



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: April 28, 2023
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Meeting Date: May 30, 2023
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TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager, Arts, Culture, and Community Services
SUBJECT: Theatre Rental Grant Allocations – Fall 2023 and Spring 2024

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve Theatre Rental Grants (TRG) totaling \$1,349,795 from the 2023 Cultural Grants Operating Budget to the 33 organizations listed in Section A of Appendix A of this report for the amounts recommended for each organization in the “Sept. 1 – Dec. 31, 2023 Recommendation” column, for use of the Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT) from September 1 – December 31, 2023.
- B. THAT Council approve, in advance of determination of the 2024 Theatre Rental Grants Budget, Theatre Rental Grants (TRG) totaling \$1,830,195 from the 2024 Cultural Grants Operating Budget to the 57 organizations listed in Section B of Appendix A of this report for the amounts recommended for each organization in the “Jan. 1 – Aug. 31, 2024 Recommendation” column, for use of the Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT) from January 1 – August 31, 2024.
- C. THAT Council delegate its authority to execute grant agreements that include terms and conditions that are consistent with this report, that satisfy the City’s Director of Legal Services, and that disburse the grants described in this report to the City’s General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services (or their designate).
- D. THAT, pursuant to Section 206(1)(j) of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council deems any organization listed in Appendix A of this report that is not otherwise a registered charity with Canada Revenue Agency to be contributing to the culture of Vancouver.

- E. THAT, no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's adoption of these Recommendations unless and until all legal documentation has been executed and delivered by the respective parties.

Recommendations A and B require two-thirds affirmative votes of all Council members under section 206 (1) of the *Vancouver Charter*.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report recommends Grants of \$1,349,795 to 33 cultural organizations for use of the Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT) during the Fall 2023 performing arts season that runs from September 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023.

This report recommends Grants of \$1,830,195 to 57 cultural organizations for use of the Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT) during the Spring 2024 performing arts season that runs from January 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024.

The recommendations support the following key civic policy and strategic directions:

- *Culture|Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture*, the City's 10-year culture plan, including the *Vancouver Music Strategy* and *Making Space for Arts and Culture*
- The City's COVID-19 Economic and Business Recovery program to restart the economic, social, and cultural recovery of the city

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

On May 17, 2022 (RTS 14874), Council approved 42 Theatre Rental Grants totalling \$1,190,865 for the period of Sept. 1-Dec. 31, 2022 and 57 Theatre Rental Grants totalling \$1,830,685 for the period of Jan 1-Aug. 31, 2023. [Minutes - Regular Council meeting: 2022 May 17 \(vancouver.ca\)](#)

On November 16, 2022 (RTS 14830) Council approved new rental rates for VCT that included both commercial and not-for-profit rental rates for the performing arts season that runs from September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024. [Minutes - Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities: 2022 Nov 16 \(vancouver.ca\)](#)

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

The City of Vancouver has a long history of providing grants to local arts and culture non-profit organizations (NPOs). With that support, the City recognizes the role that arts and culture play in elevating the distinct characteristics of a city. This includes providing access to Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT), one of the City's cultural assets, allowing NPOs the opportunity to both, produce and present local and international artists and creators to residents and visitors of the City.

VCT as a Department within the Arts Culture & Community (ACCS) Business Unit

VCT, one of Canada's preeminent theatre complexes, operates the Orpheum (2,672 seat concert hall), Queen Elizabeth Theatre (2,765 seat proscenium theatre), Vancouver Playhouse (668 seat proscenium theatre), and Annex (191 seat multi-purpose performing arts space) on behalf of the City. In 2022, VCT worked with commercial promoters, NPOs, and community groups, hosting 893 events in all four venues, with 653,280 patrons attending both public assembly and arts and cultural events representing a diverse range of disciplines, performing arts genres, and event types.

VCT enhances the performing arts experience, and strengthens the cultural fabric of the City by hosting events that connect patrons and performers. Through state of the art professionally-equipped theatres, supported by experienced professional staff, VCT plays an integral role in the cultural health of the City by providing culture enthusiasts with access to an endless array of arts and entertainment productions, including concerts, theatre, classical music, opera, dance, film, lectures and many other varied event types.

Many performing arts centres operate as NPOs and have access to multiple sources of funding (earned, public, and private). VCT, as a municipally-owned and operated business, primarily relies on earned revenues from the following areas: venue rentals, VCT programming, food and beverage, facility fees, ticket surcharge, merchandise commission, and parking.

About Theatre Rental Grants (TRG)

TRG are one of the few offset grants that support eligible cultural non-profit producers and presenters to access VCT's professionally-equipped, downtown civic theatre venues and associated spaces. Grants to these organizations animate the City's theatres and present a range of culturally diverse performances for the enjoyment of citizens and visitors alike. This program is one of several programs, awards, and services that the City offers to support a diverse and thriving cultural ecology. If recommendations are approved, for the 2023/2024 TRG Season, VCT will provide access to a diverse range of programming in all disciplines, representing Indigenous, Latin American, South Asian, Asian, Middle Eastern cultures, and others.

Discussion

Recommendations in this report implement key directions of *Culture|Shift* and build on previous City support and investment in the vibrancy, cultural diversity and economic vitality of the city. These recommendations are for 2023/2024 Performing Arts Season that runs from September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024.

Theatre Rental Grant Program Description and Goals

The TRG program is designed to support Vancouver-based, professional arts and cultural NPOs 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, and visual arts).

This offset grant program provides rental subsidy and assistance for certain 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 to small-sized occasional users. The program objectives are to assist organizations with artistic development, to increase their profile, and to expand their audiences.

Program Guide: <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/theatre-rental-grant-information-guide.pdf>

TRG Assessment Process

The applications were evaluated by a staff team from VCT and Cultural Services using the published application criteria, while also cross-checking applicants' bookings and theatre availability. The review considers the organization's capacity to produce the event as proposed, and the community impact of the presentation. Grants are being recommended to applicants as listed in Appendix A Section A (Sept. 1 – Dec. 31, 2023) and Section B (Jan. 1 – Aug. 31, 2024).

Any grants not fully used or that are canceled will be repurposed to consider initiatives coming from the community to support groups' creation and development.

Grant Recommendations

TRG recommendations for the 2023/2024 Season are as follows:

- For the 2023/2024 TRG Season, all applicants are being recommended for a grant.
- Due to available unallocated resources in 2023 as detailed in the financial implication section, almost all organizations would receive their entire requested amount.
- For the Spring 2024, staff have proposed a conservative budget approach with a 74% funding recommendation of overall requests, as these recommendations are in advance of the 2024 budget.

TRG requests often exceed available resources. As a result, grants can range from 0 to 100% of any applicant's request. It is important to note that while the Vancouver Symphony Society is not recommended for their full request as listed in Section A of Appendix A, it is a significant increase over their previous year funding. The current recommended funding represents 47% of the total available budget for Fall 2023 and 93% of their requested amount.

Table 1 – Key Metrics: Requests vs Recommended

TRG Funding	Requested #	Recomm. \$	%	Requested \$	Recomm. \$	%
Fall 2023	33	33	100	\$1,395,885	\$1,349,795	98
Spring 2024	57	57	100	\$2,471,775	\$1,830,195	74

The recommendations are based on the published program criteria, which include:

- Equitable access to programs and services;
- Confirmed booking at a VCT venue within the 2023/2024 Season;

- Respectful and safe working conditions for artists, staff, volunteers, and contractors;
- Participation, Access and Impact (audiences and participants reflect the diversity of the city; accessibility plans and practices are in place; there is demand for the programs);
- Leadership and Administration (skilled leadership, working with artists and creative collaborators with the relevant lived experience, permission, knowledge, skills, and expertise to lead and contribute to the work); and,
- Have a mix of revenue sources (earned, private and public) for the project.

TRG Impact

As an offset grant program, TRG is an internal transfer from the Cultural Services Grants budget to the VCT Operating Budget. Council approved TRG cover the costs of appropriate, approved, eligible event costs and applied as rental revenue to the VCT Operating Budget. With this investment by Council, TRG events generate other revenue for VCT such as Food and Beverages sales, ticket surcharge and parking. On average, TRG rental revenues represent approximately half of VCT’s annual rental budget.

Table 2 – Percentage of TRG rental revenue vs Commercial and NPO (2018-2022)

Year	TRG% of overall VCT rental revenue
2018	47%
2019	43%
2020	66%
2021	74%
2022	47%

It is important to highlight that organizations that received TRG funding have contributed to over \$3.5M in food and beverage revenues for the civic theatres over the past five years.

Table 3 – Percentage of TRG rental revenue vs Commercial and NPO (2018-2022)

Year	TRG F&B	All events F&B	TRG% of overall
2018	957,760.96	3,313,691.26	29%
2019	1,055,661.51	3,387,983.78	31%
2020	192,847.62	543,542.92	35%
2021	554,560.79	802,702.55	69%
2022	810,326.00	3,449,704.27	23%
Grand Total	3,571,156.88	11,497,624.78	31%

In 2022, 214,572 patrons attended TRG events at VCT venues representing 33% of the total attendance for all events which include Commercial, NPOs, and community events. Over the past 5 years, TRG audiences accounted for an average of 39% of overall attendance at VCT.

Table 4 – Percentage of TRG Attendance vs Commercial and NPO (2018-2022)

Year	TRG% of overall VCT attendance
2018	39%
2019	39%
2020	53%
2021	60%
2022	33%

Financial Implications

The 2023 TRG budget is \$2,846,586. In May 2022 (RTS 14874), Council approved in advance of the 2023 budget, grants totalling \$1,830,685 for Spring 2023 events at VCT venues. Leaving \$1,015,901 remaining to be allocated for Fall 2023. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact numerous grantees in 2022 with artist cancellations. As such, these circumstances forced some organizations to cancel their events or move to smaller venues. In an effort to reschedule or replace these events at VCT, \$218,862 TRG funding was carried forward to 2023. As of April 28, 2023, 12 organizations have cancelled or will reduce their Spring 2023 approved bookings, thereby making \$129,815 available for reallocation to the Fall 2023 season. This will leave a forecasted total of \$14,783 of TRG to be allocated in the future, shown in Table 5.

Table 5 – Summary of 2023 Theatre Rental Grants funding

2022 Theatre Rental Grants carry forward	218,862
2023 Theatre Rental Grants Budget	2,846,586
2023 Theatre Rental Grants (Jan. – Aug.) allocated May 2021 (RTS 14383)	(1,830,685)
2023 Theatre Rental Grants Spring 2023 cancellations or underuses (as of April 28, 2023)	129,815
TOTAL FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR ALLOCATION	1,364,578
2023 Theatre Rental Grants recommended in this report – Sept. – Dec.	(1,349,795)
2023 FORECASTED THEATRE RENTAL GRANTS BALANCE	14,783

Staff are therefore recommending 33 grants totalling \$1,349,795 for Sept. 1 - Dec. 31, 2023. The source of funds is the 2023 TRG budget.

This report also requests approval of grants to 57 organizations for VCT uses from Jan 1-Aug 31, 2024 totalling \$1,830,195 in advance of approval of the 2024 operating budget. The source of funds, the 2024 TRG allocation within the Cultural Grants Operating budget. These grants are summarized in Table 6 and listed in Appendix A, Section B. Should the 2024 TRG budget remain the same as 2023 at \$2,846,586, a balance of \$1,016,391 in TRG funds will be allocated for the remainder of the year.

Table 6 – Summary of 2024 Theatre Rental Grants projected funding

2024 Theatre Rental Grants Budget (projected at 2023 level)	2,846,586
2024 Theatre Rental Grant Recommendations in this report (Jan. – Aug.)	(1,830,195)
2024 TOTAL THEATRE RENTAL GRANTS BUDGET AVAILABLE TO ALLOCATE FOR Sept. 1 - Dec. 31, 2024	1,016,391

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report’s recommendations.

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APPENDIX A

A. Sept. 1 – Dec. 31, 2023 Theatre Rental Grant Recommendations		
Organization	Sept 1 - Dec 31, 2023 Requested	Sept 1 - Dec 31, 2023 Recommendation
All My Relations Indigenous Society	53,865	53,865
Arts Umbrella Association	40,075	40,075
Asian-Canadian Special Events Association	22,550	22,550
Ballet B.C. (Pacific Ballet British Columbia Society*)	69,750	69,750
Circus 3 Arts Society (Sophisticated Laughter Theatrical Society)*	9,435	9,435
DanceHouse (Seismic Shift Arts Society)	25,370	25,370
Erato Ensemble Society	1,555	1,555
Friends of Chamber Music	17,675	17,675
Greater Vancouver International Film Festival Society	140,080	140,080
Mexican Dance Vancouver Society	4,715	4,715
Music on Main Society	4,665	4,665
Muzewest Concerts Society	1,555	1,555
Nahualli Folklore Society	1,555	1,555
New Performance Works Society	6,225	6,225
RE:Naissance Opera*	9,340	9,340
Sound of Dragon Society	3,115	3,115
The Coastal Jazz and Blues Society	15,545	15,545
The Vancouver Bach Choir	34,790	34,790
The Vancouver Chopin Society	3,530	3,530
The Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra Society	1,555	1,555
The Vancouver International Writers Festival Society	9,430	9,430
The Vancouver Men's Chorus	23,580	23,580
Vancouver Academy of Music	23,080	23,080

Vancouver Chamber Choir	25,965	25,965
Vancouver Latin American Cultural Centre Society	11,540	11,540
Vancouver Metropolitan Orchestra	11,540	11,540
Vancouver New Music Society	2,335	2,335
Vancouver Opera Association	119,815	119,815
Vancouver Recital Society	17,650	17,650
Vancouver Seniors Singing Club Association*	3,110	3,110
Vancouver Symphony Society	674,625	628,535
VSO School of Music Society	4,715	4,715
Yarilo Contemporary Music Society	1,555	1,555
Total	1,395,885	1,349,795

*SUBJECT TO CONDITION

B Jan. 1 – Aug. 31, 2024 Theatre Rental Grant Recommendations		
Organization	Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2024 Requested	Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2024 Recommendation
Allegra Chamber Orchestra Society	1,555	1,555
Arts Umbrella Association	58,975	33,005
Asian-Canadian Special Events Association	29,420	11,540
Astrolabe Musik Theatre Society	3,115	2,335
Ballet B.C. (Pacific Ballet British Columbia Society*)	139,500	131,795
BC Chinese Music Association	8,605	3,110
Blackout Art Society	7,080	4,715
Blueridge Chamber Music Society	9,330	3,110
Caravan World Rhythms Society	4,715	4,715
Chor Leoni Men's Choir	780	780
Circus 3 Arts Society (Sophisticated Laughter Theatrical Society)*	14,145	9,430
DanceHouse (Seismic Shift Arts Society)	63,705	54,245

Erato Ensemble Society	1,555	1,555
Friends of Chamber Music	28,290	23,575
Heroic Opera Society	11,670	3,110
Karen Flamenco Dance Society	11,795	11,795
Music on Main Society	41,650	28,290
Musica Intima Society	8,565	3,110
Muzewest Concerts Society	6,220	3,110
New Performance Works Society	8,560	3,110
Persian Culture and Art Institute Association (PERCAI)	15,545	11,540
PuSH International Performing Arts Festival Society	35,175	32,835
Rosario Ancer Flamenco Arts Society	2,335	1,555
Sound of Dragon Society	6,220	3,110
Taiwanese Canadian Cultural Society	9,430	4,715
The Coastal Jazz and Blues Society	179,025	62,180
The Community Arts Council of Vancouver	3,110	3,110
The Documentary Media Society	4,715	4,715
The Mascall Dance Society	5,450	3,110
The Standing Wave Society	8,570	3,110
The Vancouver Bach Choir	29,520	29,520
The Vancouver Cantata Society	2,335	1,555
The Vancouver Chinese Singers Society	4,715	4,715
The Vancouver Chopin Society	31,325	11,540
The Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra Society	1,555	1,555
The Vancouver International Writers Festival Society	16,255	4,715
The Vancouver Out On Screen Film and Video Society	14,145	14,145
Time Will Tell Arts Society	4,675	3,115
Turning Point Ensemble	6,220	3,110
Universal Gospel Choir	3,530	3,530

Vancouver Academy of Music	36,385	23,080
Vancouver Asian Film Festival Society	4,715	4,715
Vancouver Chinese Canadian Seniors Society Of Multicultural Song and Dance	4,715	4,715
Vancouver Chinese Instrumental Music Society	1,555	1,555
Vancouver Choral Arts Society	15,545	11,540
Vancouver International Burlesque Festival Association	9,430	9,430
Vancouver International Dance Festival Society	67,825	31,820
Vancouver Metropolitan Orchestra	23,080	9,270
Vancouver New Music Society	3,890	3,110
Vancouver Opera Association	244,965	244,965
Vancouver Pro Musica (Pro Musica Society of Vancouver)	2,335	1,555
Vancouver Recital Society	58,875	58,875
Vancouver Seniors Singing Club Association*	28,030	4,715
Vancouver Society for Early Music	4,715	4,715
Vancouver Symphony Society	1,100,110	859,680
VSO School of Music Society	20,970	9,430
Yarilo Contemporary Music Society	1,555	1,555
Total	2,471,775	1,830,195

*SUBJECT TO CONDITION