

**Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 172**

**Is your organization a 501(c)3 nonprofit?**

Yes

**According to your 501(c)3 letter, in what town is your official office located?**

Hartford

**Where will your project be performed or exhibited?**

Hartford

**Will this activity occur after February 1, 2023?**

Yes

**Are you a recent grantee?**

No

**Organization Name**

HartBeat Ensemble

**Organization's IRS Tax ID #**

061633100

**Principal Contact Name**

Rhoda Cerritelli

**Title**

Managing Director

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United States  
[Map It](#)

**Website**

<http://hartbeatensemble.org>

**Amount requested this application**

\$10,000.00

**What is the organization's mission/vision statement?**

## **Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 172**

Founded in 2001, HartBeat Ensemble's mission is to create provocative theater that connects our community beyond traditional barriers of race, gender, class and geography.

### **Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.**

HartBeat Ensemble is the only institution in Hartford that is consistently using theater to speak powerfully across different generations, races, populations and interest groups. As an ensemble of artist-activists, we create as well as present innovative productions based on critical civic issues. HartBeat offers audiences the chance to experience and respond to the work they have just seen through live performance and guided conversations.

Our reimagined program structure includes:

- HartBeat Repertory: a diverse program of contemporary, classic, and ensemble created political plays that represent the multiplicity of cultures at the heart of Hartford.
- HartBeat Presents: a curated performance series of contemporary and socially pertinent work by local, regional, national artists.
- HartBeat Forum: often in partnership with civic or social organizations, HartBeat uses theater, performance and facilitated dialogue to engage the community about a specific topic and/or geographical location.
- HartBeat LifeLong Learning: a series of paid internships for youth ages 16-21 in play creation; new program of anti-racism training for K-12 and higher education teachers and administrators.
- HartBeat Rental Program: offering our community of artists/companies a fully equipped theater to create, rehearse and present their work at a subsidized rate.

### **Describe the demographics of your audience/people served by your activities.**

Our neighborhood, Asylum Hill, has an African American population of 53% and is among the poorest in Hartford, a city that continues to be confronted with racial, economic and social inequities. We expect that audiences for My Children! My Africa! will mirror our existing audience: 16% Hispanic or Latinx, 23% Black or African American, 51% White and 7% Multi-racial/other. 39% of are between 13-44 years old and 33% are men.

### **Describe your organization's governance.**

Meetings take place quarterly, with an average attendance of 90%. Our board reviews financial reports quarterly such as profit & loss, cash-flow, account payable and receivables schedules and balance sheets.

In August 2019, the Board appointed Godfrey L. Simmons Jr as Artistic Director to lead and reimagine what it is to be an ensemble theater company in Hartford and to continue to build upon the Ensemble's long, celebrated history of creative, educational and community-inspired work.

### **Describe the diversity of your board.**

HartBeat's Board of Directors is currently comprised of seven people. Our board demographics include: 14% Hispanic or Latinx, 44% Black or African American, 42% White. Fifty percent of our members are from the Greater Hartford Area and 85% are women.

### **What percentage of your board makes personal financial contributions to your organization?**

50% of the board makes personal financial contributions.

### **Project Name**

## **Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 172**

My Children! My Africa!

### **Is this project related to the Visual Arts?**

No

### **Project Description**

HartBeat is requesting support for the presentation of *My Children! My Africa!* a gripping, eloquent drama written by Athol Fugard. Presented by HartBeat Ensemble, this play will open at the Carriage House Theater on Nov 11 and continue through Nov 28. Performances are scheduled for Fri-Sat at 7:30 pm and Sun at 2:00 pm. Artistic Director Godfrey L. Simmons Jr. will be joined by New York-based actors Jelani Pitcher and Brianna Ford to bring this story to life. The piece is directed by Melanie Dreyer. The performances will be preceded by a one week rehearsal in Hartford.

The play confronts the tragedy of apartheid in this compelling tale set in a segregated township in 1984. In the face of increasing racial tension, a humble and humane black teacher attempts to persuade his best student that education, not violence, is the answer to South Africa's problems. The play helps us ask the question, how do you dismantle structural racism or smash the patriarchy?

### **Total estimated project budget**

\$41,100.00

### **Project start/opening**

11/11/2022

### **Project end/closing**

11/28/2022

### **Project venue**

Carriage House Theater

### **Project town**

Hartford

### **Admission fees, attendance, and activity details**

In keeping with HartBeat's desire to introduce non-traditional audiences live performance experiences, tickets will be reasonably priced and accessible to communities of all financial abilities (\$25 general; \$20 Let's GO Arts! members, student & senior) As always, we will promote a "no one turned away for lack of funds" policy that is listed on all our promotional materials. We expect our audience to reach close to 900 people, with the majority being Hartford residents.

### **How do you intend to promote/market this project?**

Our media mix includes both traditional and non-traditional/digital components. Traditional media includes posterage as well as distributing press releases to local media about the program. We employ social media tactics such as postings on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Digital tactics include targeted email blasts. We are committed to giving blocks of tickets to our partners in an attempt to encourage attendance and will rely heavily on their input about messaging.

### **How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?**

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Funding will support artist fees (actor, royalties, director, designers, photographer/videographer) as well as the production team (technical director, stage manager and crew).

### **How will Roberts support be recognized?**

The Roberts Foundation logo and listing will be prominently credited in all HartBeat's marketing materials including the website, email blasts, newsletters, house performance programs, and all printed materials. It will be displayed in all materials related to the performances of *My Children! My Africa!* Furthermore, when appropriate, support from the Roberts Foundation will be included in all curtain speeches at the Carriage House Theater and other programs related to the performances.

### **What is your organization's definition of artistic excellence?**

HartBeat's work is in, with, and through the community. Essential to this work is our shared sense of wonder with our participants. Wonder brings us together ready to engage. Through that curiosity, truths emerge that are specific to our community. The uncovering of truths prompts an increase in activism throughout our community with the goal of yielding more and more justice. Through our work, we recognize that a community uplifted by the power of justice finds itself open to more wonder yielding more truth and again more justice in a virtuous circle until justice achieves its goal: liberation. The spirit of this cycle—the simple beauty and raw disruption of it—is at the heart of the HartBeat.

### **How does this project align with that definition, and how does it advance your mission?**

This statement of Artistic Excellence was arrived at through deep conversations with representatives of our board, our ensemble, and our staff. It combines with our mission statement to state our dedication to providing a workplace and an audience experience that is founded on the tenets of the Beloved Community, where all people are celebrated and have the right to live, play, and work in an artistic environment that is safe and celebratory.

### **How will your audience and the community benefit from this project?**

The presentation of *My Children! My Africa!* provides the opportunity to inspire conversations through the lens of history. It is critical that audiences have the opportunity to learn from past classrooms, past teachers and students, lessons learned and already forgotten. How can we step back now to reflect on how this moment in the American Experiment compares with the past and what it may say about the future?

The presentation of *My Children! My Africa!* will provide HartBeat the expanded opportunity:

- To continue an honest dialogue about race, art and politics in our community.
- To continue the practice of sharing stories with our community to address issues of privilege, power and inequity.
- To continue to work with the following institutions to deepen and/or forge new strategic partnerships with UConn Hartford, Capital Community College, and the Dodd Impact Center for Human Rights.

### **How will this project be evaluated?**

HartBeat evaluates the project outcomes by collecting information through surveys from each performance. These anonymous surveys ask basic demographic questions such as household income, zip code, and ethnicity. The second half of the questionnaire asks the audience member to evaluate the performance. HartBeat encourages participants to fill out the surveys and we explain the importance of collecting this information to our mission and work. The demographic data helps us evaluate the success of our audience outreach efforts to non-traditional audience members and the program feedback helps us to examine the artistic efforts of each presentation.

### **Cover letter**

**Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 172**

- [HartBeat-Cover-Letter.pdf](#)

**Board list**

- [HartBeat-Board-of-Directors.pdf](#)

**IRS 501(c)3 determination letter**

- [IRS-Definitive-Ruling-Letter.pdf](#)

**Financial statement**

- [Hartbeat-990- -2019.pdf](#)

**Last year operational budget**

- [HartBeat-FY21-Organizational-Budget.pdf](#)

**Current year operational budget**

- [HartBeat-FY22-Organizational-Budget.pdf](#)

**Balance sheet**

- [HartBeat-StatementofFinancialPosition.pdf](#)

**Project budget**

- [HartBeat-Project-Budget-MCMA-UPDATED.pdf](#)

**Does your organization produce an annual report?**

No

**Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?**

No

**Have you contacted the Executive Director by email or phone to discuss this proposal?**

Yes

**Is your cover letter signed by your senior executive? on your letterhead? with your official office address?**

Yes