York)
575 Eighth Avenue, Suite 1720
New York, New York 10018

Introduction

Good afternoon. My name is Virginia Louloudes and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York (A.R.T./New York) the leadership organization for New York City's not-for-profit Broadway, Off Broadway and Off Off Broadway theatres.

I want to thank Council Member Recchia and his staff for inviting me to testify before you today on the importance of A.R.T./New York's member theatres and their individual and collective contributions to the cultural identity of New York City. Before doing so, however, I would like to acknowledge the incredible dedication of Council Member Recchia and his work towards ensuring that the theatre community remains in the spotlight. Through his tireless efforts and advocacy on behalf of hundreds of theatres, he has helped to ensure that we all continue to have access to the support we need to fulfill our missions and contribute to this incredible cultural sector.

A.R.T./New York

To give you a few statistics regarding the work of our nearly 400 member theatres, here is a brief overview of what the community has accomplished during this past year:

- A.R.T./New York members produced 2 of the 3 finalists for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama: *Bulrusher*, written by Eisa Davis and produced by Urban Stages, and *Elliot: A Soldiers Fugue*, written by Quiara Alegria Hudes and produced by Page 73 Productions.
- At the 2007 Tony Awards, shows from the not-for-profit sector had 76% of the total wins, including the award for Best Play, which went to Lincoln Center's production of the *Coast of Utopia*, and the award for Best Musical, which went to the Atlantic Theater Company's production of *Spring Awakening*.
- Currently, more than 3.1 million people attend New York City's not-for-profit theatres each year.

Rather than go into detail about A.R.T./New York's programs and services, which you can read about in the attached folder, I would like to highlight the contributions of just a few of our member theaters that present work in each of the five boroughs.

For instance, in the Bronx, longtime A.R.T./New York member Pregones Theater, has continued to build and enrich New York City's Latino community by creating and performing "original musical theater and plays rooted in Puerto Rican/Latino cultures," while at the same time presenting "other performing artists who share in (their) commitment to the arts and civic enrichment." (Quote taken from <http://www.pregones.org/about.html>.) (Total A.R.T./New York member theatres in the Bronx: 3, including Grimalkyn Ltd. and Mud Bone Collective.)

In Queens, A.R.T./New York member The Chocolate Factory, "supports the creation of new work in a variety of disciplines including theater, dance, music, multimedia and the visual arts ... and provides support to visiting artists in the form of dedicated access to space and technical equipment free of charge; marketing and press assistance; administrative support; and a guaranteed artist fee." (Quote taken from <http://www.chocolatefactorytheater.org/about.html>.) Through their work, The Factory provides Queen's residents and those from the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island, with access to new works that are affordable and truly one of a kind. (Total A.R.T./New York member theatres in Queens: 20, including Queens Theatre in the Park, Astoria Performing Arts Center and Thalia Spanish Theatre.)

In Brooklyn, A.R.T./New York's own South Oxford Space is home to 24 theatre companies, that have offices at the space and present productions throughout the year that are affordable and accessible to Brooklyn residents and those from throughout New York City. Additionally, South Oxford Space provides community outreach activities, such as our annual Halloween Party and Summer Youth Theatre Festival. (Total A.R.T./New York member theatres in Brooklyn: 62, including The Gallery Players (winner of the Innovative Theater award for their production of Urinetown, The Musical), Narrows Community Theatre and Ryan Repertory Theatre.)

In Staten Island, A.R.T./New York member Sundog Theatre provides residents of Staten Island with "contemporary and original theatre" geared towards adults and children. Sundog also offers professional touring performances and arts-in-education programs for Staten Island schools. (Total A.R.T./New York member theatres in Staten Island: 1)

Which brings us to Manhattan, the heart of New York City's cultural community and home to nearly 300 of our members, which create, present and produce live theatre for all New Yorkers.

To highlight one of our Manhattan members, I would like to focus on Peculiar Works Project, a company dedicated to creating "fresh, intelligent performance that is accessible and fun for diverse audiences." (Quote taken from http://www.peculiarworks.org/PWP_about.html.) During the past year Peculiar Works has presented two productions that have not only entertained, but taught audiences about the rich cultural histories of the East and West Village. Titled *OFF Stage: the East Village Fragments* and *OFF Stage: the West Village Fragments*, these productions celebrated the birth of downtown theater through walking performance. These performances could be seen by all New Yorkers, as they were presented on the streets of the East and West Village, and paid tribute to the history of the Off Broadway Theatre community.

What all these groups have in common, is that they play a vital role in sustaining the cultural community within their neighborhoods and the cultural identity of New York City as a whole. Without groups such as these many residents of the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island and Manhattan would not have access to live theatre. By providing theatre that is accessible and affordable, these groups and others like them, help to ensure that all New Yorkers benefit from living in the cultural capital of the world.

On a separate note, I would like to urge the Council to support the cultural organizations in their districts by advocating on their behalf and providing them with as much financial support as possible. By helping the theatres and cultural groups within your communities, we will all reap the benefits of living and working in this culturally diverse city. Thank you again to Council Member Recchia for his steadfast support and for continuing to be a friend to our member theatres and cultural organizations throughout the five boroughs.

In closing, please know that I applaud your work to pass resolution 273 and will encourage all of our members to help promote "Live Theatre Week" in New York City. Thank you again for your time and for your dedication to promoting theatre throughout the five boroughs. I look forward to working with you and your staff in the months ahead and hope to help make "Live Theatre Week" a success.

**Testimony of Charlotte St. Martin
The League of American Theatres & Producers, Inc.**

**Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and
International Intergroup Relations
New York City Council
Wednesday, September 26, 2007 at 1:00 p.m.**

Good afternoon Chairman Recchia and Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, I'm Charlotte St. Martin, Executive Director of the League of American Theatres and Producers, the trade association for the Broadway theatre industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the contributions that Broadway theatres are making to New York City's five boroughs and to the proposed Resolution 273-A designating the last week of each January to be known and celebrated as "Live Theatre Week" in New York City.

Broadway is the #1-cited reason for visiting New York City for pleasure and the engine that drives tourism here in New York, and Broadway's health is intrinsically linked to the economic well-being of the city. Last season on Broadway (June 2006 – June 2007) paid attendance to Broadway was 12.3 million and this is only the second time in our history that we have passed the 12 million mark. Strong attendance by tourists continued to be a driving force for these increases and thanks to the great job done by NYC & COMPANY, tourism represents 65% of the theatre tickets sold. But the other 35% comes from the Metro area and this is indeed one of our most important constituencies as they come year in and year out so a designation of Live Theatre Week every year would help to keep Live Theatre top of mind to these very important guests. And with additional support, we can work together with other live theatre organizations to promote this week nationally.

As winter is one of the slowest times for attendance in Broadway, this is a very positive move to help us improve the times when our shows need help. And, our health is also important to the health of NYC.

The League conducts an economic impact study of Broadway every two years – the next will be the economic impact of the 2006-07 season which will be done sometime this fall and we will make sure you get copies as soon as they're available. Our most recent study is from the 2004-05 season, when we found that Broadway contributed an estimated \$4.8 billion to New York City. This total comes from \$1.72 billion in impact derived from spending by all Broadway shows (primarily labor, advertising and other expenses), \$17.6 million in impact from spending by the theatre venues (capital improvements, labor, etc.) and the overwhelmingly largest piece of the puzzle: \$3.06 billion in impact from ancillary spending by tourists who came to the city specifically for Broadway. Accounting for multiple theatre visits, over 5 million visitors were in the City because of Broadway that year. The major categories of their Broadway-related ancillary visitor spending were restaurants, hotels, shopping, and transportation.

In order to ensure theatre audiences for generations to come, the League of American Theatres and Producers (soon to be called the Broadway League) is committed to getting out the message that Broadway is an open and accessible experience for all. That's why we've designed several outreach programs targeting different audiences including Kids' Night on Broadway - the annual event (now in its thirteenth year) where young people ages 6 to 18 can attend a Broadway show for free when accompanied by a full-paying adult. Last year over 20,000 children and their parents attended a Broadway show thanks to this program. Since its inception, over 200,000 people have participated in Kids' Night.

We've also found that sixty-two percent of Broadway theatergoers surveyed said that their parents or other adult family members took them to the theatre as a child or teenager, so we designed Family First Nights – a program specifically designed to encourage at risk families to attend theatre on a regular basis. Thanks to the help of funding from the DCA and DYCD through Councilman Domenic M. Recchia, Jr. and Speaker Christine Quinn, we continue to expand the number of families that participate in the program. In 2006, the Family First Nights program included 70 families (280 participants) from the South Brooklyn Youth Consortium in the Coney Island area of Brooklyn and 30 families (120 participants) from the Harlem Children's Zone who all saw three Broadway shows. After the successful expansion of the program in 2006, and with a renewal of \$35,000 in city

funding, the League added 35 families from a third borough in 2007. Councilman Thomas White, Jr. pledged his support to facilitate a partnership with The Dunton Block & Civic Association in Queens. The program included 35 families from Queens, 35 families from Brooklyn and 30 families from Manhattan, for a total of 400 participants. Families saw "The Color Purple," "The Phantom of the Opera" and "Radio Golf," and took part in post performance discussions after each show with the cast and stage managers, and were given family theatre packets prior to the performances including study guides, etiquette information, and a guide to who's who backstage.

My goal for this program is to get it to 1000 families in the NYC area and the more promotion of live theatre and its impact not only on the impact to NYC's economy, but on the lives of those who attend, the better off we all are as a city.

Traditionally, the holiday months are the biggest draw for Broadway shows. But as soon as the year is over and the tourists head home, Broadway invariably suffers. In the past four seasons, the average seated capacity during the week of New Year's Eve was 92% but by the last full week of January and the first week of February, capacity sank to 73% -- over a 20% loss. Therefore, the League is a proponent of Live Theatre Week because it will help increase attendance, keep Broadway in the public eye and give shows that struggle during winter a chance to stay open longer.

I'd like to acknowledge Speaker Quinn, Commissioner Oliver, Commissioner Levin and the Mayor's office for the vital role each plays in enhancing the experience of visitors to the theater district. I am very grateful to the City of New York for its past support of Broadway and look forward to our continued collaboration. We look forward to working with the City Council and the Administration to maximize the good intentions behind the Live Theatre Week Resolution. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.



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ANGEL GIL ORRIOS
Artistic/Executive Director

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of Thalia Spanish Theatre, Queens' **ORIGINAL** home for **Latino culture**.

Every month is Hispanic Heritage Month at Thalia Spanish Theatre. You don't have to wait for October to roll around each year to experience Hispanic theatre, music, and dance: We serve the diverse Hispanic community and promote its rich culture to all people, year-round, with every show we produce. **FOR 30 YEARS** we have been the **only BILINGUAL Hispanic theatre in Queens**. We bring **thousands of visitors to Queens each year**.

Our roots in the community go very deep. More than half of our staff and artists live in Queens. Forty percent of our audience lives in Queens. We serve a Hispanic community of at least **ONE MILLION** from every Spanish-speaking nation in the world. **Our artists and audiences patronize local businesses, helping to keep our community's economy vital and competitive.** We've even fostered our very own "Restaurant Row" across the street: an Argentine steakhouse and two Colombian restaurants.

We produce our plays with alternating performances in English and Spanish to be accessible to everyone. Our concerts and dance productions transform language barriers and speak to people of all backgrounds. In our intimate space, they sit side by side, swept up in the beauty and magic of Hispanic culture. For those of other cultures, it's a real revelation. In our local park, hundreds of folks from all around the world come together to enjoy our free outdoor concerts. Their elders sit in the sun and relish the music; their children dance together, unable to resist the Latin rhythms.

On our stage, Hispanic people are represented as *real* people, not as caricatures or stereotypes. We emphasize positive roles for Hispanic artists, and offer them opportunities and exposure that are difficult to attain in the "mainstream" theatre. We provide substantial work for emerging and established Hispanic actors, many of who are respected and experienced professionals in their homelands, but as immigrants to the US are overlooked or at best typecast. We help diversify New York's theatre community so that it better reflects our city's changing population. By doing so we make theatre in New York accessible to thousands of Hispanic people who feel shut out by language and cultural barriers, ensuring the health and survival of live theater as it struggles to remain relevant.

Our home in Sunnyside, Queens, is literally off-off-Broadway, but we play a crucial role in the ongoing drama of New York City's theater saga. Thank you for recognizing the importance of theater in New York City, for all people, in all five boroughs.

Kathryn Giaimo
Administrative Director, Thalia Spanish Theatre
September 26, 2007



Good Afternoon Councilman Recchia, members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and Intergroup Relations. My name is Arne Gunderson. I am the Eastern Regional Vice President of Actors' Equity Association and a working actor. I want to thank you for this opportunity to express Equity's support of Theater Week here in the five boroughs of New York.

Actors' Equity Association represents more than 46,000 professional stage actors and stage managers nationwide – approximately 17,000 of whom live and work in the greater metropolitan area. In 2013, Equity will celebrate its 100th anniversary and throughout our history, we have grown and developed with the theater industry in America. As professional stage actors and stage managers we work with some of the most creative individuals in the world –directors, playwrights, musicians, composers, choreographers and stagehands.

Live theater is an important cultural, economic and educational resource for our city and Equity enthusiastically supports Theater Week in January, 2008. The creation of Theater Week will bring attention to this dynamic art form and celebrate theater at all levels in our five boroughs, whether it is a Broadway show or a small local theater company with a limited budget and big dreams. Just as Broadway is an important economic driver for New York City, Theater Week will acknowledge the many contributions theaters in the boroughs make to their communities. Wherever a theater is located, small businesses and neighborhood revitalization flourish.

Our city is truly a cultural capital because here in New York we have a wide variety of theatrical venues in every borough that reach audiences of all ages, backgrounds and incomes. This cultural richness is an important element for those of us who live and work here and is an important draw for tourists as well as a destination for theater professionals from around the world. On any given day, people can see theater on the Broadway stage, at a small Off Broadway theater, in a park, in a publicly owned facility, and in our schools.

Live theater also has a direct impact on our young people and is fundamental to their education. Studies have shown that theater, as well as music, art and dance, in the classroom are essential to the creative and intellectual development of students. Young people who have arts as part of their education achieve higher test scores, have a broader vocabulary, and are more proficient in math and science. Theater in the classrooms also has a positive impact on future audience development, overall cultural literacy and is an investment in our children's future.

Again, I would like to reaffirm Equity's support of Theater Week and applaud you for your efforts to shine a spotlight on Live Theater in our city.

Coalition of Theaters of Color (CTC)

Background

CTC is a historic assemblage of several the oldest ethnically specific multicultural theatrical institutions in New York, the “Cultural Capital of the World”. These venerable institutions, each 25 years old or more, include *The Billie Holliday Theatre; Black Spectrum Theatre; International Arts Relations, Inc. (INTAR); The National Black Theatre; The New Federal Theatre; The New Heritage Theatre; The Paul Robeson Theatre; and Thalia Spanish Theatre.* (Kathy, please alphabetically add the new membership)

The CTC was first convened in 2004 by the late great Ossie Davis, and the revered Miss Ruby Dee, to address the inequity of funding to these cultural institutions, not only relative to their mainstream counterparts throughout the State, but also to the changing demographic profile of people of color who live, work, and support New York; and whose histories, cultures, and life experiences are represented on CTC stages. Historically, CTC institutions, and the many arts organizations of color throughout the State, while representing the artistry and cultures of a growing majority of New Yorkers, receive less than 1% of the total funds for the arts and culture in New York.

Collectively, CTC member theatres represent over 200 years of producing hundreds of World Premiere productions; presenting the critically-acclaimed, award-winning artistry of many of the finest actors, directors, playwrights, musicians, choreographers, artisans, technicians, and producers to have worked on stage, in television, or on film; and of promoting some of the greatest new and established artistic works of African and Latino origin to the people of New York City. Additionally, these institutions have served for decades as the meeting places, cultural centers, and ‘safe havens’ for the communities in which they operate, each year serving literally tens of thousands of New Yorkers, providing vitally needed cultural, educational, social, and economic resources and opportunities for youth, families, and members of society at large.

Mission Statement

To empower theatrical institutions of color in New York State by increasing the funding, support and heightening the awareness of their programmatic activities. To ensure their sustainability, legacy and preserve their longevity. To promote and preserve the significance of member institutions to the State- wide, regional, national, and international political landscape. To establish parity in funding and resource allocation between member institutions and their mainstream counterparts. To promote cooperation, interdependence, collective advancement, and the transfer of legacy among member institutions, the many communities we serve, and the generations yet to come.

THE COALITION OF THEATERS OF COLOR

BILLIE HOLIDAY THEATRE

Brooklyn, New York

Serving some 30,000 people annually for more than 30 years, the AUDELCO and Obie award-winning Billie Holiday Theatre has garnered a well-earned reputation for providing outstanding professional theater productions at affordable prices. The 200 seat theater has a 40 week season and serves as a training ground for aspiring theater professionals. It has nurtured the careers of Oscar-nominated actor Samuel L. Jackson; multitalented performer, choreographer and director Debbie Allen; television, film and theater producer Samm-Art Williams; musician, composer and playwright Weldon Irvine (TO BE YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK); actress Tichina Arnold (Fox Network's *Martin* and CW's *Everybody Hates Chris*); award-winning scenic designer Felix Cochren and many others. The Theatre is the original New York producer of many hit shows, including LOTTO; INACENT BLACK AND THE FIVE BROTHERS, which went on to Broadway and starred Melba Moore; ONE MONKEY DON'T STOP NO SHOW, which toured nationally with Kim Fields and Ted Lange and the musical, OVER FORTY.

BLACK SPECTRUM THEATER

Queens, New York

Founded in 1970, Black Spectrum Theatre Company produces and presents theatre, films, and videos examining issues of concern to the African-American community, particularly African-American youth. At our 400-seat state-of-the-art theatre, we serve more than 25,000 audience members annually. We reach many thousands more through our nationally distributed social issue video series and tours and workshops for underserved communities. Black Spectrum is the only professional theatre company reaching out to people of African-American descent in southeastern Queens. We serve the large African-American, Caribbean-American, and Latino populations of Jamaica, Hollis, St. Albans, and Laurelton, and diverse audiences throughout the country.

H.A.D.L.E.Y. PLAYERS

New York, New York

.In 1979, Gertrude Jeannette founded the H.A.D.L.E.Y. players in Harlem, New York to give artists a chance to develop their talents and skills in the theatre and to enrich the cultural life in Harlem. The H.A.D.L.E.Y. Players presents professional theatrical productions and provides developing artists who are not regularly employed an opportunity to sharpen their crafts. Jeannette has gone on to direct, produce and write her own plays as well as the works of other playwrights. Ms. Jeannette has been honored with several awards for her work and accomplishments. In 1991, she was honored as a living legend at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and in 1998, she was honored with the Lionel Hampton Legacy Award. Jeannette was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame in 1999, and in 2002, she received the prestigious Paul Robeson Award from the Actor's Equity Association.

INTAR

New York, New York

INTAR, one of the United States' longest running Latino theater producing in English, works to: Nurture the professional development of Latino theater artists; Produce bold, innovative, artistically significant plays that reflect diverse perspectives; Make accessible the diversity inherent in America's cultural heritage. Through an integrated program of workshops, productions of works in progress, and mainstage productions, INTAR continues to raise standards of the theater arts. INTAR brings to the public vital and energetic voices of both promising and accomplished Latino theater professionals, replacing stereotypes while giving expression to the diversity and depth of today's Latino-American community.

NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE

New York, New York

NBT's Institute of Action Arts operates from an African context of a spirit culture. It began in 1968 as a 501(C)(3) organization and center for research & development known as the National Black Theatre Workshop Incorporated. NBT has since grown into an institution providing an alternative learning environment offering organizations and individuals, specifically those of African descent born in America, a space to discover, explore, nurture, articulate, address and heal the negative attitudes and emotions blocking freedom of expression. Participants are able to fully express dignity, respect and cultural values of self-love. NBT, entering its 34th year of existence, serves its purpose through by offering workshops, symposiums, and special events under the Theatre Arts, Communication Arts and Entrepreneurial Arts programs.

The mission of the National Black Theatre is to gift the Harlem community with a viable and highly visible permanent cultural and educational institution that offers people an alternative learning environment. This creative factory is designed to capture the ethics of self-respect, self-worth and self-love through the creativity of art that flows through the heart. This cultural institution encourages family, unity, oneness, and responsibility by developing the business and spiritual principles of ownership, entrepreneurship, and self-empowerment in individuals and the community at large.

NEGRO ENSEMBLE COMPANY

New York, New York

The Negro Ensemble Company was founded in 1967 by actor/producer Robert Hooks, playwright Douglas Turner Ward and theater manager Gerald S. Krone. The company was designed to produce professional theatre in which Black artists, performers, writers, directors, actors, and craftspeople could oversee their own creative destiny. The mission of the Negro Ensemble Company, Inc. (NEC) is to provide African-American, African and Caribbean professional artists with an opportunity to learn, to work, to grow and to be nurtured in the performing arts. The overall mission of the NEC is to present live theatre performances by and about black people to a culturally diverse audience that is often underserved by the theatrical community.

THE NEW FEDERAL THEATER

New York, New York

For over 35 consecutive years, New Federal Theatre (NFT) has produced full seasons of excellence in the theatre and is regarded as one of this nation's premier theatrical institutions. NFT has pioneered in the development of new theatre concepts and has provided an avenue for the emergence of African American talents who have become major forces in the theatre, television and motion picture industries. Highlights of NFT's achievements include: More than 180 theatrical productions. Over 5000 performances. Providing opportunities for over 1000 actors, directors and scenic artists.

NEW HERITAGE THEATER

New York, New York

New Heritage Theatre Group (NHTG) is the oldest Black nonprofit theater company in New York City. NHTG was originally established in 1964 under the name New Heritage Repertory Theatre by the late Roger Furman, a revered playwright, director, actor and lecturer who began his career in the 1940s with the American Negro Theatre in Harlem. It was created to present entertaining, informative and quality productions and to preserve and institutionalize classic works of Black theatre. It features New Heritage Theatre Group, dba Furman Theatre Rep, IMPACT Repertory Theatre, and New Heritage Films.

PAUL ROBESON THEATER

Brooklyn, New York

The Forty Greene Avenue Cultural Center, Inc./Paul Robeson Theatre (PRT) is a 501(c)3 non-profit arts organization which serves as a forum for artists and community to create, develop, produce, present, and preserve the experience of people of African descent.

Founded in 1980 by Dr. Josephine English, M.D. to exemplify the spirit and impact of the legendary Paul Robeson, PRT promotes the performing, visual, and literary arts as an educational tool to expose youth and families of the neighboring Fort Greene, Bedford Stuyvesant, Williamsburg, Clinton Hill, and other communities of New York City to the rich histories, cultures, positive lifestyles, and educational opportunities found in these stories.

Guided by a commitment to "make a positive contribution to society and to create a healthier, safer, and better world," PRT produces and presents critically acclaimed productions; fosters collaboration between emerging and established artists; and offers training and production opportunities in the performing arts as a vehicle through which human development and education are advanced. By placing special emphasis on youth development as a cultural investment, PRT strives to ensure that one of the few independently owned and operated Black non-profit theatre arts institutions in New York City continues to thrive well into the future.

Programs & Activities: Mainstage Productions (Theatre, Dance, Musical, Film/Video, Literature, Multidisciplinary); Co-Productions; Staged Reading Series/Workshops; Rehearsal/Performance Space Rentals; Arts Education; After-School/Summer Arts Camp; Creative Theatre Workshop for Youth; Community Initiatives

THALIA SPANISH THEATRE

Queens, New York

Every month is Hispanic Heritage Month at Thalia Spanish Theatre, Queens' *original* home for Hispanic culture. Established in 1977, Thalia Spanish Theatre celebrates the vibrancy and diversity of Spanish and Latin American culture with unique productions of plays, musicals and dance. Winner of the 1997 New York State Governor's Arts Award, this professional theatre produces BILINGUAL play performed alternate days in English and in Spanish by Spanish and Latin American authors. The theatre also produces Folklore Shows of music and dance like its popular COLOMBIAN FANTASY, along with World Premiere original dance musicals fusing Hispanic music and dance with American musical theatre style. Thalia offers Bilingual Theatre for Youth workshops and Bilingual Theatre for Children performances, and is open year-round. Every June the theatre presents THALIA AI AIRE LIBRE/FREE OUTDOORS FESTIVAL, four free concerts in Thomson Hill Park/Noonan Playground.

AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

Buffalo, New York

The African American Cultural Center has been in existence since 1958. It is the first Black cultural institution in Buffalo. Our objectives are to: stimulate growth and knowledge in Black Heritage and its cultural implications; provide and project a unified and systematic approach to learning and programming in African history, Theatre, Ethnic Dance interpretation, Music, Sculpture, Arts & Crafts, and Reading/Math. We house an African World Studies Archive, The Paul Robeson Theater, African Dance & Drum Performing Group, and a Children's African Dance & Drum Performing Group.

BLACK EXPERIENCE ENSEMBLE (BEE)

Albany, New York

BEE was founded in 1968 in Albany, NY by playwright Mars Hill. We produce original plays by Black writers and offers workshops for aspiring actors and writers.

RAPA (Rochester Association of Performing Arts)

Rochester, New York

The Rochester Association of Performing Arts, (RAPA), a not-for-profit agency, is Upstate New York's oldest professional school of performing arts for all ages. Serving a five-county area since 1978, RAPA provides professional training in dance, theater, and music for those pursuing careers or for personal enjoyment. In addition, RAPA is unique in that it provides special programs for youth at risk.

RAPA is the only performing arts school in Monroe County that educates children ages 3 years to senior citizens in a multi-discipline curriculum in dance, music, and a theater certified by the Board of Regents. Beyond classes, students perfect their skills through performances in our 160-seat cabaret playhouse. RAPA's teen and adult performances emphasize the multi-ethnic nature of our community.

THE PAUL ROBESON PERFORMING ARTS COMPANY

Syracuse, New York

Mission Statement: To provide the Central New York community with high quality theater performances coming out of the African American Tradition while at the same time providing opportunities for artists (youth and adults) from the minority community and the University student population to develop and display their skills and talents; To offer multi cultural experiences, i.e., PRPAC multicultural Youth Ensemble and co-productions of our adult theater with other theater groups; To provide university students and PRPAC with an opportunity to participate in cross generational artistic interaction; To give each group an opportunity to display their skills and talents in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

UJIMA COMPANY INC.

Buffalo, New York

Ujima Company, Inc. serves to advance the interest and exposure of the performing arts as created and interpreted by African-Americans, by providing working opportunities for established artists and training experience for student artists. Ujima Company, Inc. is the only professional theatre company in all of Western New York dedicated to the development and presentation of work by African-American and other Third World artists. Of all the theatre companies in Buffalo, Ujima supports the longest standing acting ensemble. Ujima is among the most heralded and awarded arts organizations in the region, and was the first theatre company to receive the Outstanding Arts Organization award given by the Greater Buffalo Chamber of Commerce and the Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County.

MEMBER LIST – THE COALITION OF THEATERS OF COLOR as of 3/1/2007

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NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE
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