



REPORT

Report Date: October 27, 2020
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RTS No.: 14153
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: November 24, 2020
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TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services
SUBJECT: Theatre Rental Grant Allocations – Spring 2021

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve Theatre Rental Grants to 40 organizations totalling \$1,463,870 for use of the Civic Theatres from January 1 - August 31, 2021 in the amounts recommended for each organization in the “2021 Recomm.” column in Appendix A. Source of funding is the 2021 Cultural Grants Operating budget (Theatre Rental Grants).
- B. THAT, pursuant to Section 206 (1) (j) of the Vancouver Charter, Council deems any organization listed in Appendix A that is not otherwise a charity registered with the Canada Revenue Agency to be contributing to the culture of Vancouver.
- C. THAT the General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services (GM of ACCS) (or their designate) is authorized to negotiate and execute agreements to disburse the grants described in this report on the terms and conditions generally set out below, and on such other terms and conditions as are satisfactory to the GM of ACCS and the City Solicitor.
- D. THAT no legal rights or obligations are created by the approval of Recommendation A above unless and until the applicable theatre license agreement is complete and approved by the City in accordance with Recommendation C above and executed and delivered by both the grant recipient and GM of ACCS (or their designate).

Recommendation A require two-thirds affirmative votes of all Council members per section 206 (1) of the *Vancouver Charter*.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report recommends grants to 40 cultural organizations for a total of \$1,463,870, for use of the Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT) during the Spring 2021 performing arts season that runs from January 1, 2021 to August 31, 2021.

The recommendations have been made by a staff assessment process - a process that is rooted in the key directions of *Culture/Shift (C/S)*, COVID-19 recovery, and VCT Restart Plans.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On July 9, 2019 (RTS 12991) Council approved new rental rates for VCT that included both commercial and not-for-profit rental rates for three consecutive seasons from September 1, 2020 to August 31, 2023.

On July 21, 2020 (RTS 13959), Council approved 34 Theatre Rental Grants totalling \$1,230,955 for the period of September 1-December 31, 2020 for use of the Civic Theatres.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

Theatre Rental Grants (TRGs) are non-cash grants that support eligible cultural non-profit producers and presenters to access the City's professionally-equipped, downtown civic theatre venues and associated spaces: the Queen Elizabeth Theatre (QET), the Orpheum, the Vancouver Playhouse, the Annex, and ᓄᓂᓄᓄ Xwtl'a7shn (formerly known as the QET Plaza). Grants to these organizations animate the City's theatres and present a range of culturally diverse performances for public enjoyment. This program is one of many programs, awards, and services that the City offers to support a diverse and thriving cultural ecology.

The TRG program is designed to support Vancouver-based, professional not-for-profit arts and cultural organizations that have a mission to develop, create, produce, present, and disseminate artistic work for the benefit of the public and the arts sector, in any artistic discipline (e.g. Indigenous arts, community arts, dance, interdisciplinary, literary, media, multidisciplinary, music, theatre, visual arts).

This in-kind grant program provides rental subsidy and assistance for VCT costs (including a portion of event staff labour costs and in-house technical equipment) and serves a range of organizations, from large-scale year-round users through to small-sized occasional users. The program objectives are to assist organizations with artistic development, to increase their profile, and expand their audiences.

The TRG annual public call for applications was issued in January 2020 for VCT uses for the 2020/21 (Sept. 1, 2020-Aug. 31, 2021) performing arts season. Applications were received via an online submission process from 63 organizations for performances during this 12-month period. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus a pandemic and all non-essential venues and services were directed to be closed, to limit gatherings and stop the spread of the virus. As a result, many cultural organizations closed, or temporarily suspended operations, and several had to lay off staff.

During the early stage of the pandemic, staff were in review of a few key grant programs, including the TRG program. It is important to note that staff did not bring forward grant recommendations while the City was analysing the impact of COVID-19 on its finances and developing several planning scenarios to address the considerable operating budget shortfall for 2020.

Due to on-going COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary, real time, updates to programming scheduling and adjustments in order to meet the necessary health and safety guidelines, it was determined that staff present the recommendations for Fall 2020 TRG (September 1, 2020-December 31, 2020) for Council consideration as separate recommendations that were subsequently approved. The staff committed to presenting further recommendations for Council consideration and decision later in 2020 for Spring 2021 TRG (January 1 – August 31, 2021), once the applicants had a clearer idea about their Spring 2021 programming.

Strategic Analysis

Vancouver Civic Theatres are currently in Phase I of their Restart Plan, which includes providing access to Fall 2020 TRG groups to reach their audiences in new ways and to provide access to performing arts spaces as organizations seek larger spaces to ensure health and safety protocols are met including social distancing, and on-line recorded performances. VCT staff are very close to finalizing their re-opening plans to include Phase II of the Restart Plan, which includes access to additional VCT spaces and events with potential audiences, subject to Provincial Health Orders, and are targeting the start of the Spring 2021 Season as the start of Phase II of the Restart Plan, subject to final approvals by the Business Planning Oversight Committee (BPOC). VCT continue to work with the community to adapt the use of space in innovative ways to comply with new health and safety requirements. Theatre Rental Grants will support some of the most impacted performing arts groups to adjust their plans to continue to support artists, and bring content to the public in new ways (various access to VCT facilities, socially distanced audience attending events, activating non-theatre space including lobbies and *šxwł exən Xwtl'a7shn*, and digital performance experiences).

The Spring 2021 TRG season plans at VCT feature a wide range of classical and contemporary performances in dance, theatre, and music. The work reflects the diversity of Vancouver's cultural communities, which include Indigenous, East and South Asia, Latin America, and LGBTQ2+. Some examples of recommended TRG include Full Circle First Nations Performance, Allegra Chamber Orchestra, Vancouver Out on Screen Film Festival Society, Indian Summer Arts Society, and others.

The applications were evaluated by a staff team from VCT and Cultural Services using the published criteria, and cross-checking applicants' bookings and theatre availability. Grants are being recommended to applicants as listed in Appendix A (Jan. 1-Aug. 31, 2021).

Theatre Rental Grants will be conditional upon receipt of applicants' updates, detailing any necessary adaption of their programs in order to comply with VCT re-opening plans. This may include necessary health and safety protocol adjustments, to ensure safety of programmed events, and new ways of programming in VCT ancillary spaces and VCT venues, that may not be the standard VCT performing arts space of the applicants. Any grants that are reduced or canceled due to the necessary programming adjustments, will be repurposed to consider new COVID-19 recovery initiatives coming from the community to support groups' creation, development, and taking performances to the public in new ways (i.e., online, outdoor, safe rehearsal practices, creation workshops).

The TRG program is currently one of the few non-cash grants within the Cultural Services grant program portfolio. It is a direct internal transfer from the Cultural Services grants budget to the VCT operating budget. Council approved TRG are disbursed as a credit equal to the appropriate eligible event cost and is applied as rental revenue to the VCT operating budget.

Financial

This report requests approval of grants to 40 organizations for VCT uses from January 1-August 31, 2021, totalling \$1,463,870 in advance of Council's approval of the 2021 operating budget. The source of funds is to be the 2021 Cultural Services grants budget. Theatre Rental Grants are summarized in Table 1 and listed in Appendix A. Should the 2021 TRG budget remain the same as 2020 (\$2,894,608), a balance of \$1,445,298 would remain for allocation for the rest of the 2021 year. This balance would not include any potential re-allocations from the Approved Spring 2021 grants due to cancellations or underuses.

Table 1 – Summary of 2021 Theatre Rental Grants (TRG) projected allocations

2021 TRG Budget (projected to be the same as 2020)	2,894,608
2021 TRG Recommendations in this report (Jan. – Aug.)	(1,463,870)
2021 TOTAL Estimated TRG BUDGET AVAILABLE FOR ALLOCATION Sept. 1 - Dec. 31, 2021	1,430,738

CONCLUSION

Investments in selected projects will enable organizations to access VCT spaces and program events in safe and new ways, while supporting these groups' efforts to remain resilient as they respond to the on-going challenges presented by COVID-19.

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Organization	Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2021 Requested	Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2021 Recommendation
Aeriosa Dance Society	11,015	11,015
Allegra Chamber Orchestra Society	2,900	2,900
Arts Umbrella Association	44,020	44,020
Asian-Canadian Special Events Association	1,450	1,450
Ballet B.C. (Pacific Ballet British Columbia Society)	86,530	86,530
Blueridge Chamber Music Society	5,800	5,800
Chor Leoni Men's Choir	1,450	1,450
Circus 3 (Sophisticated Laughter Theatrical Society)	58,655	58,655
City Opera of Vancouver Society	8,820	8,820
The Coastal Jazz and Blues Society	163,145	163,145
DanceHouse (Seismic Shift Arts Society)	30,800	30,800
Doxa Documentary Film Festival (The Documentary Media Society)	4,400	4,400
Early Music Vancouver (Vancouver Society For Early Music)	4,350	4,350
Erato Ensemble Society	2,900	2,900
Flamenco Rosario (Rosario Ancer Flamenco Arts Society)	1,450	1,450

Organization	Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2021 Requested	Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2021 Recommendation
Friends of Chamber Music	30,800	30,800
Full Circle: First Nations' Performance Society	4,400	4,400
Hard Rubber New Music Society	2,900	2,900
Indian Summer Arts Society	16,505	16,505
Karen Flamenco Dance Society	13,200	13,200
Latincouver Cultural & Business Society	24,755	24,755
Music on Main Society	18,850	18,850
New Orchestra Workshop Society	4,350	4,350
New Performance Works Society	5,800	5,800
Postmodern Camerata Society	5,800	5,800
PuSh International Performing Arts Festival Society	8,700	8,700
Sound of Dragon Society	4,350	4,350
The Frank Theatre (Screaming Weenie Productions)	10,150	10,150
Vancouver Academy of Music	25,410	25,410
Vancouver Asian Film Festival Society	4,400	4,400

Organization	Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2021 Requested	Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2021 Recommendation
The Vancouver Bach Choir	1,450	1,450
The Vancouver Cantata Society	2,900	2,900
The Vancouver Chinese Singers Society	4,400	4,400
The Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra Society	2,900	2,900
Vancouver New Music Society	2,900	2,900
Vancouver Opera Association	41,520	41,520
Vancouver Out on Screen Film and Video Society	15,825	15,825
Vancouver Symphony Society*	772,320	772,320
Vancouver Tap Dance Society	4,350	4,350
VSO School of Music Society	7,250	7,250
Total	1,463,870	1,463,870

*as per RTS 13278