

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 191

Is your organization a 501(c)3 nonprofit?

Yes

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

West Hartford

Where will your project be performed or exhibited?

West Hartford

Will this activity occur after August 1, 2023?

Yes

Are you a recent grantee?

Yes

Enter your Report Code

157997-Roberts2020

Organization Name

Playhouse Theatre Group, Inc.

Organization's IRS Tax ID #

264840125

Principal Contact Name

Tracy Flater

Title

Co-Founder and Executive Director

Email

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Phone

(860) 523-5900

Address

244 Park Road
West Hartford, Connecticut 06119
United States
[Map It](#)

Website

<https://playhousetheatregroup.org>

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 191

Amount requested this application

\$15,000.00

What is the organization's mission/vision statement?

To provide quality entertainment at an affordable cost to as broad an audience as possible; provide opportunities for professional, emerging, & community artists; offer educational programs with visiting or resident artists & educators. All programming, partnership, governance, & organizational decisions are evaluated against our commitment to social and racial justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion for people of color, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ+ community, & all community members.

Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.

Founded in 2009 by Tracy Flater, Darlene Zoller, & Sean Harris, Playhouse Theatre Group, Inc. (PTG) has established itself as a professional theatre company attracting award-winning directors from New York City & regional theatres, as well as professional actors, playwrights, & designers. Founded in 2004 by Darlene Zoller, stop/time dance theater is our resident dance company and produces original theatrical dance and music productions and special events.

2019—our 10th anniversary year—marked a high point. Subscriptions & ticket sales reached an all-time high. The combination of robust earned & contributed income put us in a strong financial position which enabled us to both expand productions & build-out the staffing & organizational capacity required to sustain a growing professional theatre. Our artistic excellence was recognized in exceptionally positive reviews from local & regional critics & audiences, we received many awards, & our robust community collaborations with added economic value & vitality throughout the region.

Then came 2020. Like all theatres, we were forced to close our doors. The speed & magnitude of change & loss were astonishing. But resilience is in our DNA so we immediately reimagined how to “be PTG” without a theatre. All Season 12 productions and events went forward in Bushnell Park and Auerfarm, Dunkin Donuts Park baseball stadium, the Hill-Stead lawn, & online.

Last summer, the government tossed out a thin lifeline of funding and we opened our doors in September with a full season of productions. There were new operating rules, then new Covid variants, then more and different new rules, then more variants. Sometimes some seats have been filled. More often they have not. Financial losses have been substantial but thanks to support from funders like the Roberts Foundation, our loyal patrons, and donors, we are in a financial and artistic position to move forward with Season 14 with great pride and measured confidence.

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

A key factor in crafting our Main Stage Series is finding high quality productions that resonate with our diverse community & keep tickets affordable. The majority of the audience is from Greater Hartford & is a healthy mix of traditional theatre-goers & newcomers of all ages, races, ethnicity, cultures, incomes, sexual orientation & gender identity. Past methods of gathering demographics, such as surveys, have not yielded meaningful data and we continue to search for ways to improve that.

Describe your organization's governance.

Throughout the year, the PTG Board meets monthly as do the Executive, Finance, Development, and Marketing Committees. Engagement is consistently high—attendance averages 95% at Board and Executive Committee meetings, and 85% at other Committee meetings. Out of the current 16 Board members, all reliably make personally significant donations (except one who has recently suffered serious health and financial setbacks.)

Describe the diversity of your board.

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 191

Currently: 16 board members; 2% people of color; 75% female. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, several Board members were forced to step down due to personal circumstance. Our Board rebuilding process seeks to engage a full complement of 21 Board members with the focus on ensuring they are representative of all segments of the diverse community serve, and share a deep understanding of and commitment to artistic excellence, robust financial health, and exemplary governance practices.

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

All 16 current Board members, consistently make personally significant gifts, participate in fundraising events, & cultivate & solicit others to donate (one Board member suffered serious health and financial setbacks & could not give this year.) The Board is acutely tuned into PTG's financial condition & the role that contributed income plays in our solvency—60% in "normal times" & upwards of 70% since March 2020 when the pandemic decimated earned income from ticket sales.

Project Name

Playhouse on Park Season 14 Main Stage

Is this project related to the Visual Arts?

No

Project Description

The theme of Season 14 is perseverance—fitting to our entire existence but especially to the past two years, and the next few years as we rebuild audiences to pre-pandemic levels.

Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill by Lanie Robertson, is the story of Billie Holiday who persevered through a terrible childhood, abuse, & addiction. In **Fences** by August Wilson we meet Troy Maxon, a former star baseball player, who perseveres despite demons from his past. Art & love persevere in **Indecent** by Paula Vogel, a play about the controversial play *The God of Vengeance*. In the World Premiere of **Webster's Bitch** by Jacqueline Bircher, we witness perseverance against workplace sexism, wage gaps, & gender bias. In **Bandstand**, with Music by Richard Oberacker and Book & Lyrics by Robert Taylor & Richard Oberacker, we are witness to perseverance through grief and guilt in post-WWII America. In *Dance MACHINE*, stop/time dance theater's dancers persevere through time.

Total estimated project budget

\$655,240.00

Project start/opening

09/28/2022

Project end/closing

08/20/2023

Project venue

Playhouse on Park

Project town

West Hartford

Admission fees, attendance, and activity details

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 191

Prices for the Main Stage Series, 5 plays and 1 stop/time dance theater production.

Subscriptions: \$126-\$375. Tickets: \$22.50-\$55. Day-of specials & student rush: \$15. Processing fee: \$2.50. # of Main Stage performances: 151. Days open to the public: 197 includes Theatre for Young Audiences and other shows. Projections are "Covid" conservative: Total Main Stage attendance: 14,169. (12,413 paid + 1,756 comps.) 40% of capacity for individual tickets. 677 subscribers versus 1,000+ in 2019.

How do you intend to promote/market this project?

The Season 14 "Big Reveal" and subscription renewal campaign launched on May 1. Recognizing the challenges of re-engaging and expanding audiences, we have turned all marketing channels on full blast: print materials include, a professionally designed Season brochure, postcards, posters, and mailings for each production. Constantly updated social media, e-blasts, and the website. Heavy outreach to general and industry media, groups of all kinds, and collaborations with other nonprofits.

How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?

A grant from the Roberts Foundation will support a portion of production expenses including actors, directors, technical crew, music, lights, sets, and props, etc. for one, several, or all Season 14 productions depending on the Foundation's preference.

How will Roberts support be recognized?

The Foundation will be recognized in marketing materials such as the season brochure, posters, e-newsletters, social media, etc., on the website, and in the playbills. Moreover, we would welcome the opportunity to work with you to tailor other and/or additional types of recognition.

What is your organization's definition of artistic excellence?

We choose work that we are absolutely passionate about producing from a fresh and unique perspective. Work that educates, challenges, entertains, broadens minds, and resonates with diverse audiences from all walks of life. Work that appeals to traditional theatre patrons and newcomers, fosters social networks, and builds the bonds of community. Work that attracts top professional talent, brings to light challenges and injustices against marginalized communities, and gives voice to playwrights of color. Work that maximizes the unique features of our intimate theatre and that has not been seen in this area or not for a long time.

Our productions regularly receive critical acclaim, accolades, and awards which are one way of measuring artistic excellence. But an equal measure of excellence is evidenced in our lobby thirty minutes after the show when everyone is lingering, buzzing, and talking about the experience they just shared.

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

Perseverance: "persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success." The time periods, settings, and types of challenges of Season 14 vary but the productions all feature stories of fighters and survivors. *Lady D at Emerson's Bar and Grill* and *Fences* explore the Black experience in mid-20th century America. *Indecent* pays tribute to Yiddish, immigrant families, Jews, theater makers, and the women, specifically the queer women, who are erased from historical narratives. *Webster's Bitch*, the world premiere of a new work, grapples with gender and obscenity in the age of social media. *Bandstand*, a musical, examines post-WWII grief, guilt, and PTSD, through the story of a motley group of veterans who form a band unlike any the nation has ever seen. The characters' courageous responses to their challenges will resonate with audiences as they reflect on their own lived experiences, especially during the last two years of the pandemic.

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 191

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

It is during times of upheaval, dislocation, tragedy, uncertainty and fear, that people most need what theatre does best: lift spirits, lighten hearts, soothe souls, broaden minds, all while entertaining, inspiring, and educating people of all ages and from all walks of life. Theatre has the power to connect us with each other, to help us understand our dynamic environment, and to imagine new, better, different futures. The intimacy of actors and audiences gathering together at a specific time and place for a communal experience builds the bonds of community in a way little else can.

How will this project be evaluated?

We will evaluate the success of the 2022-2023 Mainstage Season by the following: attendance at performances; audience response to the show; critiques and reviews in print and online publications; interest, enthusiasm and feedback from the artists and designers employed for each production; and by awards and accolades.

Cover letter

- [PTG-Cover-Letter-to-Roberts-Fdn.pdf](#)

Board list

- [Board-List-with-Addresses.pdf](#)

IRS 501(c)3 determination letter

- [PTG-501c3-IRS-approval.pdf](#)

Financial statement

- [990-2020-PTG.pdf](#)

Last year operational budget

- [PTG-20-21-FY-Budget-1.pdf](#)

Current year operational budget

- [PTG-21-22-FY-Budget.pdf](#)

Balance sheet

- [PTG-3_31_22-BalanceSheet-1.pdf](#)

Project budget

- [PTG-Main-Stage-Production-Budget.pdf](#)

Does your organization produce an annual report?

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 191

No

Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?

Yes

Strategic plan

- [PTG-Strategic-Plan-Updated-1-17-2021-1.pdf](#)

Grant Report

- [Playhouse-Theatre-Group-Grantee-Reporting-Form.pdf](#)

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