

**Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 73**

**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 August 1, 2023?**

Yes

**Are you a recent grantee?**

Yes

**Enter your Report Code**

198432-Roberts2020

**Organization Name**

TheaterWorks Hartford

**Organization's IRS Tax ID #**

061172413

**Principal Contact Name**

Dina Silva

**Title**

Director of Development

**Email**

[dina@twhartford.org](mailto:dina@twhartford.org)

**Phone**

(860) 986-7457

**Address**

233 Pearl Street  
Hartford, Connecticut 06103  
United States  
[Map It](#)

**Website**

<http://www.twhartford.org>

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### **Amount requested this application**

\$25,000.00

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

TheaterWorks' mission is to produce high quality, contemporary theater that is relevant to our audiences, engages a diverse community, and provides insight into the human experience.

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

Founded in 1985, TheaterWorks was established for the purpose of providing the Metro Hartford region with Off-Broadway style professional theater. The company's artistic quality and record of achievement are embodied in its history of growth and accomplishment. TheaterWorks' success is further attributable to the specific, clearly defined vision that has shaped the organization, as well as an overall dedication to the highest achievable standards of artistic excellence.

Since its inception, TheaterWorks has produced a unique repertory reflecting the company's commitment to addressing a broad variety of issues with relevance for the community that it serves. Guided by a persuasive sense of artistic mission and strong professional management, TheaterWorks has, to-date, produced over 150 major plays, and currently presents 225 performances each season. TheaterWorks has also had their hand in developing new works, including sending shows to Broadway, off-Broadway and to other regional theaters around the country. Last year, the company had an audience base of more than 5,000 subscribers and total individual attendances of approximately 36,000.

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

TheaterWorks' introduction of new playwrights, timely social issues, and intriguing styles of theatrical presentation serves to broaden and strengthen the company's audience and has provided the basis upon which the diverse cultural and ethnic elements of TheaterWorks' audience have been brought together in new, shared experiences.

TheaterWorks' audience is made up of subscribers/members, single ticket buyers, and individuals and groups that receive tickets through the company's Education and Outreach Programs. Last year, we served more than 2,500 students. Prior to the Covid pandemic, annual attendance averaged 36,000. Of this total, 91% of attendees live in the Greater Hartford region, 6% live in Connecticut outside of Greater Hartford and roughly 3% come from out of state. Audience ethnic composition is approximately 72% Caucasian; 10% African-American; 12% Latino; 6% Asian. Median age is 48; gender composition is 66% female, 34% male. This season TheaterWorks has switched to a membership model and will stream each of its 12 production, which we believe will enable us to reach a younger, more diverse audience.

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

Despite its small size (currently 19), the Board has proven effective and committed. It is comprised of a diverse group of civic-minded individuals that care deeply about the theater and the greater Hartford community. All Board members support the theater financially with personal contributions, substantial in-kind services, and as subscribers/members. Current average tenure is 8 years. The Board meets monthly with average attendance of 80%.

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

TheaterWorks is deeply grounded in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and has recently engaged a consultant to facilitate antiracist training for the entire staff and board with the goal of becoming a model antiracist organization.

The company prides itself on the diversity of its board across all demographics: race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status. Of the 19 members, 2 are Asian, 1 is African American and 1 is Latina (21% BIPOC), with 8 (42%)

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females.

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

100%

**Project Name**

TheaterWorks August Production

**Project Description**

TheaterWorks requests funding from The Roberts Foundation to support its August Production. While the exact project has not been determined, it will be a musical directed by Rob Ruggiero that is currently scheduled to run from August 8 – 28, 2021.

Our plans are to perform live outdoors while also simulcasting each performance and we are in conversations with both Bushnell Park and Riverfront Recapture. The production will be a musical featuring two to four actors with a single, beautiful set. By limiting the amount of scenery, we are hoping to offset increased expenses for security and storage that we will incur by performing in one of the parks. We are looking for a family-friendly show – think Sweeney Todd with a TheaterWorks aesthetic. By performing at a large outdoor space, we are hoping to attract a larger and wider demographic. We have set an internal deadline of Thanksgiving to decide on the exact production and we will let the foundation know as soon as the decision is made.

**Total estimated project budget**

\$112,606.00

**Project start/opening**

08/08/2021

**Project end/closing**

08/28/2021

**Project venue**

Bushnell Park or Riverfront Recapture

**Project town**

Hartford

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

With the onset of Covid, TheaterWorks switched to a membership model from a subscription. To date, we have sold some 2,500 memberships with a goal of reaching 3,000. A single membership is \$195 for 12 productions or \$16.25 a show if paid in full. We are also offering monthly memberships for \$20.21 a month and single production streams for \$20.21. Students and libraries will get free streams.

The production is scheduled to run for 3 weeks with the potential to reach 6,000 viewers.

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

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TheaterWorks has a solid track record of garnering publicity and critical reviews in all local outlets and national trade publications. For each production, we print and mail 12,500 postcards, and distribute 200 posters and 6,000 playbills. TheaterWorks eblasts 12,500 patrons 5x each during the run for a total of 75,000 impressions. Sponsors are prominently acknowledged on the eblasts, in the curtain speech, on signage at the performance venue, theater's website and on the simulcast stream.

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

Funding from the Roberts Foundation will help cover the costs associated with the artists, including the actors and designers salaries.

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

As noted, the Roberts Foundation will be prominently displayed on all marketing material associated with the production and the season, including signage at the performance venue, in the program and in the curtain speech.

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

TheaterWorks guiding directive is to deliver a consistently exceptional and cohesive artistic product. This directive begins with the its leadership in Rob Ruggiero. Rob has a firm grasp of who we are, the work we produce and what our audience expects. Rob has established an exceptionally high standard of perfection, which he achieves by working collaboratively with the industry's most talented playwrights, designers and actors. TheaterWorks is exceptional in that though its professional designation is for a small professional theater (Equity SPT -10), it pays artistic staff at the same Equity rates as larger theaters, such as Hartford Stage and Westport Country Playhouse (LORT-B). This is an important strategic decision that allows us to hire the best, most talented actors, directors and designers. TheaterWorks' productions consistently uphold this directive by presenting stellar casts and the most accomplished artistic and production teams to audiences from the greater Hartford area.

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

The August production squarely aligns with the company's vision of artistic excellence and its mission to produce high quality, contemporary theater that is relevant to our audiences, engages a diverse community, and provides insight into the human experience. While the exact project has not yet been determined, there is no doubt that under Rob's direction the show will have exacting production values, exceptionally talented actors and musicians, and strong community connections as it will surely provide new insights and new understandings of the world around us. Moreover, by performing at a large venue outdoors we will seek to engage a broader, more diverse audience from throughout the area.

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

TheaterWorks commitment to the presentation of a diversified repertory has forged a profound relationship with a broad community. This, in turn, enables the theater to advance its unique artistic vision and ensure its ability to make bold artistic choices that have relevance for the entire spectrum of our region's cultural composition.

TheaterWorks believes that excellence in theater combines complex meaning, provides new insights and new understandings of the world around us and is relevant to all. An excellent theatrical experience can help us make sense of our place in the world, ask questions, understand answers and appreciate things we may have never before experienced.

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

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Audience make-up and development are quantified through daily reporting procedures. TheaterWorks has a unique house management style and reservation system (we know our patrons by name), which makes it possible for the theater to build its audience, one by one, relationship by relationship.

Specifically, we count house size, seats sold and the number of performances. We also count subscribers, actual attending versus total patron base. Our goal is to fill houses at an average 80-90% capacity, which is exceptional in the industry.

We also conduct post show audience surveys via email. Our audiences have been very receptive and the response rate has been excellent. At the end of the run, TheaterWorks will be able to report on what the audiences thought of the production and the theater. Other criteria for gauging success include critical review, single tickets sales including sales to new audience members, meeting outreach and education goals, as well as meeting artistic standards.

### **Cover letter**

- [TheaterWorks-Application-Cover-Letter.pdf](#)

### **Board list**

- [TheaterWorks-Board-Contact-List-2019-20-tenure.pdf](#)

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

- [TheaterWorks-Federal-Tax-Exempt-Letter-2018.pdf](#)

### **Financial statement**

- [TheaterWorks-FY19-Audit.pdf](#)

### **Last year operational budget**

- [TheaterWorks-Last-Year-Budget-Actuals.pdf](#)

### **Current year operational budget**

- [TheaterWorks-Current-Year-Budget-and-Actual.pdf](#)

### **Balance sheet**

- [TheaterWorks-Balance-Sheet.pdf](#)

### **Project budget**

- [TheaterWorks-Project-Budget.pdf](#)

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

No

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

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Yes

**Strategic plan**

- [TheaterWorks-Strategic-Plan-Final-6.12.15.pdf](#)

**Grant Report**

- [TheaterWorks-Hartford-Grantee-Reporting-Form-.pdf](#)

As noted in the final report for last year's grant, TheaterWorks will prominently acknowledge the Roberts Foundation's support of FUN HOME which was scheduled for this past summer but will now have a streaming production in April 2021.

**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