

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

January 23, 2024

Bringing Performing Arts Experiences to Communities

The Music Center: Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County boasts world-class performing and multi-disciplinary arts that enrich and engage Los Angeles County residents and visitors through concerts, musicals, theater, operas, and dance performances. The Music Center, one of the nation’s largest performing arts centers, is home to four resident partners, including Center Theatre Group, Los Angeles Master Chorale, LA Opera, and LA Phil. While The Music Center strives to invite people from every area of the County to attend performances, it is not always feasible for people, especially those in the farthest parts of the County, to travel to Downtown Los Angeles to attend a show and participate in the arts programs produced on its campus. With that in mind, The Music Center’s arts programming division, TMC Arts, formed their Performing Artists in Schools and Neighborhoods program.

The program began exclusively for school settings with great success for more than 40 years, providing hundreds of performances to schools throughout L.A. County. In 2022, it expanded to neighborhoods through public gatherings in parks, libraries, senior centers, and civic events under the name Arts Grown L.A. Featuring a robust roster of more than 30 performing artists and ensembles and offering more than 60 distinct performances, The Music Center makes live performances accessible to residents in every region by collaborating with communities to identify relevant artists and experiences to engage communities where they are already gathered. While Arts Grown L.A. already does exceptional work, it would be mutually beneficial for residents, community organizations, and The Music Center to further increase awareness of the program.

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The array of artists on The Music Center's roster reflects the rich diversity of the County with backgrounds and styles representing many communities and genres. With performances including classical, ballet, folklorico, flamenco, mariachi, poetry, opera, jazz, musical theatre, and many other traditions from around the world, there is something for everyone to enjoy. The artists are equipped with deep knowledge about their art form and include educational content that contextualizes the performances for diverse audiences. The program's mission and outcomes align with the three main goals of the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture's Countywide Cultural Policy: (1) to invest in cultural infrastructure and access to arts and culture; (2) to advance arts and culture in every sector of civic life; and (3) to promote cultural equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging.

The program is especially important at a time when artists are still recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Otis College Report on the Creative Economy, employment in the performing arts sector in 2021 was 18.9% below 2018 levels. As artists face challenges securing regular work, the program importantly provides good-paying jobs to workers in the performing arts sector, an opportunity The Music Center is currently opening up to a broad range of artists throughout the County with an April 30, 2024 deadline to apply.

Just as the pandemic took a toll on organizations, it presented immeasurable challenges to County residents. As communities continue to regain their footing, the arts are a powerful tool that increase mental health and well-being. As cited by the National Endowment for the Arts, "the arts' impacts on health and well-being can be seen at all stages of life. From early childhood through adolescence and youth, arts education can support the social and emotional needs of students, helping them better to cope with their feelings, to bounce back from adversity, and to show tolerance and compassion for others. For older adults, greater frequency of arts participation has been linked to positive health outcomes. Creative arts therapies and arts-in-health programs can help to address specific physical and mental health conditions and can improve the quality of life for patients and their caregivers. In cities, towns, and neighborhoods, meanwhile, arts-based strategies can contribute to greater social cohesion, health equity, and community well-being."

Whether at a resource fair, community center, public park, library, or local event, artists enhance public gatherings with their passion, enthusiasm, and knowledge of the arts. Rates for hiring The Music Center's artists for a performance are fairly affordable, ranging from \$775 to \$2,350 per show. These high-caliber and engaging performances are free for the public to enjoy but have limited funding from The Music Center and partner organizations. In some cases, the cost of hosting an event could be prohibitive. It would be valuable to assess what resources may be available to assist organizations with covering the cost.

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While Arts Grown L.A. is already bringing vibrant performances to communities Countywide, it's important that as many schools, community organizations, and residents as possible—in both unincorporated areas and cities—know this valuable resource is available.

I, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Arts and Culture to:

1. Work with The Music Center to amplify multicultural social media and communications content that features information on how to access the Arts Grown L.A. initiative;
2. Work with relevant County departments, including Public Library, Parks and Recreation, Office of Education, and Countywide Communications, to share the content to help bring awareness and access to the program; and
3. Explore potential philanthropic funding streams that could assist community organizations who need help covering the cost of performances.

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