

Acey, David and Yvonne



AFRICA IN APRIL CULTURAL AWARENESS FESTIVAL, INC.

P. O. Box 111261 · Memphis, Tennessee 38111
(901) 947-2133 · (901) 907-0062 · (901) 678-3181
www.africainapril.org aiafest@bellsouth.net

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REV. DELNOAH WILLIAMS

April 29, 2021

Tennessee Arts Commission
Ms. Kinshna Adams, Director of Visual, Arts, Crafts,
Media and Design
401 Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. Boulevard
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Dear Ms. Adams:

We are extremely appreciative and honored to participate in the Governor's Arts Award Leadership Category to highlight and recognize leadership and excellence with Africa In April Cultural Awareness Festival, Incorporated via "The Windows of The Arts" locally, statewide, regionally, nationally and internationally for thirty- three years. As Executive Director and Associate Director, we have sponsored successful quality and professional artistic cultural programs of excellence honoring approximately twenty-seven African countries annually surrounded by 300 vendors and 30,000 attendees Beginning in 1986 with limited attendance, finances, organization and committees, a few dedicated, committed, compassionate visionary individuals and a dream for building and investing in an organization as ambassadors for "The Arts". As a result, this was a cultural journey to develop a mission, explore possibilities, analyze existing art programs, funding opportunities, 501(c)(3) status, composition and a strategic plan for implementation. This was the catalyst for our dream that became a reality designed to showcase arts and cultures simultaneously addressing the underserved populations in education, history, Afrocentricity, music, economics, diversity, elderly citizens, faith-based organizations, children, youth families, health/wellness, safety, ethnic minorities, physically challenged populations and others.

Additionally, our organization focus on a variety of other programs and disciplines engaging art appreciation, self- esteem and respect such as reading fluency, writing skills, job readiness/ placement, shadowing, mentoring, math, English, career exploration and life skills necessary for physical and social development. Consequently, Africa In April Cultural Awareness Festival is totally committed to producing exceptional committed leaders and professionals devoted to a vision of developing a cultural, artistic, creative and historical road map for discovering, preserving and sharing a rich heritage worldwide via "The Windows of The Arts". Africa In April Cultural Awareness Festival's impact and services are extremely and comprehensive and global with diverse ethnocentric populations in Memphis/ Shelby County, the State of Tennessee, regionally, nationally and abroad in select African countries and delegations. Universally, our appeal has attracted all ages, genders, social, cultural, religious, sectarians, demographics, congressmen, state representatives, presidents, executives, corporations, ambassadors, fraternal organizations, students, churches, schools, colleges, institutions, museums mass and social media. The Festival's events are held in Memphis, Tennessee at The University of Memphis Holiday Inn, LeMoyne-College, The National Civil Rights Museum, Mt. Vernon Baptist Church-Westwood, International Famous Beale Street and Robert R. Church Park.



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In 2019-2020 Africa In April encountered an unprecedented interruption with COVID-19 of our program and strategic planning. This pandemic created an international health crisis, problems and challenges- physical, financial, emotional, economical, educational, community and family. As of March 2020 festival plans, productions, marketing, advertising, logistics, contractual obligations, transportation, travels, schedules and Souvenir Books were completed for April 2020 as follows-International Executive of the Year Entrepreneurs Luncheon, International Trade Brunch Summit, International Artist Poster Unveiling Reception, International Children& Senior's Day/ Diversity Parade, International Family, Health Wellness& Community Day, International Blues Showcase and International Music, Gospel, Jazz and Reggae.

In conclusion, Africa In April Cultural Awareness Festival has received numerous accomplishments, achievements, awards, commendations and recognitions for outstanding leadership with "The Arts" as follows: The New Tri- State Defender (2009), Memphis Dailey News (2016), The Downtowner Magazine (2019), The National Association for the Study of African American Life and History Council of Special Recognition Award for substantial contributions, impact, leadership and community service (2019), The Commercial Appeal Newspaper Community Service and Leadership Award (2019), Shelby County Archives African American History Month Honorees & Legends (2019), Memphis Small Business Quarterly Magazine/ Writing By Design, honoring "Outstanding African American Educators & Leaders"(2019), Shelby County Commission Resolution Honoring and Celebrating Shelby County Living Legends (2021), "The Rise of 300 Moral Leaders Award" Ceremony Commemoration of Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. Dream & Legacy for African American Culture, Leadership, Advocacy & Philanthropy (2021).

For additional information regarding David L. Acey, Sr. and Yvonne B. Acey's community service, leadership, programs advocating "The Arts", visit [www African April.org](http://www.AfricanApril.org), and You Tube.

The following documents are enclosed- Narrative, Recommendations, Bios and a Media Release.

Thanks for your attention and consideration.

Respectfully,

David L. Acey, Sr.
Executive Director (901-315-7508)
Yvonne B. Acey
Associate Director (901- 569-9047)

Letter of Reference

March 26, 2021

Re: Dr. David L. Acey, Sr. and Yvonne B. Acey with Africa In April Cultural Awareness Festival, Inc. – Letter of Reference for the 2021 Tennessee Governor’s Arts Award.

Dear Sir, Madam:

It is my pleasure to recommend Dr. David L. Acey, Sr. and Yvonne B. Acey with Africa in April Cultural Awareness Festival, Inc. for the 2021 Tennessee Governor’s Arts Award in the Arts Leadership Award category.

For the past 33 years, Africa in April Cultural Awareness Festival, Inc. have honored numerous African countries: Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Gabon, Malia, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, the list is endless.

On those occasions, several music groups, artists, performers, painters have been invited and brought up in Memphis to perform.

Dr. David L. Acey, Sr. and Yvonne B. Acey have contributed through Africa in April Cultural Awareness Festival, Inc. to make Memphis the capital of Africa in various areas of activities, such as Arts, Culture, Economic Development, and more.

To that end, Dr. David L. Acey, Sr. and Yvonne B. Acey with African in April Cultural Awareness Festival, Inc. have my highest recommendation for a Leadership Award in the Arts category.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this recommendation.

Cheikh Mbaye
Facility Rental Manager
Pronouns: he, him, his

450 Mulberry Street Memphis TN 38103
p: 901.521.9699, x2439 c: 901.406.2385
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Elizabeth Rouse
President & CEO

April 1, 2021

Governor Bill Lee and Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission

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Dear Governor Lee and the Arts Awards Committee,

On behalf of ArtsMemphis and the Memphis arts community, I am honored to submit this letter of support for Yvonne and David Acey and Africa in April, nominee for the 2021 Governor’s Arts Leadership Award.

Yvonne and David have been community assets and champions for the Memphis and Shelby County arts sector for decades.

They established and have run the Africa in April Cultural Awareness Festival for thirty-three years. This annual event and their programming offers diverse experiences, attracts international guests and brings thousands of people to the heart of downtown Memphis. They have enlightened generations about the history of an entire continent so very important to our community.

Yvonne and David have worked tirelessly to create a festival that is about inclusiveness, diversity, cultural awareness, the exchange of ideas and global connections. Their advocacy efforts have benefitted the arts sector greatly.

With gratitude for your consideration.

Elizabeth Rouse

Oscar Adams
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Ashley Patterson
Ron Walter



March 29, 2021

Selection Committee

Tennessee Governor's Arts Award

Dear Members of the Selection Committee:

I am honored to join in nominating David and Yvonne Acey for the 2121 Tennessee Governor's Arts Award in the Arts Leadership category. I have known the Aceys for more than five decades and have observed their profound impact on our area's artistic and cultural community.

Great cultural contributions begin with a great idea. Thirty-three years ago, the Aceys developed a concept they called "Africa in April." Each year since, with the sole exception being the Covid year, they have honored an African nation, focusing on its unique artistic, cultural, and economic features and achievements. They bring to Memphis that nation's leaders to explore trade possibilities, conduct seminars that increase international understanding, and make available to the public a broad sampling of products, art works, and food choices. The result has been to help us think of Africa not in monolithic terms, but rather as an exciting diversity of tastes and accomplishments. The Aceys have helped us see beyond the distorted stereotype to the many Africas that are that continent's reality.

It is one thing to have a great idea, quite another to bring it to fruition. That accomplishment requires great energy and dedication. The Aceys have those qualities in abundance. I rejoiced when they agreed to join the Executive Committee of our University of Memphis Association of Retirees (UMAR) as chairs of our Diversity and Inclusion Committee. An example of their contribution to UMAR occurred just recently when we sponsored a program featuring the arts and culture of the ancient Nubian civilization. The Aceys publicized this event in seventy-five local media, religious, and civic outlets, concentrating on the African American community. They have helped us create an audience for our artistic and cultural programs that extends our outreach and enriches our educational mission.

We are grateful for all they have brought us, and are more than proud to support their nomination for the Governors Arts Award in the Arts Leadership category.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Osborn

President, University of Memphis Association of Retirees

Rep. Steve Cohen

349 Kenilworth Place
Memphis, TN 38112

March 26, 2021

Dear Tennessee Arts Commission,

It is my great honor to support the nomination of Africa In April Cultural Awareness Festival, Inc. for the 2021 Governor's Arts Award in the "Arts Leadership" Award Category.

Africa In April Cultural Awareness Festival, Inc., founded by Dr. David and Yvonne Acey, is currently in its 34th year of operation celebrating the artistic and cultural contributions of the African diaspora community, showcasing a different nation every year and providing attendees with a window into African culture, art, cuisine, and industry.

In addition, there is always a splendid poster promoting the festival that honors the featured nation. This is just one of the arts activities in addition to the arts and crafts being sold at the festival.

I appreciate your consideration of Dr. David and Yvonne Acey and the Africa In April Cultural Awareness Festival, Inc. for the 2021 Governor's Arts Award in the "Arts Leadership" Award Category.

As always I remain,
Most Sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Herff College of Engineering
201 Engineering Administration Bldg.
Memphis, Tennessee 38152-3170
Office: 901.678.2171
www.memphis.edu

March 29, 2021

Dear Tennessee Arts Commission:

I am writing this letter of recommendation in support of Africa in April organization receiving the prestigious 2021 Governor's Art Award.

Africa in April is a not-for-profit organization that focuses on highlighting various African culture annually. The premiere event for the organization is the annual Africa in April Cultural Awareness Festival – a festival that has been around for over 33 years. Over the past 10+ years I have participated on the leadership team, I have seen the love the Acey's and the entire organization has for sharing African culture with the Mid-South area. Because of hard work, thousands of Memphis and surrounding area citizens get the opportunity to not only learn about different African cultures, but also interact with members from these same countries.

The organization focuses not only on the entertainment of the honored country but focuses on educating the community on the values and cultural impact of the country. In my position, I have the distinct pleasure of involving the different colleges, universities, businesses, and faith-based groups to participate in the annual luncheon before the festival begins. This is important because Africa in April has a direct impact on these groups' involvement in the community. In our work together, the University of Memphis has become a strong ally of the festival, further strengthening the educational mission of the organization. As an advisor to the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Student Chapter at The University of Memphis, Herff College of Engineering, we have partnered with Africa in April in serving the community in K-12 schools in the inner city serving as mentors and tutors to students, also have helped with food drives and community walks in the Orange Mound neighborhoods to promote STEM education. NSBE's mission is to increase the number of culturally responsible Black Engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally and positively impact the community. This mission aligns with what David and Yvonne Acey have been doing in the African American community for years to educate the community through arts, promoting higher education, and educating the community on cultural awareness to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion not only in the Greater Memphis area but on a national level.

In closing, it is with sincere conviction that I recommend the Africa in April Cultural Festival organization for the Governor's Art Award in the "Arts Leadership" award category. With over 33 years of service and a legacy of embracing the arts, many people have benefited from the great work of this organization. I sincerely look forward to how the organization grows post-covid, but I also look forward to them receiving this award!

Sincerely,

Shelia Moses

Shelia Moses, MPA
Academic Services Coordinator II

Arts & Business Council of Greater
Nashville

2019 Tennessee Governor's Arts Awards Leadership Award Nomination Narrative

Imagine a young artist living in Tennessee; we'll call her Laura. She's a singer-songwriter who has co-written songs with Nashville- and Memphis-based musicians and seen minor success with a few of the songs she's written. She loves the collaborative nature of songwriting, but she's also passionate about making her own music. It's not been easy, but she's slowly and steadily built a following of her own.

Early one morning while driving, an unfamiliar voice begins singing familiar lyrics through the speakers of her beat-up truck. The sound causes Laura to quickly pull off the road and turn up the radio. Could she really be hearing what she thinks she's hearing? A song she's written is being sung by someone else without her knowledge and without her permission. She doesn't have money for a lawyer, and she's not sure what to do. Where does an artist, early in their career, without abundant resources, turn for help?

The Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville (ABC) is the answer. ABC exists to leverage and unite the unique resources of the arts and business communities to create a thriving, sustainable creative culture in Nashville and beyond. ABC accomplishes its mission by creating mutually beneficial partnerships between the arts and business communities; by providing direct services, key opportunities, and education to the creative community to help them master the business of art; and, by inspiring workplace creativity in businesses to demonstrate the impact of the arts and develop lifelong arts participants and supporters.

ABC's cornerstone program is the Volunteer Lawyers & Professionals for the Arts (VLPA), which provides pro bono legal services to income-qualified artists, arts nonprofits, and creative businesses across Tennessee. The most frequently accessed VLPA services are drafting and reviewing contracts, protecting intellectual property with copyright and trademark, nonprofit

incorporation and governance issues, and resolving other arts-related disputes. Since its inception in 2006, VLPA's network of 400 volunteer lawyers and professionals has provided close to \$4 million in free legal and business counsel to more than 5,000 artists and 400 nonprofit arts organizations across Tennessee. Within a few weeks, Laura receives legal assistance through VLPA about her copyright dispute, and she begins an enduring relationship with ABC.

Jumping ahead a few years, Laura finds herself with enough money to invest in her own small business, but her priorities have shifted over time. She's ready to start a company using her songwriting skills to consult with corporations to help them unlock the creativity of their employees. She's spent her entire life honing her skills as a singer-songwriter, mastering her craft, but it hasn't left much time to learn the ins and outs of the business side of her work. Once again, Laura reaches out to ABC and is introduced to a program designed to empower working artists by helping them see their vision through an entrepreneurial lens.

Late one night, Laura hits send on her online application for ABC's Periscope: Artist Entrepreneur Training, an eight-week intensive professional development curriculum followed by six months of one-on-one mentorship with a high-caliber business mentor. ABC presents Periscope in partnership with the Nashville Entrepreneur Center, Metro Nashville Arts Commission, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Mayor's Office of Economic Development. It's designed to be a transformative experience for participating artists, sparking the moment when their careers really start to take off.

A few weeks later, Laura is accepted into the Periscope program. During her training, she learns the business skills that help her turn her passion for music and building relationships into a viable, sustainable business. Along the way, she meets painters, choreographers, illustrators, authors, sculptors, musicians, fashion designers, filmmakers, and artisans. These cross-discipline

relationships form a network of inspiring colleagues who help her overcome the inevitable obstacles that any entrepreneur would face. To date, more than 120 artist entrepreneurs have completed the Periscope program and gone on to start or grow their businesses, win Emmy® and Grammy® Awards, hit the popular music charts, top bestseller lists, and even come back to be leaders and mentors to others in the program.

Beyond anecdotal success, Periscope proves its value year over year, measured by participant evaluations completed annually to measure the short-term and long-term impact of the program. Surveys test artists' perceptions of their increased business acumen as a result of the program, and participants consistently report 80–95% improvement on identified program objectives. Periscope graduates show marked growth in goal setting, and 100% of participants say their goals changed as a result of the program. In addition, participants report increased comfort speaking and writing about their work. In 2018, the National Center for Arts Research at Southern Methodist University named Nashville the 4th Most Vibrant Arts Community in America, specifically citing ABC's Periscope program as a basis for that designation.

Through Periscope, Laura becomes fast friends with both a visual artist and a choreographer in her cohort who each learned about Periscope at one of ABC's Monthly Education Seminars. Since 2006, ABC has educated more than 3,400 artists through monthly seminars, panel discussions, and workshops. Sessions cover broad topics of interest for creatives and business professionals alike, such as copyright law, banking, and business planning, as well as genre-specific topics such as recording agreements, gallery contracts, paths to publishing, and recently, a panel on the Music Modernization Act with Congressman Jim Cooper and iconic singer-songwriter Rosanne Cash.

After the first eight weeks of Periscope, Laura, the singer-songwriter turned artist entrepreneur, is introduced to her business mentor, Eric, who she works with one-on-one for six

months. Eric is a partner at an entertainment law firm, but when he was a young associate, his firm encouraged him to participate in ABC's Arts Board Matching (ABM) program. Through ABM, he was trained in the essentials of nonprofit board service and connected with arts organizations via a "speed dating"-style Match Event where he met nonprofits with needs that aligned with his passion for service. Since 2012, ABC has placed more than 80 business professionals on arts nonprofit boards of directors throughout Middle Tennessee. Not only that, those board members are often some of the most engaged and well-informed new directors, ready to roll up their sleeves to develop stronger, more strategic organizations. The entire arts nonprofit sector benefits when boards are filled with knowledgeable individuals prepared for board service. Eric now serves on two nonprofit boards, supporting them with his time, talent and treasure, and he still finds time to offer pro bono legal services to artists through VLPA and mentor artists through the Periscope program.

Six months later, Laura completes her mentorship just in time to pitch her business in front of a sold-out crowd at the Periscope Pitch, the culminating event of the Periscope program, held every September. Pitch celebrates the work of all 20 Periscope graduates with an entrepreneurs' gallery, and select artists take the stage to pitch their creative business plans to the community and compete for cash prizes. A panel of all-star judges provide insights along the way, and the audience has the opportunity to vote for their favorite pitches. It's an event that's been described as part TED Talk, part *Shark Tank*, with a dash of your favorite arts experience.

Laura doesn't win the top prize, the Pitch Perfect award, but she does make business connections that help her grow her business. Later, when her business is thriving, Laura decides to volunteer her time at a local songwriting organization that works with veterans. The founders hope to establish a nonprofit but aren't sure where to start. Laura connects them to ABC.

Since the songwriting organization has eager donors in their pipeline, they decide to apply for ABC's Fiscal Sponsorship program. Fiscal Sponsorship allows projects to accept tax-deductible donations and grants and receive administrative guidance while working on their nonprofit formation paperwork with a qualified nonprofit attorney. In FY19 alone, ABC supported 20 arts-based projects in Tennessee with access to more than \$220,000 in funding.

With its suite of programs, ABC builds relationships throughout (and across) the arts and business communities. Artists like Laura attend monthly workshops, train to be entrepreneurs, receive legal assistance, and even become mentors and trainers themselves. Business professionals like Eric volunteer their time, connect with artists and arts nonprofits, and become mentors, friends, and colleagues with artists.

These connections are most visible at ABC's two major public events—the Martha Rivers Ingram Arts Visionary Award, honoring a Nashville resident for their inspiring leadership and patronage of the arts, and *Arts Immersion*, a night showcasing Nashville's creative community through live music, dance, theatre, and interactive art. Both events bring together artists like Laura and business professionals like Eric, who personify ABC's unique approach to advancing the arts in Tennessee — uniting the arts and business communities. Their stories illustrate how ABC's innovative strategy cultivates a thriving, sustainable creative community and why the Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville should be recognized with a 2019 Tennessee Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership.

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

May 30, 2019

Dear Committee:

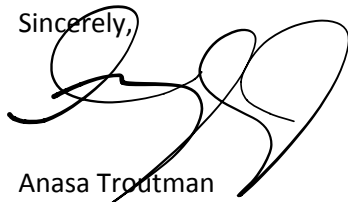
I am a writer, producer, and entrepreneur who has dedicated her work to the importance of culture and the power of love. As CEO Culture Shift Creative, I work to build and execute strategies for artists and organizations that are aligned with a vision of a loving world and a belief in creativity as a pathway to personal, community and global transformation. I'm writing today to express my support for the Arts & Business Council's nomination for the 2019 Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership.

I uphold the Arts & Business Council's nomination because I felt the benefits of their assistance in real and tangible ways. Through ABC's Fiscal Sponsorship program, I launched SheLectricity, a project based in arts and media and designed with girls of color at the center. SheLectricity is a girls' empowerment ecosystem that brings together technology, culture, and community to create safe and nurturing online and in-person environments for girls to learn, grow, innovate, and lead. Through interactive online tools and in-person experiences, SheLectricity girls engage in creativity, personal development, STEAM-based learning, entrepreneurship, and network building.

As a fiscally sponsored project of the Arts & Business Council, SheLectricity was eligible to apply for and receive a 3-year grant for \$450,000 from the NoVo Foundation to seed fund the design, build out, and launch in three hub cities including Memphis, TN. SheLectricity is intended to scale over time to reach all girls in the U.S. who need safe and nurturing online and in-person experiences, relationships, and support in order to learn, grow, innovate, and lead.

By enabling projects like SheLectricity to thrive, the Arts & Business Council is creating space for artists and entrepreneurs to innovate and prosper. Because of their support, the needs of black and brown girls will be met through the integration of a digital social media platform with place-based programming designed specifically for them. There's no other resource for artists in Tennessee like the Arts & Business Council, and I highly recommend them for this prestigious honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anasa Troutman', written over a white background.

Anasa Troutman
CEO
Culture Shift Creative

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

May 30, 2019

Dear Committee:

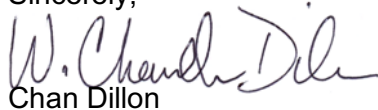
Thank you for considering the Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville for the prestigious Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership. As a longtime business owner in Nashville and current board president of this distinguished institution, I offer my unequivocal support for the Arts & Business Council's nomination for this award.

The Arts & Business Council advances the arts in Tennessee by offering key resources, educational opportunities, and direct services to artists and arts organizations throughout the state. Our cornerstone program, the Volunteer Lawyers & Professionals for the Arts, supports hundreds of income-qualified artists and arts organizations across Tennessee each year with pro bono legal services that might otherwise be inaccessible. Our monthly Education Seminars provide business skills training to the creative community and our Fiscal Sponsorship program supports more than a dozen projects in the state with access to tax-deductible grants and donations and administrative support. Periscope: Artist Entrepreneur Training provides high-level professional development for artists, and Arts Board Matching provides an unparalleled nonprofit board training curriculum for business professionals. All programs help fulfill our mission to unite and leverage the unique resources of the arts and business communities to create a thriving and sustainable creative culture in Nashville and beyond.

The Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 national economic impact study—released in 2017—showed that the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates nearly \$400 Million in annual economic activity in Davidson County, and supports over 14,000 full-time equivalent jobs. Nashville is consistently in the top 4 arts and culture markets in the U.S. and the Arts & Business Council's Periscope: Artist Entrepreneur Training was cited as a reason for Nashville's success in the National Center for Art Research Arts Vibrancy Index IV.

Though not always glamorous, the day-to-day work of the Arts & Business Council provides the infrastructure necessary to support a thriving arts ecosystem. The resources we provide often can't be found elsewhere, and the artists and business professionals we support stay engaged for years and years. Without a doubt, the Arts & Business Council deserves to be honored for its leadership advancing the arts in Tennessee.

Sincerely,



Chan Dillon

Board Chair, Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville



1906 Jackson Ave
Memphis, Tennessee 38107
(901) 725-6838
danny@dannybroadway.com

5/27/19

Dear Committee,

My name is Danny Broadway and I create art from my Memphis-based studio where I currently live. My art is exhibited across the country, but as a result of my involvement with a unique program called *Periscope*, I have been able to grow a lucrative business whereby I reach and sell my art to a global clientele. With appreciation for all that I learned from *Periscope*, I am writing this letter with the utmost zeal to recommend that the Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville receive the 2019 Governor's Arts Award for their *Periscope Artist Entrepreneur Training Program*.

I was fortunate to participate in their pilot group in 2014, which required me to travel to Nashville from Memphis every Wednesday for several weeks in order to collaborate and engage in rigorous dialogue with other artists, creative professionals and business leaders. During these intensive sessions, I obtained valuable information about organizing the marketing and business aspects of my practice, along with insight into developing multiple streams of revenue from my artistic endeavors. I was given the opportunity to construct, plan and rethink my business strategy aloud in front of trendsetters and peers who were as passionate about my success as their own. That scrutiny forced me to think more logically about my direction and my goals. It was like going to business school for visual art. In addition to all of these benefits, I was able to connect with media outlets such as the Nashville Arts Magazine in which an article was published about my journey. I was also given the chance to optimize relationships with many local galleries or businesses and show my work with them on various projects.

The *Periscope Artist Entrepreneur Training Program* opened doors to new worlds of thought for me that I may otherwise not have ever known. The Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville deserves recognition for developing such a stellar program. Please accept this letter as my personal recommendation as they are merited this prestigious award.

Warm regards,

Danny Broadway
Artist/Broadway Studios

danny@dannybroadway.com

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consists of overlapping curved shapes in shades of blue, maroon, and orange.



Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

May 29, 2019

Dear Nominating Committee:

I am thrilled to offer this letter of support for the Arts and Business Council of Greater Nashville. It is no exaggeration to say that this organization has done more than almost any other group to further the cause of the arts in Tennessee, and so I believe it would be a worthy recipient of the 2019 Governor's Arts Awards for Arts Leadership.

As a Tennessee-based arts journalist and arts administrator, I have had frequent contacts over the years with the Arts and Business Council and its Volunteer Lawyers and Professionals for the Arts. Nearly a decade ago, the Arts and Business Council helped me navigate the intricacies of the IRS Code to set up one of the region's first nonprofit arts websites.

Not long after the website's launch, I received a letter from the powerful national media licensing company Getty Images, which accused the website of improperly using a stock photo of a typewriter! Getty contended that we owed their company many thousands of dollars for this alleged impropriety. With the website's existence at stake, I turned to ABC's Volunteer Lawyers, which quickly established that, a) the website didn't improperly use the photo, and b) the overly aggressive Getty didn't have a license for that typewriter photo in the first place.

Realizing it had met its match in ABC, Getty simply dropped the matter, and faded away. I came away from the experience with a feeling of gratitude but also a sense of deep respect and awe. It would have been very easy for a giant, multi-million-dollar company to dust off a little arts nonprofit, which could never have afforded to defend itself on its own. ABC's legal division allowed for justice to prevail. ABC does that all the time, giving young artists and new arts organizations the time and support needed to make it on their own.

More recently, as chairman and CEO of the Monthaven Arts and Cultural Center in Hendersonville, I again turned to ABC and its Volunteer Lawyers for advice on whether we should treat our part-time art teachers as employees or independent contractors. We are a small arts education organization, so this issue went to the heart of our operation. If we categorized our teachers incorrectly, we could get into trouble with state regulators and possibly the IRS.

ABC and its Volunteer Lawyers responded with a thoroughly researched legal memorandum that beautifully laid out the legal questions, providing clear guidance on workers who should be deemed independent contractors and those who should not. These were complicated, technical issues that we could never have resolved without the professional support of an organization like the Arts and Business Council. ABC's memo now helps guide our operation.

I am sharing just a few of my own experiences with the Arts and Business Council. But I know dozens of other artists and arts organizations from around the region who have had equally positive encounters with this extraordinary group.

Susan Prado, who works as my grant writer at Monthaven, recently graduated from ABC's terrific Periscope program, which helps artists develop entrepreneurial skills. Given her remarkable success working with us, I'd say Susan learned a thing or two. So did other great artists like the dancer Rebecca Allen, formerly of New Dialect, and Celine Thackston, artistic director of the alt-classical group chatterbird, both of whom have benefited from ABC's thoughtful training programs. And note: New Dialect and chatterbird are the kinds of adventurous new groups that have changed Nashville's arts landscape for the better.

What is it that ABC does so well? In a nutshell, it provides young artists and small arts organizations with the critical support they need to operate on an equal footing with larger arts groups. But the help doesn't stop there. ABC's training programs are designed to give young artists and new organizations the skills they need to become mature, self-sufficient and successful operations. Put another way, ABC feeds Tennessee's arts community, but more importantly it also teaches the arts community how to fish.

I should add that this remarkable contribution in arts leadership has received important national recognition. The National Center for Arts Research, headquartered at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, recently named Nashville as one of America's top five arts cities, and it credited this ranking in part to ABC, which has encouraged a sense of arts entrepreneurship throughout the region. The Arts and Business Council's influence is now felt far and wide, and it has helped transform Music City into a City for All the Arts. For that reason, I respectfully recommend it receive a 2019 Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Pitcher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "P".

John Pitcher
Chairman and CEO
Monthaven Arts and Cultural Center
Hendersonville, Tenn.

Birthplace of Country Music



2021 Tennessee Governor's Arts Awards

Arts Leadership Award Nomination: Birthplace of Country Music, Bristol, TN-VA

(*NOTE: Click through underlined text to view articles and video content*)

The twin cities of Bristol, Tennessee-Virginia are enjoying a renaissance of music and culture largely due to the hard work and perseverance of [Birthplace of Country Music \(BCM\)](#), located in Historic Downtown Bristol, Tennessee-Virginia. As a result, Bristol has reclaimed its important place in country music history – a legacy that continues to inspire artists around the world. Bristol serves as the bridge between [Tennessee's Music Pathways](#) and [The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail](#), and has become an essential stop for travelers and musicians alike because Bristol is where it all began – and recognized as such through its [Congressional designation as the birthplace of country music](#).

[BCM is the parent nonprofit](#) of the [Birthplace of Country Music Museum](#) (an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution), the annual [Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion](#) music festival, and [WBCM Radio Bristol](#), which broadcasts from the museum. In its mission, BCM seeks to perpetuate, promote, and celebrate Bristol's rich music heritage; to educate and engage audiences worldwide regarding the history, impact and legacy of the 1927 Bristol Sessions recordings; and to create recognition, opportunities, and economic benefit for its local and regional communities. BCM is well on its way to becoming a global brand, a feat generally only achieved by for-profit agencies in larger cities.

The legendary 1927 Bristol Sessions recordings, an event that scholars often refer to as the "[big bang of country music](#)," laid the foundation for the country music industry. The Sessions featured the first recordings of The Carter Family (the First Family of Country Music) and Jimmie Rodgers (the Father of Country Music). The Bristol Sessions were not only revered for the vast talent contained within those recordings, but also for the technological developments that influenced their impact and reach. The invention of the Western Electric microphone, used on the Sessions, meant artists were no longer recording into an acoustic horn, resulting in higher-quality recordings with more vibrant and nuanced sound. Ralph Peer, the legendary producer who came to Bristol to produce the Sessions, established a royalty system that influenced today's music industry. In short, the 1927 Bristol Sessions revolutionized the country music industry and brought the genre into the mainstream, a perfect storm of extraordinary events that, for decades, went largely uncelebrated until BCM came into existence.



BCM is directly responsible for the reclamation of Bristol's identity as the "birthplace of country music" and has inspired a renewed sense of community pride for its authentic music heritage – resulting in major economic impact for the region, a big boost in tourism, and an increase in community events. It is also considered hallowed ground for musicians with an eye on history and has become a source of inspiration for many.

The Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion music festival was established by the cities of Bristol in 2001 as a way of honoring the 1927 Bristol Sessions and the music of the Appalachian region. It was held on State Street to help revive Bristol's decaying historic downtown. The event was turned over to volunteers after its second year and became its own nonprofit. Festival attendance climbed steadily over the years, as did staff, sponsorships, and the festival's footprint. By 2019 Bristol Rhythm was celebrating its 19th year and had expanded to cover 8 city blocks, with 20 outdoor and indoor stages, and more than 100 acts of live music over the course of a 3-day weekend in September. Internationally-known touring artists such as Emmylou Harris, Wynonna Judd, Old Crow Medicine Show, Lucinda Williams, Dr. Ralph Stanley, Marty Stuart, Bela Fleck, Tai Mahal, Buddy Guy, and many more have headlined the event, yet it remains dedicated to local and regional artists who make up the vast community of talent in the region. From traditional bluegrass and old-time to progressive rock, Celtic, and Piedmont blues, the festival remains true to the music and the sounds of Appalachia and to the music inspired by the 1927 Bristol Sessions. Attendance at the event has climbed to more than 40,000 people, and an independent study in 2015 revealed that the festival creates more than \$16 million in economic impact for the region. Bristol Rhythm has also been listed among Rolling Stone's "Hottest Country Tours and Festivals."

A tremendous amount of solidarity for Bristol and its music heritage has been earned over many years of building relationships both outside and within the community. In 2010 talks about merging Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion with the former Birthplace of Country Music Alliance (BCMA) began. The BCMA had spent more than a decade trying to raise money to build a museum to honor the 1927 Bristol Sessions. A building had been donated in 2004, but little progress had been made. The success of the festival strongly influenced the 2012 merger that brought both organizations together to form BCM. The festival had earned the trust of stakeholders and legislators over the years, fueling progress of the museum project at a blinding pace. Millions of dollars were raised (\$500,000 from both Tennessee and Virginia), historic tax credits and grants



obtained, and contractors hired. Two short years later, in August 2014, the Birthplace of Country Music Museum opened its doors to wide acclaim and has since been featured in stories by major outlets including NPR, Reuters, The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post.

The state-of-the-art Birthplace of Country Music Museum, a Smithsonian Institution affiliate, is the only facility in the world dedicated to telling the story of the 1927 Bristol Sessions. The world-class museum explores how evolving sound technology shaped the success of the Sessions and highlights how this rich music heritage lives on in today's music. Through multiple theater experiences, interactive displays, rich text panels and artifacts – along with a variety of online resources, educational programs, music performances, and community events – the exciting story of these recording sessions and their far-reaching influence comes alive for visitors young and old. BCM is dedicated to community outreach to local schools in order to pass on our region's music culture to future generations. The museum offers resources for educators, school group tours, and online resources for students. Its popular Pick Along Summer Camp, designed for children ages 8 to 16, offers an introduction to playing traditional instruments like guitar, banjo, and fiddle, and gives instruction in Appalachian music culture and history. Students also have the opportunity to dabble in broadcasting as they work on projects with WBCM Radio Bristol. Rotating exhibitions from guest curators and other institutions, including the Smithsonian, or created in-house are featured throughout the year in the Special Exhibits Gallery at the museum, and it is also building an extensive digital archive. Tourists from 48 foreign countries and each state in the United States have visited the museum since it opened; the museum saw approximately 26,000 visitors in 2019 with .07% of traffic coming from group tours. Visitation was on track with other museums of the same size prior to the pandemic; operations and outreach continue to persevere despite the crisis.

In 2015, one year after BCM opened the museum, WBCM Radio Bristol took to the airwaves. Broadcasting live from an exhibit inside the museum, Radio Bristol brings the message of the birthplace of country music to an international audience through its three online channels 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with original programming inspired by early country music, the Bristol Sessions, and talent from the region. Many local musicians serve as DJs for several of its original, weekly programs, and the museum's Performance Theater is often utilized to host live radio shows and sessions. The station can be accessed



through a low-watt channel at 100.1 FM in the Bristol area, online through the station's website, and through a free mobile app. Plans are under way to further expand the station's on-air FM channel to the surrounding region.

BCM was instrumental in bringing the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) and the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) together to record the *Orthophonic Joy: The 1927 Bristol Sessions Revisited* CD project, released in 2015 on the Sony Legacy imprint. Celebrating the impact that the 1927 Bristol Sessions had on the country music industry, *Orthophonic Joy: The 1927 Bristol Sessions Revisited* features re-creations of the original Bristol Sessions recordings by a variety of country music stars, including Brad Paisley, Dolly Parton, Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver, Emmylou Harris, Jesse McReynolds, Keb' Mo', Marty Stuart, Sheryl Crow, Steve Martin & the Steep Canyon Rangers, Vince Gill, and others. The recording project also includes narration of the 1927 Bristol Sessions history by beloved Grand Ole Opry host Eddie Stubbs. Produced by Grammy Award-winning producer Carl Jackson, proceeds from the project go to the museum. The album received national attention in articles issued by *Garden & Gun*, *Huffington Post*, and *Rolling Stone*, among others. BCM Executive Director Leah Ross traveled with TDTD to the U.K. to promote the CD and accompanying documentary *Born in Bristol*, which premiered at the Country to Country Festival in London. Both Ross and country music star Marty Stuart were interviewed by the BBC about the projects.

In 2017 BCM was approached by a group looking to organize a new country music festival in Leicestershire, United Kingdom. They were interested in partnering with BCM on the venture, and *The Long Road: A Festival of Country, Americana, & Roots* was born. BCM worked closely with organizers to bring Bristol artists to the U.K. event, and the festival created a special area at the event for BCM to promote travel to Bristol. The partnership was a smashing success, and Bristol gained international visitation and acclaim due to the partnership.

In April of 2019 Radio Bristol's popular *Farm and Fun Time*[™] live variety show, a throwback to the classic WCYB program from the 1940s and 1950s that helped start the careers of The Stanley Brothers, Jim and Jesse McReynolds, and countless others, made its broadcast television debut on Blue Ridge PBS. The popular and heartwarming program streams and broadcasts live in the "acoustically perfect" Performance Theater inside the Birthplace of Country Music Museum before an audience and features music performances from national and internationally touring artists. The program features an heirloom recipe segment that's more storytelling than instruction, and live jingles performed by a house band. Like its predecessor, *Farm*



and Fun Time™ also offers a Farm Report – pre-recorded video vignettes that highlight agriculturists and sustainable farms in the region. In the following months, *Farm and Fun Time™* expanded its reach to audiences at East Tennessee PBS and PBS North Carolina.

In 2019 the Birthplace of Country Music Museum was the first stop for award-winning documentary filmmaker Ken Burns and his team on a promotional tour for his PBS docuseries Country Music. Bristol and the 1927 Bristol Sessions were featured prominently in the first episode of the series, and museum archives were used as a resource in the making of the film. The impact of those legendary recordings has been heralded by Burns and musicologists around the world as the genesis of the country music industry itself, further cementing Bristol's important place in music history. The documentary also led to increased visitation to the museum once it aired. Bristol is the first stop on TDTD's Country Music passport as a guide for tourists who wish to visit locations highlighted in the film.

As BCM and its programming have grown, so has investment in Bristol. That growth is evident in the cities' beautifully revitalized Downtown, where just 15 years ago the majority of storefronts and buildings sat vacant. Today State Street boasts a variety of great restaurants, breweries, galleries, shops, and a distillery; the floors above many of these storefronts have been renovated into gorgeous, high-end loft spaces. Two new boutique hotels were opened by investors looking to capitalize on the cities' unique music history, with a third chain hotel project currently under construction. The historic Cameo Theatre is under renovation, and a new casino project, to be managed by Hard Rock International, is under way within city limits as well. Development of two major shopping centers, The Pinnacle in Bristol, Tennessee, and The Falls in Bristol, Virginia, has also come to fruition. Three new recording studios have opened in Bristol in recent years, bringing that number up to five.

With a staff of 18 employees and hundreds of volunteers, BCM has created a year-round music tourism market, based on its authentic music history and culture, where none previously existed – and in a relatively short time. As an organization, BCM continues to nurture growth, stability, education, and community, while also fostering the talents of local and regional musicians. The success of BCM has given tourists a reason to visit Bristol year-round, opening up a number of opportunities for other businesses in Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia as a whole. For these reasons, and all of the above, we hope you'll find BCM is deserving of the Governor's Arts Leadership Award.



JON LUNDBERG
SENATOR
4TH DISTRICT
SULLIVAN, CARTER &
JOHNSON COUNTIES

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Senate Chamber
State of Tennessee

NASHVILLE

HOUSE MEMBER
105TH-109TH GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

SENATE MEMBER
110TH-112TH GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
1ST VICE-CHAIR
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
FINANCE, WAYS & MEANS
COMMITTEE

DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

March 5, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
TN Arts Commission
401 Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to lend my profound support for the Birthplace of Country Music Museum as a nominee for the 2021 Arts Leadership Award. This phenomenal organization resides in the heart of my district in beautiful Bristol, Tennessee. I'm continually amazed by their work and the positive impression they have made in Northeast TN and beyond. Since opening its doors in 2014, the Birthplace of Country Music has been a tremendous asset to our community--providing Tennesseans an ability to engage with the arts and be educated on its place in Tennessee's storied history.

This nonprofit organization daily promotes Bristol's rich musical heritage through engaging educational programs, broadcasts, and festivals such as the Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion which is held annually in September. Students from all over the Northeast corner of the state attend field trips and camps that allow them to explore the museum on-site while gaining a fundamental knowledge of musical styles, instruments, and their historical influence. The Museum's dedication to teaching our youth the importance of art & music unquestionably demonstrates their commitment to the preservation of art history and culture in Tennessee and has made them a leader among all creative organizations.

I am proud to recommend the Birthplace of Country Music for the 2021 Arts Leadership award and truly, cannot think of an organization more deserving.

Sincerely,

Jon Lundberg
State Senator, District 4



THE CITY OF BRISTOL, TENNESSEE
801 Anderson Street
P. O. Box 1189
Bristol, Tennessee 37621-1189

Mahlon Luttrell - Mayor
Vince Turner - Vice Mayor
Margaret Feierabend - Councilwoman
Chad Keen - Councilman
Lea Powers - Councilwoman

Telephone: (423) 989-5503
Facsimile: (423) 989-5506

William L. Sorah, City Manager

March 11, 2021

By the summer of 2021, 94 years will have passed since a singular defining event occurred here in Bristol, Tennessee that would forever shape America's musical landscape – the 1927 Bristol Sessions. Country music, and truthfully the recording industry as a whole, owes its legacy to what Ralph Peer and future legends like the Carter Family, Pop Stoneman, and Jimmie Rodgers ignited that summer. The old Taylor-Christian Hat Company building where these recordings took place is no longer standing. Today, a historical marker commemorating the sessions stands in its place. Adjacent to this site, however, another living monument to Bristol's music heritage stands in the form of the home offices of the Birthplace of Country Music.

The Birthplace of Country Music is more than a designation bestowed upon Bristol by the United States Congress more than 20 years ago. The organization of the same name represents a stalwart devotion to preserving and advancing the appreciation of country music and the indelible mark made by the genre. To pay proper respects to the origins of such a significant part of our culture while at the same time celebrating its continuing evolution is no small feat. Nevertheless, the Birthplace of Country Music successfully accomplishes both of these aims through each of its activities.

Radio Bristol beams the best of country music and related genres not only over our regional airwaves, but also across the globe through their online station. Their Farm and Fun Time program also reaches a syndicated audience of nearly 20 million PBS viewers in five states. All of Radio Bristol's programming emanates from another of BCM's assets in Downtown Bristol, the Birthplace of Country Music Museum.

The Smithsonian-affiliated Birthplace of Country Music Museum is truly one of Bristol's crown jewels, providing a physical touchpoint where visitors from around the world are able to experience the cumulative history of the Bristol Sessions. The meticulous design of the museum and its exhibits create, at minimum, a remarkable chronicle that will instill a reverence and respect for the genre, even in visitors who would not consider themselves to be country music fans. For others, stepping through the doors of the museum feels akin to entering hallowed ground where the stories of our ancestors and the music they created in the surrounding mountains live on still today.

Lastly, the activity that perhaps shares the story of the Birthplace of Country Music with more people than any other is their signature event, the internationally recognized Bristol Rhythm and Roots Reunion music festival. For two decades, this gathering has served as a confluence of hundreds of artists that span the spectrum of Appalachian, Americana, and roots music. Tens of thousands of music lovers descend upon Downtown Bristol in

the waning days of each summer to reunite with old friends, make memories with new ones, and revel in the shared enjoyment of the music that was born in Bristol so many years ago.

It is clear that Bristol is proud of the Birthplace of Country Music. Our appreciation of this organization extends beyond community pride, however, as they also serve as one of the single largest contributors to our tourism economy, generating millions of dollars in impact annually. The museum and festival also function as conversation starters and venues to facilitate business recruitment and other economic development efforts that extend far beyond the music industry.

I can think of no other arts organization in our region or across the great state of Tennessee that is more deserving of recognition for their accomplishments and contributions to the advancement of our artistic and cultural heritage. Thus, I am proud to support the Birthplace of Country Music in their nomination for the 2021 Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mahlon Luttrell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Mahlon Luttrell
Mayor



Office of the
Mayor

City of Bristol, Virginia

300 Lee Street, Bristol, Virginia 24201 (276) 645-7333

FAX: (276) 821-6278

Website: www.bristolva.org



To whom it may concern,

The twin cities of Bristol, TN-VA have the unique privilege to be recognized as the “Birthplace of Country Music,” honoring the region’s musical heritage before, during, and since the seminal 1927 Bristol Recording Sessions. The Birthplace of Country Music has played a key role in recognizing this living musical tradition; educating students, residents, and visitors about our living cultural heritage, offering performances, exhibits, and other programs for the public to experience this traditional art form firsthand, and taking an active lead in redeveloping our downtown, creating a sense of community pride.

Opening in 2014, the Birthplace of Country Music Museum has served as a tourist attraction, educational resource, and catalyst in the continued development of our historic downtown. As an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, the museum offers exhibits, programs, and performances that interpret traditional Appalachian music and culture for students, visitors, and residents.

For twenty years, the Rhythm and Roots Reunion Festival has featured numerous award-winning artists performing in a wide variety of genres representing America’s music heritage. The festival serves as a major community event and tourist attraction for our region, drawing tens of thousands of people to experience the roots and branches of American music in our historic downtown. Radio Bristol, a low-watt FM station that streams online, also offers engaging and entertaining programs to listeners across the globe and has recently had its Farm and Fun Time show carried by PBS stations across five states.

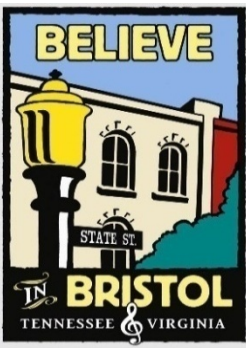
The Birthplace of Country Music has been a catalyst for downtown redevelopment as new businesses have located to take serve the tourists who the museum and festival. The estimated economic impact of the festival is over \$16 million annually, while the museum has attracted visitors from all fifty states and multiple foreign countries. The Birthplace of Country Music’s programs have cultivated a sense of community pride, as residents view the festival as a homecoming to gather with friends, meet new ones, and celebrate their hometown heritage.

I highly recommend the Birthplace of Country Music for a Governor’s Award for Arts Leadership for their achievements in promoting, preserving, and perpetuating the unique musical heritage that finds its origins in Bristol and the surrounding community but is part of the artistic legacy of Tennessee and the cultural fabric of America.

Bill
City of Bristol, Virginia

Hartley,

Mayor



DATE: March 10, 2021

RE: Tennessee Arts Commission — Arts Leadership Award

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Believe in Bristol Board of Directors, please accept this letter of support for Birthplace of Country Music's application for the Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

Believe in Bristol is a non-profit, Nationally Accredited Tennessee and Virginia Main Street Community in partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Main Street Approach is a community-driven, comprehensive methodology used to revitalize older, traditional business districts throughout the United States. The underlying premise of the Main Street Approach is to encourage economic development within the context of historic preservation in ways appropriate to today's marketplace.

Our community partner, the Birthplace of Country Music, seeks to perpetuate, promote, and celebrate Bristol's rich musical heritage; to educate and engage audiences worldwide regarding the history, impact and legacy of the 1927 Bristol Sessions; and to create recognition, opportunities, and economic benefit for our local and regional communities. BCM accomplishes this mission through its three primary branches (Museum, Festival, and Radio), special projects and events, and a multitude of community and educational outreach programs.

As an educational institution, the Birthplace of Country Music Museum brings a host of resources to a local and regional community that might not normally have access to such things. These include hosting in-house special exhibits and traveling exhibitions from the Smithsonian, other museums and institutions and guest curators, tours for schools and large groups, educational programming for children and adults, research and archival collections that further the understanding of Bristol's music history and heritage and a variety of events that support BCMM's educational mission.

Believe in Bristol's Main Street program is built on strong community partnerships, and for over 20 years BCM, along with Bristol Rhythm and Roots Reunion, which welcomes 40,000 people to downtown Bristol annually, has been instrumental in the development of those bonds. The Birthplace of Country Music Museum, since it's opening in August 2014, has helped to foster those bonds further and bring new partnerships into the mix, all of which has helped to grow the Main Street community and its assets.

We strongly support and endorse Birthplace of Country Music in their application for the Tennessee Arts Commission Governor's Arts Leadership Award. Through its strong vision of leadership and mission-driven work, the Birthplace of Country Music is preserving the music heritage of Bristol while diligently sharing country music's past and present stories with the world.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at info@believeinbristol.org.

Sincerely,

Maggie Elliott
Executive Director, Believe in Bristol

*President
Sara Beth Hitt*

*Vice President
Van Guthrie*

*Secretary
Jessica Barnett*

*Past President
Ken Monyak*

Tom Anderson

Rob Blanton

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Kimberly Leonard
2004 Tryon Court
Nolensville, TN 37135

March 19, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
TN Arts Commission
401 Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to lend my support for the Birthplace of Country Music (BCM) as a nominee for the 2021 Arts Leadership Award.

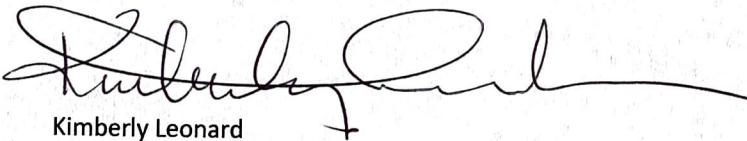
For many years BCM has led and continues to lead the region in educational programing and development for the arts. This non-profit organization not only strives to share Bristol's significant role in the history of Country Music, it also provides residents and visitors from around the world opportunities to experience the music that makes this region unique.

BCM's Smithsonian-affiliate museum, Birthplace of Country Music Museum, is committed to the education of the arts and music through interactive exhibits and programing. The staff work to find ways to develop the love of music, from special exhibits that tell new stories and learning experiences to creating classroom curriculum as a resource for teachers and students.

Bristol Rhythm and Roots Reunion takes education to another level by providing the experience of music. The festival has grown to a multi-stage, three-day event that provides over a \$16 million economic impact to the community, according to an independent study. From traditional bluegrass to the sounds of new country, world-renowned musicians have performed in historic downtown Bristol to pay homage to the music that began here and entertain music-lovers from around the world.

BCM and their programs provide opportunities to learn, to see, to listen, and to feel the sounds which continue to shape the music of today. I am proud to recommend Birthplace of Country Music for the 2021 Arts Leadership Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Leonard', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kimberly Leonard
Birthplace of Country Music, Board of Directors, 2013-2016
Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion, Board of Directors/Committee, 2007-2016
Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion, Festival Chair, 2014

Bluestein, Frank

Dear Governor's Art Award for Arts Leadership Selection Committee,

I am happy to write this narrative to nominate Frank Bluestein for this honor. Frank Bluestein has a successful and expansive career as a public school educator, arts advocate, and community arts leader. During my 9 years of working with the Tennessee Arts Academy, I have had a front row seat to the thought, passion, and action Frank Bluestein brings to the organization as the Executive Director and Theater Director. It could be said that he does not rest at good in the pursuit of great, but is probably more accurate to say he doesn't rest at great in the pursuit of the unprecedented.

The mission of the Tennessee Arts Academy is to provide exceptional quality professional development, arts training, support, encouragement, information and renewal to K-12 teachers and to promote and honor the role of the arts in the lives of all Tennesseans. This mission is realized at the Academy as educators fine tune their skills, have shared experiences of networking and collective learning. As a result of attending the Academy, educators are better prepared to create richer arts experiences for their students, which ultimately makes their communities more vibrant.

The Academy began as one of many content area professional learning institutes conducted by the Tennessee Department of Education and remains the only one in operation after 35 years under the current leadership of Frank Bluestein. Prior to the summer of 2020, the Tennessee Arts Academy was annually attended by more than 300 teachers impacting more than 150,000 students across Tennessee and was on track to repeat that in the summer of 2020. However, that goal came under question as it became clear that an in-person Academy would not be possible for that year.

Frank Bluestein was ready to keep the learning going and tirelessly worked to not only create a virtual Academy, but a virtual Academy that exceeded projections. The 2020 Academy served over 325 educators with an impact of over 200,000 students across the state, and resulted in an average 5 out of 5 on overall impression of the Academy as reported by attendees, a net promoter score of 95%, and pages of positive feedback. Like every exceptional institution, the Academy is committed to lifelong learning and continuous improvement. Therefore, the 2021 Academy is also scheduled to be virtual, and is already nearly at attendance capacity.

Under his leadership, the Academy has not only grown in attendance, but also in depth of content. There is a deliberate effort to reflect the needs of the educators and students in the selection of the visiting faculty. Additionally, he has curated performances and cultivated relationships that connect legendary performers like Sting, Richard Sherman, and Eden Espinoza to name a few, directly to educators in Tennessee. None of that would have happened without Frank Bluestein and his dedication to enriching the lives of educators.

While he is extremely capable of amazing things without a team, he makes it a point to invest in growing others who are passionate about the arts, arts education, and culture in Tennessee. He listens, responds, envisions, builds, and iterates to maximize opportunities for interaction with the arts. His mentorship will ensure that opportunities like the Tennessee Arts Academy will continue to be available for countless future generations of educators and students.

Please consider the perspectives articulated in the supporting letters of recommendation from Mr. Bluestein's colleagues who have experienced his leadership over the extent of his career. The diversity and depth of impact in each of the letters is a testament to

the work he has done to ensure the arts remain a vital part of Tennessee's culture. He is highly deserving of this award.

Sincerely,

Amanda Galbraith



THE DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
FINE ARTS DIVISION

Teaching & Learning Academy Annex • 2485 Union • Memphis, TN 38112
(901) 416-3432 • Fax (901) 416-3436 • www.scsk12.org

April 29, 2021

Dru Davison, Ph.D.
Fine Arts Advisor
davisonpd@scsk12.org

Dear Governor's Art Award for Arts Leadership Selection Committee,

Please accept this nomination of Frank Bluestein for consideration for the Tennessee Arts Commission Council for the Governor's Arts Recognition. Mr. Bluestein has contributed an outstanding body of work to benefit a thriving arts community in Tennessee and beyond, including extensive work in arts education, arts advocacy, and educator professional development. His impact continues to affect high quality access to the arts in several ways. I would like to briefly summarize just a few of the ways that Frank has impacted the arts in Tennessee through his extensive teaching career, his career as an arts administrator, his contributions to professional organizations within the state, his leadership in establishing a large network of community support for arts education, and also his experience in cultivating and mentoring a broad group of arts advocates.

Frank's contributions to the arts in Tennessee are difficult to sum up with words on a page. His career has spanned such rich opportunities as being the Director of Shows at Opryland and writing and directing national touring shows. During his tenure as a classroom educator and leader, Frank's students were well known for their commitment to excellence. Under Frank's leadership, a number of students grew to influence the arts industry in powerful ways, including graduates such as *Saturday Night Live* star Chris Parnell; film, television, and stage actress Missi Pyle; Emmy-winning casting director (*Desperate Housewives* & *NYPD Blue*) Scott Genkinger; NPR reporter Debbie Elliott; Tennessee Shakespeare Company founder and Producing Artistic Director Dan McCleary; and Blue Man Group actor Wes Day. Under his leadership as chair of the Germantown High School Fine Arts Department, the school's three-million-dollar television studio won multiple Emmys and became an exemplar program in the media arts.

Mr. Bluestein's accomplishments have been recognized by numerous organizations, including Disney, USA Today, and the Educational Theatre Association. He was the 1996–1997 Disney National Performing Arts Teacher of the Year, and the 1994 Tennessee Teacher of the Year, and USA Today named Mr. Bluestein as one of the top forty teachers in the United States in 1998. In 2013, Mr. Bluestein was inducted into the Educational Theatre Association's Hall of Fame in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Mr. Bluestein is a past winner of the American Theatre Association's John C. Barner Award, and has served as an arts advisory panelist for numerous organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts.

You can reach me at davisonpd@scsk12.org or (901) 416-3434 if you wish to discuss this information in greater detail. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the outstanding merits of Frank Bluestein for consideration for the Tennessee Arts Commission Governor's Award for Arts Leadership and thank you for your continued work in arts leadership across the state.

Most Sincerely,

Dr. Dru Davison



Dear Awards Committee:

Frank Bluestein's name is synonymous with excellence in the arts! I first met Frank in 1995 when I interviewed for a position at Germantown High School. I have always and still do believe that in order to become a better teacher, you need to challenge yourself to be as good as the best, and at the time, Germantown High School had the BEST art department. I wanted to be a part of that. As an art teacher at Germantown High School, it was known that you would be part of the art team, Frank's art team. Frank was the drama instructor and department chair while I was there. He was the director extraordinaire'....I had been hired into the "Broadway" of high-school drama. The sets, the costumes, the acting all done by students under the guidance of the arts faculty. In my second year at Germantown, Frank arranged for Charles Strauss to direct the students in a retrospective of his music. What an opportunity for the students of Germantown. During my tenure at GHS, I grew to respect a man who had very high standards and showed a mutual respect for others who cared as much as he about providing the students with the experience, tools and guidance to achieve their artistic goals. Other schools during the 90's had channel 1, but Germantown had E. Frank Bluestein's Chanel 1. Students would present announcements through a news broadcast that rivaled that of many small towns. Many of the students from GHS went on to pursue careers in the arts, theater and TV or broadcasting.

Then in 2006, Frank met with Dan McCleary to start a new professional Shakespeare Company in the Memphis Area. Working with the City of Germantown, Frank helped to procure funding and the facilities to house the company. Now, 15 years later, Frank serves as the Executive Director of the Tennessee Shakespeare Company which is the first and only professional, not-for-profit theatre and education organization in Memphis dedicated to live, diverse performances of William Shakespeare's play as well as works of social significance by classical, Southern and modern playwrights/composers.

Fast forward several years.... While Frank remains active in serving and promoting the arts in his own community, he also wears the hat of both the Executive Director and Theater Director for the Tennessee Arts Academy. I have been involved in the Tennessee Arts Academy myself since the third year of the Academy, first as a participant, then as a facilitator, and now I serve as the visual art director. I have served in the position of visual art director for 5 years now, and the respect that I felt for Frank



at Germantown has only grown. Frank has channeled his passion for not only theater, but all of the arts into his work with the Tennessee Arts Academy. This summer intensive for art, music and drama teachers all across the state of Tennessee is a top-of-the-line program that serves as a model for arts education professional development in other's states. Frank has been instrumental in bringing master artists, musicians and performers to our state to work with our state's teachers face-to-face. Frank has a holistic approach to his management that allows him to make connections and share those connections in his own community locally, regionally and state-wide. As an executive director, he hires subject area directors that he trusts and then allows them to pursue their vision. Under Frank's guidance, the Arts Academy has grown and evolved into a teacher training program that is even bigger than the dream when it was founded. When the pandemic struck last year, I remember Frank saying in a conference call with the directors in January of 2020 that we needed to think about our upcoming summer and what we needed to do. I thought at the time that he was overreacting, but his forethought is what allowed the Tennessee Arts Academy to shift into a virtual training that again rivaled anything else that was being offered. While none of us were happy with not being on campus, our virtual Academy maintained all of the integrity of the on-campus experience. It also served as a guide for many teacher/participants who were struggling trying to offer their own art, music and drama classes through distance learning. Through the offerings at the Tennessee Arts Academy, teachers realized that not only COULD they teach the arts virtually (as many districts throughout our state were requiring), but they could actually excel at teaching the arts virtually.

It is with so much pleasure and without any reservation that I am honored to nominate E. Frank Bluestein to receive the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Very kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Libby Lynch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Libby Lynch, TAA Visual Art Director
Upper School Art Instructor, University School of Jackson
731-695-3127

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April 29, 2021

Dear Nominations Committee for the 2021 Tennessee Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership:

For over 45 years in Tennessee, E. Frank Bluestein has changed the way the world educates teenagers, expanded the cultural horizons of all Tennesseans, and created compassionate, service-oriented Americans through arts innovation.

I am Dan McCleary, the Co-Founder and Producing Artistic Director of Tennessee Shakespeare Company (TSC) in Memphis. TSC is the Mid-South's first and only professional, classical theatre and education organization. Founded in 2008, TSC is our state's only classical theatre with its own facility.

It is my pleasure and honor to recommend Mr. E. Frank Bluestein to you for strongest consideration during the nomination process of the 2021 Tennessee Governor's Arts Awards in the category of Arts Leadership.

I re-located to Memphis in 2006 because of Mr. Bluestein. I wanted to make a contribution to the world that I hoped would last beyond me. To do so, I needed Mr. Bluestein to join me and that meant moving back to Memphis. Through his tireless volunteerism, strategic thinking, and unflagging loyalty to our mission, the arts, and to me, TSC was created. He will not take credit for this. But he should.

Mr. Bluestein introduced me to live theatre and television production when I was 14 years old at Germantown High School. I had never seen theatre, having grown up in Orange Mound and Bartlett in the Memphis area. The first play I ever saw, Mr. Bluestein cast me in when he ran the Poplar Pike Playhouse and created GHS-TV (entirely run by students) at GHS. I am one of hundreds of successful innovators in the arts and other fields who will trace any level of success we have professionally and personally to Mr. Bluestein. Running the theatre and television studio, while being a student, trained us to be disciplined, caring, holistic, result-driven, process-oriented humans who sought excellence in everything we did and aspired to be of genuine service. This is why Tennessee Shakespeare Company was born decades later. You will see these values in our mission and vision statements.

The artistic values Mr. Bluestein shared with me as a student have become shared values of humanity. He has guided me and TSC's Board through our creation, launch, obstacles, growing pains, and now sustainable health. I do not make a move or a decision unless I speak with Mr. Bluestein first. TSC's mission is to be of service through the plays of William Shakespeare and our innovative education, training, and outreach programming.

Now completing our 13th season, TSC has created an economic impact for Shelby County of more than \$11 million through the annual development and delivery of more than 30 arts/education/training programs delivered by 61 staffers to 5,100 patrons on-site and over 35,000 children on a current operating budget of \$770,275. Across 13 years, TSC has engaged 305,000 Tennessee citizens with 53 site-specific plays and events. Our ground-breaking Education and Outreach Program has reached 120 schools, totaling over 250,000 student interactions. We have taught in almost every Memphis area school.

Because Mr. Bluestein always has believed and acted upon the notion that the arts should be central to every child's formal education, I believe that. And so does everyone who works at Tennessee Shakespeare Company, as well as the hundreds of thousands of patrons and children with whom we have points of contact.

Through the arts, over 40 years, I have experienced first-hand how Frank Bluestein has changed many thousands of lives for the better. Not just in our state, but throughout America, and around the world through his legendary exchange programs in Europe and Russia. I believe Tennessee enjoys its culturally-rich arts landscape now due in large part to the ingenuousness, inspired direction, and creative drive of Mr. Bluestein and his ground-breaking innovations at TSC, Germantown High School, and the Tennessee Arts Academy.

Prospective arts funders and donors often ask me for quantitative data and reports regarding how their investment will return to them and their community. I provide those. But more inspiring is being able to see the living embodiment of the return. After all, the arts are about our shared humanity and life-changing compassion. For this, I point first to Frank Bluestein. I then point to the thousands of legacies he continues to release out into the world. They are service-minded human beings. And we are all that way entirely due to Tennessee's most outstanding arts leader: E. Frank Bluestein.

If I may, this recognition is overdue for him. If you will shine a light on his accomplishments in Tennessee, he will attract world-wide attention to our deserving state. He is a beacon who can attract any world-class artist or teacher to Tennessee.

If I can provide any further details, please let me know. There is no more pleasurable recommendation I can write for someone than this for Mr. Bluestein.

Thank you for your strong consideration of his nomination.

Sincerely,



Dan McCleary
danmccleary@tnshakespeare.org
(901) 759-0620

Borderless Arts Tennessee

Governor's Arts Awards: Arts Leadership Award
Nominee: Borderless Arts Tennessee

Twenty years ago, Borderless Arts Tennessee emerged with a mission to provide arts access to people with disabilities. At its inception, most of the major cultural organizations were not offering accessible programs and there were very few arts opportunities for people with disabilities in the State. Borderless Arts Tennessee (then VSA Tennessee) became the leader in this field by offering training and consultation to the major cultural organizations, inspiring the start-up of new arts programs specifically tailored for people with disabilities, and offering our own wide range of arts programming. BAT secured a contract from the John F Kennedy Center to provide educational training sessions across the State on arts integration for people with disabilities. The organization also offered training for artists to learn how to work with people with disabilities. Borderless Arts Tennessee has served as a leader in opening access to the arts to people with disabilities.

Most things in life start with education and learning. Since 2006, Borderless Arts Tennessee has been providing artist residencies in 12-16 schools every year free of charge to the school. The residencies assist the educators in meeting curriculum and behavioral classroom goals by using the arts as a tool. The residency program results in an annual Curriculum Guide with lessons plans and activities that can be used in any classroom throughout the State. The Curriculum Guide is provided to the TN Dept. of Education. Borderless Arts Tennessee has been a leader in arts education for nearly 20 years.

Guided by the belief that the talents of artists with disabilities need to be shared, BAT has championed efforts to provide professional development and to promote these artists. BAT

worked with the Tennessee Arts Commission and the Tennessee Department of Developmental Disabilities to provide webinars in career development. BAT pursued these efforts further in a semester long Careers in Music program for Transition Students in Metro Nashville, the Crescendo Summer Music Institute, the Certification Program that is offered through the Teapot Diplomats, and music mentoring for the Young Soloist program. Annually, BAT provides several professional development opportunities for artists with disabilities. Borderless Arts Tennessee has served as a leader in supporting the career development of artists with disabilities. While providing training, BAT was also providing performance and exhibition opportunities. In the areas of performance, BAT has placed musicians with disabilities on the stages of the Ryman, Dollywood, Ford Theater, the CMA, the Bluebird Cafe, and the Schermerhorn to name a few. Through Borderless Arts training and promotion, a young musician became the first musician from Tennessee to win the John F. Kennedy Center International Young Soloist Competition. Another group of young musicians with disabilities were the first musicians to ever be invited by the John F Kennedy Center to be part of their International Art and Music Festival in Washington DC with the group performing at the Smithsonian. The Nashville Symphony has invited musicians connected to BAT to perform in their concerts and to be part of their Family Day of Music Celebrations. In addition to these noteworthy performance opportunities, BAT has also had participants performing in venues all over the State for corporate events, festivals, and private gatherings. Finally, Borderless Arts offered a Dulcimer Choir for over 10 years with weekly music training and community performance opportunities. The Dulcimer Choir has now evolved into a Guitar Choir. Borderless Arts also offers

songwriting classes. Borderless Arts Tennessee has no rival as the leader in opening doors for performance opportunities for musicians with disabilities.

In the area of visual arts, BAT has offered exhibition opportunities since its inception. Annually, BAT would provide an art exhibit at the Legislative Plaza until the legislators moved their offices. BAT connected with small galleries throughout the State, corporate venues and festivals to show the work of people with disabilities. However, in 2015, BAT ramped up its efforts in the area of the visual arts with the formation of the Teapot Diplomat program. The exhibitions and accolades gathered by this group have included: Creating the ornaments that represent TN on the National Christmas Tree 4 years in a row; Partnering with the Frist Center for the Visual Arts on two major projects resulting in exhibitions of art by people with disabilities; Hosting an annual International Day of People with Disabilities event with exhibitions at the Summer Tourism; Being invited to host a show at the Hotel Preston; Hosting a Golden Ratio exhibit at the Nashville Parthenon; The Nashville Predators purchasing a piece of art from BAT for the Vanderbilt Children's Center; Darrell Waltrip accepting a piece of art from BAT participants for his store; The Nashville Zoo featuring a piece of art created by BAT participants; Participating in the annual Dept of Ed. Partners In Education Conference where participants sell their work; Creating a mosaic wall that is a piece of public art shown in the Hendersonville Memorial Park; Having a piece of art accepted into the US State Department's Art in Embassies Program; and Due do some costumes created by BAT participants and the dance program BAT represented the United States at an international forum in Egypt. These are just a few examples. Many art exhibits that take place annually showcasing the work of BAT participants. Several participants

have had their art accepted into Nashville art shows, the Tomato Arts Festival, and the Beale Street Arts Festival. Two participants have launched their own small businesses based off skills and exposure they have had through the Teapot Diplomat program. Borderless Arts Tennessee is unquestionably the leader in visual arts opportunities for people with disabilities.

Although music and visual arts have often taken center stage, Borderless Arts also offers programs in theater and dance. Several exciting theater partnerships have happened with the Nashville Children's Theater. These endeavors have involved working with playwrights to write one act plays to depict the challenges that young adults with disabilities, and their families, face as they grow into adulthood; Performing one-act plays; and Creating and performing with shadow puppets. BAT has also offered its own summer theater camps as well as drama lessons with Joe Loesch. Ten years ago, BAT began a dance program for young adults with Down syndrome. The program was one of only two dance programs in the State at the time for people with disabilities. In 2020, this program became a more inclusive dance program of all abilities. The group meets digitally on a weekly basis. They have completed an intensive month long training with the MTSU dance program resulting in a dance for Peace. They have also created a dance for the Beyond Space program and they are preparing to launch the first inclusive dance festival for the State of Tennessee. Borderless Arts Tennessee has demonstrated its leadership in quality arts programs in all art forms for all abilities.

A good leader works well with others, serves as a good example and is always reaching for new horizons. BAT is committed to partnerships. BAT has worked with all of the major cultural organizations, corporate partners, environmental agencies, educational institutions,

organizations that serve people with disabilities, government agencies and historic sites.

Borderless Arts Tennessee won a national award from the John F Kennedy Center and a State Award from Middle Tennessee State University for its leadership in partnership development.

Borderless Arts has represented Tennessee in the national and international arena. BAT has represented TN in the national arena through the Young Soloist program, in the numerous National Historic Site exhibitions by the Teapot Diplomats, in creating the TN ornaments for the national Christmas Tree and through, the quilt in the US State Department's Art in Embassies program. Borderless Arts Tennessee has represented Tennessee in the international arena at the international forum in Egypt, by leading a 40 days digital international arts festival, through the creation of the international Pieces of Peace project, by hosting international art exchanges with groups on every continent (and that includes scientists in Antarctica), and being invited to speak at the United Nations which has been put off until 2022.

Borderless Arts continues to grow. When COVID hit, BAT quickly adapted and emerged as a leader in digital arts delivery. BAT has been invited to create the art for an astronaut's space suit for a mission called Beyond. However, BAT took this project a step further and created an entire digital arts festival around the Beyond concept with all art forms being represented. This space/arts project has been BAT's next step of making the arts truly Borderless and taking them even Beyond our own planet.

Borderless Arts Tennessee has proven its leadership in all art forms, all art delivery methods and in all arenas. It would be the utmost honor that in BAT's 20th year of providing leadership in the arts that the organization would be recognized with a Governor's Arts Award.

February 25, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Re: Governor's Arts Award 2021

Borderless Arts has been an important and integral part of Tennessee for nearly twenty years. It grows year after year in significance to my family. When my youngest child, who has a lifetime disability, attended a program. It was life-changing. In her early years, these programs were the only times she did not want to hide from the world around her. Learning visual arts was a way for her to express herself.

A stop-motion animation workshop taught her how to create her own short film. There was also the opportunity to create an ornament for the National Christmas Tree. The Super-Hero project was amazing: She was able to design her own costume, make it, and then model it at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center. This also had the added advantage of discovering the love of sewing and textile arts. She was able to participate in the VSA International Quilt which was part of the 40 Days Around-the-World project, which was created and orchestrated by Borderless Arts TN. A watercolor workshop produced an entry that was selected to represent Tennessee at the VSA International Art Program: Yo Soy...Je Suis...I Am... at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC.

My daughter was emerging! It was a result of this organization. She was learning various forms of visual art. From watercolor and acrylic painting to collage to digital, from ceramics to glass art. Different genres were also being taught, from traditional to found art. Borderless Arts afforded the opportunity for her art to be shown at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. Then it provided the chance for her to curate an art show featuring only Borderless Arts artists at the Preston Hotel. She and some of the other artists, under the direction of one of the Borderless Arts professional artists, created a piece of art, made from recyclables that is on permanent display at the Hotel.

The Borderless Arts participants engage in workshops throughout the year that teach them how to create art. Workshops were also provided on the business side of creativity, from business cards to budgets. They get the opportunity to develop sales skills at the annual Partners In Education Conference. This is particularly beneficial to my daughter, she gets to see past teachers that are bewildered in how far she has come. This organization is key to her learning her place in society. Through Borderless Arts, she has also participated in several International Day of Disabilities events as well as representing the group at Human Rights Day at Vanderbilt University.

The Borderless Summer Arts Institute taught art techniques from the Americas, Asia, and Africa. It inspired her to go on a culinary journey through these continents and share with her Borderless Arts Community. In one year alone, they had art exchanges with all seven continents. This inspired her to learn a Japanese art technique and teach a workshop, and then do an art exchange with a group in Osaka.

Now there was no stopping her. This organization had given her the tools and the confidence to overcome her personal challenges and explore her passion. This helps her contribute to the community and give back. As part of this group, she was part of the mosaic tile and glass art murals with the Hendersonville Parks and Recreation Department in Memorial Park. Another opportunity to give back was the Parking Palette for Mary's Magical Place. Borderless Arts painted a parking spot utilizing her design as part of a fund raiser for this all-inclusive playground.

She learned not only many visual art techniques through Borderless Arts, but other methods of creative expression. Building on her success, she was able to try new things. She joined other programs within Borderless Arts. The Dulcimer Choir which in addition to teaching music, also was instrumental in learning teamwork and being in front of others. That experience helped her try the theater arts programs that are offered. My shy and introverted child came alive on the stage. She loved being in character both as an actress and as a puppeteer. There she learned she had a knack for improvisation. This sparked the interest in learning about voice acting, so she participated in the voice acting classes. Then she discovered her love of writing which led her to enroll in the songwriting classes, and to participate in screen writing. This expanded her interest into guitar playing, so she enrolled in those lessons. She is also learning different dance and movement techniques with Borderless Arts

Then, an amazing opportunity to put it all together happened. The Frist Center for the Arts (now the Frist Museum) was featuring an exhibit of Nick Cave. Borderless Arts became involved with this. Under the direction of one of the professional artists, three of the disabled artists worked on designing and creating ten sound-suits. My daughter was one of the three. These suits were worn by the Borderless Arts dance group for their performance. This was seen via the web all over the world, resulting in an invitation for Borderless Arts to represent the United States at the Awladna International Forum for Arts of the Gifted in Cairo, Egypt. My daughter was one of the participants to travel to Cairo to perform the dance in a suit she helped create representing her country in an internationally televised event.

This trip spawned an idea on how to bring awareness to the global water crisis known as Water Warriors. Participants are put into teams led by a professional artist to create art with a water conservation theme. The teams are partnered with a conservation organization. The art races either literally or virtually in a race. This event encourages giving back to the community in addition to creative expression.

The wide array of opportunities offered by Borderless Arts has provided the growth, confidence, and skills necessary to develop her passion for art that due to her disabilities would not have been feasible through traditional avenues. She has been accepted into multiple juried art shows, both regional and national, as well as winning an honorable mention in a national show. Borderless Arts TN has been truly life changing in so many ways for my daughter, not just with the opportunities it provides but also enabling her to meet so many wonderful people. When I asked her what Borderless Arts meant to her, she said:

“Borderless Arts makes me happy. It is hard for me to believe that I used to be a little girl who couldn't speak and now I am looking forward to being heard. This group helps me find a way to express myself and the people in it make me feel that others understand. Borderless Arts makes me feel that I am seen and that my disability is invisible.”

Borderless Arts has been creating understanding, knowledge and confidence across the state for nearly twenty years. All of the opportunities that this organization offers (visual art, theater, screen-writing, dance, songwriting, music, etc.) fosters both learning and community. The difference it has made in my child's life is incredible. I believe she said it best, "Borderless Arts makes me happy." The impact this organization has is truly borderless!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Crystal McKee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Crystal McKee
Mother of a Borderless Arts Participant
(615) 210-8503
crystalcmckee@gmail.com

Elliott McClain

4507 Guy Court, Old Hickory, TN | 615-477-9041 | elliott.mcclain@me.com

February 8, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my strong support for Borderless Arts Tennessee's nomination for the Governor's Arts Award in the Art's Leadership category. I have been associated with Borderless Arts as a musical artist for fifteen years. They were instrumental in my development as a musical artist, providing opportunities for performance, education, and professional networking.

I became involved with Borderless Arts Tennessee (then VSA Tennessee) in middle school when I first entered their annual Young Soloist competition for vocalists and instrumentalists. Over the next 10 years I had numerous opportunities to develop as a soloist and as a member of a pop trio assembled by Borderless Arts.

I enjoyed opportunities to perform in such venues as Ford Theatre in the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, the Tennessee Performing Arts Center, the Ryman Auditorium, the Schermerhorn Symphony Center, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. In 2017, when I won the VSA International Young Soloist competition, I was honored to perform at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC.

Through Borderless Arts Tennessee, I experienced recording in a studio for the first time and enjoyed numerous networking opportunities with industry professionals. While I am no longer a student, I continue to work with Borderless Arts, serving last year as a mentor to a Young Soloist entrant.

Through these experiences, I learned how to prepare a show, how to work on a professional soundstage, and I gained experience working in front of large audiences. I gained confidence and experience, easing my entry into college and into professional work. I whole-heartedly support the nomination of Borderless Arts Tennessee for the Governor's Arts Award.

Sincerely,



Elliott McClain

Musician

www.elliottmcclain.com

College of Education

College of Education Building 202
MTSU Box 93
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
o: 615-898-2874 • f: 615-898-5188
mtsu.edu/education



February 18, 2021

Dear Members of the Tennessee Arts Commission:

It is without reservation that I endorse the nomination of Borderless Arts TN for the Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership. I had the opportunity to learn about the mission and vision of this organization in 2006 when I served as Tennessee Commissioner of Education. At that time, TDOE made the decision to grant funding of \$5,000 annually for three years, increasing to \$10,000 a year through 2020.

By providing support to Borderless Arts in its early and formative years, we were able to ensure that students with disabilities had a chance to develop and showcase their talents and interests in the arts in a variety of activities and venues. The inclusion of these students in the academic setting was mandated, and the federal No Child Left Behind Act measured their academic progress. However, there were few opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the arts in a way that would highlight their *abilities* and provide an avenue not only for exploring their talents, but for sharing them with others. Borderless Arts filled that void.

I could not have foreseen the impact this "seed money" would have, and the return on the investment in Borderless Arts is difficult to describe. Research has shown that students who are involved in the arts and in extra-curricular activities are more successful in school, and students with disabilities are no exception. The myriad of programs and projects provided by Borderless Arts has fostered student creativity, confidence, and talents that extend into their classrooms and communities. This has resulted in the authentic inclusion of individuals with disabilities that extends far beyond a federal mandate. In addition, opportunities for service, involvement, and peer relationships within schools and universities and the community have grown exponentially. The organization's extensive and impressive list of events and activities in the visual and performing arts has included participation at the state, national, and international levels that has brought attention to Tennessee and to the role of the arts in inclusion.

For almost 20 years, Borderless Arts has provided opportunities to people who might not otherwise have been exposed or had access to the arts, opening up a world of possibilities for individuals with disabilities. This organization demonstrated leadership in diversity, equity, and inclusion long before those things came to the forefront. Because of their vision and tireless work, the lens through which we view individuals with disabilities has changed. So, too, has our appreciation of the extent to which the arts can enhance the lives of *every* person.

I can think of no more fitting way to celebrate the 20-year anniversary of Borderless Arts than by honoring them with the Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lana C. Seivers".

Dr. Lana C. Seivers
Dean Emerita
Middle Tennessee State University

D E A N N A P . K I M B R E L L

February 14, 2021

Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Nashville, TN 37243

RE: Governor's Arts Awards/Art Leadership letter of recommendation for Borderless Arts Tennessee

To whom it may concern:

For the past six years I have worked as a teaching artist for Borderless Arts TN. When asked what Borderless Arts TN does, I often say "BAT makes sure that the arts are still a part of the lives of those with special needs who have graduated out of services." That is true, but it is a very simplistic description of what I have observed over the past five years.

When I first began to work with the participants of Borderless Arts TN, I enjoyed their eagerness to learn and try new things. However, many of them struggled with social interactions and seemed to prefer to work in silos rather than collaborating with their peers. Due to the wide range of activities that are offered to these young adults, I have witnessed not only their artistic skill levels rise, but also a rise in their collaborative skills with one another and their personal confidence in claiming the title of artist. Quite frankly, I wish my own education as an artist had afforded me the broad spectrum of experiences and exposure that BAT offers to its participants.

The BAT participants are exposed to the full gamut of artistic expression: Visual Arts of all types (fiber arts, painting, drawing, recycled art, mosaics, etc.), Dance Performance, Music Performance and Songwriting (singing, instrumental lessons and competitions). I believe that the growth that I have seen in our Teapot Diplomats, as we now call them, has been due to the wide variety of ways they can express themselves artistically.

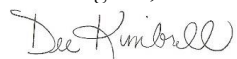
The Teapot Diplomat program is one of the branches of Borderless Arts TN. This program provides a structure of goals for each artist to develop their professional skills to achieve the title of Teapot Diplomat. It is a voluntary program that affords the Diplomats interaction with other artists (both differently abled and typically abled) who are locally and internationally renowned. They are mentored as to what it takes to be a professional artist and given the opportunity to demonstrate those skills through designing and leading projects of their own. Many of them now initiate collaborative partnerships with their fellow artists. This year several have taken on the leadership role of teaching others virtually.

Many of the parents have told me how gratifying it has been to watch their children's skills and confidence grow as they not only create art, but also have public artist shows and performances. Selling their art and performing for the public has broadened their perspective of what is possible. The Diplomats have grown from students coming to a workshop to participate in an activity, to artists that come to a workshop to learn how to improve and expand their artistic skills.

This has been a beautiful metamorphosis to witness. I am very honored to work with an organization that supports and respects their Diplomats and participants not as Artists with Disabilities, but simply as Artists.

It is with great pleasure and without hesitation that I recommend Borderless Arts Tennessee to be chosen for the Art Leadership Award.

Warm regards,



Dee Kimbrell, Storyteller and Visual Artist

Letter for Borderless Arts

In 2001 a seed was planted by the name VSA Tennessee. The plant became a tree which sprouted many leafy branches.

All around Tennessee, young people with disabilities came and sat in its nurturing shade. Here they learned to develop their skills through the arts. They became well-rounded self-supporting human beings.

There were branches for dancing, music, theatre, storytelling, play writing, music composition, costume designing, quilt making, and mask making. Every branch existed from the inner sap of creativity.

New shoots developed with new leaves and flowers bloomed as young artists participated even during the Covid times. The artists who learned under the tree held drive-by art exhibits, sold some of their art works, they showed their art on the internet, held virtual instructions and created educational opportunities for teaching artists. They danced, sang, and made music, sketched, painted, and sculpted. All the students were fulfilled and joyful as the parents were grateful to see their children's achievements. The parents were inspired, the teachers were inspired, and the students were inspired while the master gardener quietly tended the tree with the help of helper gardeners who brought plant food and compost to keep the root structure strong. They held fundraisers and auctions, they tilled and raked with grants and sponsorships. In time the tree got a new name Borderless Arts of Tennessee.

A strong wind blew seeds across the oceans to land in far off countries to enlighten and motivate other young people with disabilities. The seeds landed in Egypt, South Africa, Burma, and even to the highest mountains in Nepal. The seeds blew so very high as to be in outer space with the astronauts.

Resulting from the phenomenal care of the Master gardener, today the Borderless Arts Tree stands strong and healthy. Therefore, it is my honor to recommend Borderless Arts Tennessee for the Governor's arts leadership award 2021.

Thank you,

Estelle Condra

Board Member, Borderless Arts

2011 Recipient of Governor's Arts Award

Brown, Anne

Anne Goetze
4080 Carters Creek Pike
Franklin, Tn. 37064
anniemae9@aol.com
annegoetze.com

Dear Governor's Arts Award Committee,

When I first met Dr. Anne Brown in the early 1990's, she was already a happening fixture in the community of Nashville. It was not just from work in the Visual Arts as we think of her of today, but also because of her active involvement in and support of the Musical, Theatre and Literary Arts. Anne was instrumental in the formation of The Southern Lights concert series, spawning the attention to help revitalize the downtown area and culture. She recognized early the need for all of the Creative Arts in this town and the potential it can give to uplift everything along the way. That by its own metamorphose...it will emerge to benefit the whole. I believe that her heart is like that and it has evolved as a testimony to her life.

At that period of time, besides the music business, the visual arts were not very well represented and the downtown area itself was a gamble to invest in. But with great energy, she did just that when she opened the gallery on Fifth Avenue called 'The Arts Company' in 1996.

I had just stepped away from a career as a photographic retouch artist in the music business and transitioned to the fine arts with painting and photography. I was one of Anne's first artists to be represented with a show called 'Tennessee Countryside Impressions'. Another gamble. The juxtaposition of a country girl and a city girl was the beginning of a very long and beloved friendship that I treasure to this very day. Her collaborative spirit directed me in many ways over the years. I was inspired me to do the first art show in Leipers Fork and started putting group shows together, opened the first art gallery, (Leipers Creek Gallery) and became a founding member of the Chestnut Group. After a few more galleries, I started the Artist Open Studio Tour in Williamson County. Always encouraging, Anne gave me an exhibit of my documentary Nun Series 'Pray To Love' that set in motion a traveling exhibit across the U.S. Her belief in the work of uplifting women and telling their stories in turn gave me great courage. She always embraced the new, the next, and never retreated. It was because of that willingness to stay open, that others were given a platform to express and reflect the same spirit.

Anne was instrumental in forming the First Saturday Art Crawl, where we as artists could interact frequently with not only other creatives, but with the public and fellow art lovers. In those interactions, she created a 'space' for us all, bolstered the businesses and the economy and

broadened all of our horizons. Through her, I was introduced to creative heroes no longer with us, like Brother Mel, Joe O'Donnell and Ed Clark. The results of the friendships, influences and diversity of other artists deepened my own work. She consistently was a mentor. Whether it be the young apprentice in or out of college, the art enthusiast, the art collector, the corporate client, or the tourist off the street, her sharing of the art world has enriched us all in some form or fashion.

In 2020, when all of my scheduled exhibits cancelled and things fell apart from the Covid-19 pandemic, I thought..what to do?? The entrepreneurial Anne had just embarked on a new path in the art world and reminded me once again to persevere. So I started putting group shows together once again, this time even further in the open space of the country with 'Down a Country Road' exhibit series.

There were times it may not have been what I wanted to hear, but her level headed advice helped me to keep my heart in place as an artist and my head screwed on straight enough to survive during some really hard and difficult times of my life. That probably rings true for others. Her labors of love, service to others and work towards social justice truly makes Anne Brown a true modern day hero... so very worthy of the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership.

-Anne Goetze

Tinnin Bouldin
117 Long Valley Road
Brentwood, TN 37027
(615) 403-4690
TinninBouldin@gmail.com

March 30, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Governor's Arts Awards Committee,

I would like to wholeheartedly support the nomination of Dr. Anne Brown for the Governor's Award for Leadership in the Arts. I have worked with Anne Brown for almost twenty years, first in an outsourced position at a public relations company, and then for many years I was the Gallery Manager for her downtown visual arts gallery, The Arts Company. I have personally witnessed her integrity and dedication to the arts in Tennessee.

Dr. Brown's professional resumé reveals her lifelong adventure in arts leadership. She has been a significant and positive influence on the arts community in Tennessee for over 50 years. Guiding both nonprofit and for-profit entities, her driving force is to bring art and creativity into the lives of individuals and businesses - creating jobs for people in the arts - supporting the artist community - helping artists learn how to support themselves and thrive financially in the art market. She has had a mission to prove that art can be a profitable path for artists to pursue and that the arts can be an economic driver of local economies. So often the public views the arts as a nonessential - regularly the first item to be cut in community budgets - Dr. Brown has instead

shown us that the arts can often financially support the community rather than being seen as something that must be supported.

In 1996, Dr. Brown opened a visual art gallery on 5th Avenue in downtown Nashville. It was a time when few people visited the area and many people doubted that it would be successful; however, she believed that Nashvillians would respond enthusiastically to her unique business model of seeing a visual arts gallery as theatre. While most gallerists conform to traditional models of presenting art, Dr. Brown utilized her background as a theatrical director to create an arts venue with a special flair. The Arts Company was started with \$500, to be a fluid space of 6,000 sq.ft. that could change each month and entice a crowd of people to want to experience the excitement of art presentations. Over the next twenty years, she partnered with numerous arts organizations - using her gallery to help promote their initiatives as civic engagement has always been one of her top priorities - and helping organizations to be successful. Encouraging the development of the downtown arts district, she pushed for other galleries to open on the street, eventually establishing the popular First Saturday Art Crawl, a monthly arts event drawing an average of 1,500 people to the area, thereby visual artists were able to present successful exhibitions, musicians performed on the street, even some non-arts businesses participated - the entire area prospered. Her stewardship made it an arts destination for locals and tourists.

As I mentioned before, through her gallery, Dr. Brown created many projects with other businesses to encourage the sales of local and regional artists' work. One notable project was her curation of what would become *The Art Of Community* at FirstBank. She worked directly with Janet & Jim Ayers to select and purchase approximately 200 artworks created by Tennessee artists. This project made a significant positive financial impact for many artists and galleries across the state.

After more than twenty years of success, Dr. Brown sold the gallery in late 2018. She is currently writing a book about Nashville and the evolution of the local arts community during the past 50 years. It is a story she lived, as she moved to Nashville in 1968, with a doctorate degree in comparative literature, to teach at Fisk University, then eventually heading theatre production at Belmont University and Vanderbilt University. From 1973 to 1975, she was Director, Development and Information at The Tennessee Arts Commission; from 1975 to 1978, she was Executive Director for Nashville University Center; from 1978 to 1981, she was Executive Director of Nashville Institute for the Arts, where she developed an arts program for public and private schools in collaboration with the Lincoln Center Institute in NYC, also creating an artist-in-residence program to pair artists and teachers to work together in classrooms to make aesthetic education a basic part of the curriculum. From 1982 to 1992, she was Executive Director at Metro Nashville Arts Commission, where she developed and launched many public initiatives, including Arts at the Airport, Summer Lights Festival, the public art grants program, and opened three public art galleries.

Over these many years, she was involved in additional arts and education initiatives, including her active participation in developing the *Music Consortium of Nashville*; a leading participant in designing and establishing the *W.O.Smith Community Music School*; a key participant in site design and execution for the annual *Southern Festival of Books* during its first five years; as a graduate of *Leadership Nashville*, she was also an active participant in providing follow-up program planning for its *Arts & Entertainment Day*.

I am very thankful to have had the honor of working for Anne Brown at The Arts Company. With her dedication and direction, we presented a vast amount of quality artworks and introduced

thousands of visitors to the eclectic space that embodied the theatrical artistic vision of its founder. I am proud to have been one of its ensemble cast of characters.

A pioneer for the arts in Nashville and throughout Tennessee, Dr. Anne Brown has lived an exceptional life immersed in the arts. Her enthusiasm for our artistic communities continues to define her mission to lead others to discover how to live with art in their own lives.

Sincerely,

Tinnin Bouldin

Dear TN Arts Commission,

I am writing on behalf of my competitor, customer, friend, supplier, dearest friend, and inspiration Anne Brown. I start my note to you this way to map the evolution of my relationship with Anne over the last sixteen years, though I have known of Anne Brown dating back to 1997. I suppose if you count my attending Summer Lights in the late 80's.....well you get the idea!

I was first made known of Anne Brown as "the owner of this cool gallery in Nashville. You should go see her she has the coolest art, and she's so easy to deal with. She just wants people to love art." This was said to me, by a lady, I (a gallery owner 50' away from her restaurant – in Franklin) was trying to sell art to. I didn't seek out this wonderful woman of art as encouraged, but as I write this I deeply regret I didn't. Over the next eight years in business in Franklin I would hear from customers, passers through, but mostly artists about Anne and the Arts Company. It was the positive words of artists that struck me. No one ever had a bad word about Anne.

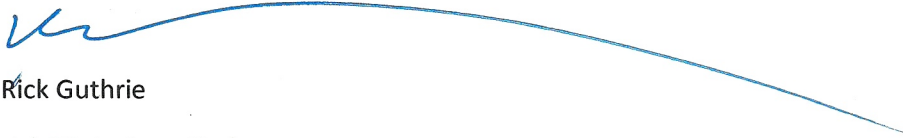
In 2005, after fourteen years in the gallery business (dating back to 1991 in Raleigh, NC) and a not small issue with depression I was out of the gallery business, which I thought would be the end of me. I continued doing framing and installation of art, and it was in this context I was introduced "officially" to Anne Brown. The first day I worked with Anne I set off the fire alarm, who knew you couldn't run a shop vac near a fire sensor, with fire crews streaming into the gallery and engines blocking 5th Ave. it was a real moment, and the first day of a new life for me and my two daughters and countless friends and intimate my wonder wife. After working two or three days for Anne she asked if I had any additional time, which of course I did, and after a couple weeks of mostly working with Anne she asked to talk to me. For the past couple weeks I had worked for her at my hourly rate (set by me) – "I need more of your help but I can't afford you what can we do?" Result - I worked twice as many hours for 2/3's the pay, and she never wavered. After relaying my "work day" to friends they would ask "does she ever need more help, or can I volunteer, or I'd just work during Art Crawl. I just want to have fun like you do.?!". Several did just that and all would call her friend today. As my work time increased so to my off-work time with Anne and Bonnie, which has become one of my and my families dearest friendships. During these years I have bought many pieces, and sold many to clients all the while adding to me appreciation for the gifts she has brought to us all. As pertains to this letter here is my takeaway working with Anne. When I needed help, on several levels, she took me into her world and never looked back. Note: I am but one of the many, many, many people she has done this for. Even today removed from the gallery business she is working to see artists have an opportunity to tell their story, and that people who need a bit of help find the help they need.

My time working with Anne has taught me many things, but my time as her friend has been the most rewarding. I have watched her guide people through their lives in the world of art - yes, but she has mentored so many in paths of all directions seeking and finding and sometime seeking again. Never with thought of gain, but rather giving. While having dinner the other night I learned yet another page in the life of Anne Brown. Many years ago, I'm not at liberty to say, Anne was offered an amazing position with a very renowned institution, upon reflection she decided she should stay in Nashville to help develop the Nashville arts community. A lifetime has been given to that end, but it isn't just Nashville that has seen the benefit. From helping with various art programs, to taking buses of patrons to the hills

and valleys and plateaus of Tennessee were the artists lived, to selling thousands and thousands of works for Tennessee artists, to promoting Tennessee artists in various states and Europe, to the dozens and dozens and dozens of jobs she a filled with Tennesseans Anne Brown is and has lived and given life to the art of Tennessee. Yes, many have done so on a larger stage and scale and with much more fanfare, but few have given as deeply and completely to Tennessee art as Anne Brown.

I have gone longer than you care for I'm sure and I'm sorry. My issue with this process is time and space and certainly paper and ink could never convey or contain how much Anne means to me and so many people I know. I know most of you if not all of you with the commission know her.....So enough said.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Rick Guthrie

rick@interioranthology.com

615-977-5073

Sondra and Doug Cruickshanks
434 Westview Avenue
Nashville, Tn. 37205

Dear Governor's Arts Award Committee,

It is with great pleasure to heartily endorse the nomination of Anne Brown for the 2021 Tennessee Governor's Arts Award in the category of Arts Leadership.

Anne Brown is a force! We were transferred to Nashville from Charlotte, N.C. 21 years ago. As 'corporate' gypsies each move_ search for the perfect house, make new friends, and discover the artistic vibe of our new locations. Anne was one of the first people we met while shopping for local art.

Her enthusiasm for Nashville, her desire to make downtown a place for art (all types of art) and her interest in making sure we found happiness was a very important sign that we are going to love our new hometown.

In her gallery The Arts Company, we were 'schooled' on the greatness of Tennessee art. It never seemed that annexes 'selling art'= instead she celebrated art, exuded art and genuinely loved and lived art!

Anne considered a vibrant art scene essential to a great city. Rather than fear competition of galleries in close proximity, she encouraged it.

Always promoting the city and its eclectic vibe of Tennessee artists, Anne sincerely loved this town and all it has to offer in all forms. Nashville and Tennessee owe a great debt to beloved Anne Brown.

-Sondra and Doug Cruickshanks

To: Tennessee Arts Commission
Governor's Arts Awards Committee 2021

From: Jane Ann McCullough
905 Travelers Ct. Nashville, Tennessee 37220
615-423-5168

I am writing this letter of support on behalf of Dr. Anne Brown, who is a candidate for the Arts Leadership Category, Governor's Award. I have known Anne for the last 44 years. It has been a great opportunity to work with Anne professionally, as a mentor to me, my employer, and so many collaborative art projects together.

Anne worked at the Tennessee Arts Commission in Community Development in the mid 1970's. I followed her into a version of her position upon moving to Nashville with the TAC. Anne freely taught me how to use the arts to inspire communities in the state and to enhance their everyday lives through the arts. She later reviewed grants for the TAC in the Artist in Schools category, helping to place artists from all disciplines across the state into the schools. She was and is, always available with a smile on her face, when guidance is needed.

Anne's drive and motivation was to develop ways to provide arts education for educators and students in both public and private schools, and to artists in Tennessee. This came about in the early 1980's as a collaborative effort with the Lincoln Center in New York City. Anne then became the director of the Nashville Institute for the Arts. She believed that all students should have the opportunity to participate and view the arts, to enhance their lives. After the Tennessee Performing Arts Center opened, I directed the Humanities Outreach in Tennessee education program, which began based on and in collaboration with the Nashville Institute for the Arts.

In 1982 Anne was named the Executive Director of the Metro Nashville Arts Commission. As founding director of the public arts agency she developed the first

policies and guidelines for awarding public funds to the arts. I was the director of the Metro Grants Program for the first ten years, and witnessed Anne guide public participation, government leaders, and grant applicants with enthusiasm and a positive outlook of where we can go from here. Anne developed many programs that have spun off and are still in operation today such as the Arts in the Airport program.

Anne takes on both large and small projects, local and international, along with innumerable consultancies, all the while holding her belief that accessibility to the arts should be available to everyone, while innovative and held to the highest standard of excellence. She is always available to individuals and other agencies for assistance or guidance with their ideas, problems or even a bit of a history lesson in the Arts.

The Arts Company is one of Anne's most exciting creations, as she calls it a "full service art gallery". After setting her eye on an area of downtown Nashville, an eyesore, where few wanted to walk, everything began to evolve some 20 years ago. Her motivation and extraordinary services to the artists and the community had purpose. She wanted all walks of life to come into this gallery. Anne's strong belief in diversity continued to show by the artists presented in the gallery along with the people who visited the gallery. Anne is friendly to everyone no matter their level of expertise. She took on the job of locating visual artists who were well known and some who had never been shown. By traveling through Tennessee and beyond she also located outsider art like never seen before in Nashville. The Gallery became a 6000 sq. ft. space, a creative adventure for everyone coming in. The Arts Company began many collaborations that brought in other businesses and art galleries to the downtown area.

Dr. Anne Brown holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, M.A. in English and History / B.A. in English and Theatre. She is a published writer, a voracious reader, a collector of art and books, a teacher, and I am proud to say my friend.

Carpetbag Theatre, The

Carpetbag Theatre, Inc

Nomination for Governor's Arts Award for Leadership in the Arts

The Carpetbag Theatre, Inc. (CBT) is an African-American, community driven, professional theater company located in Knoxville, Tennessee, celebrating its' 50th Anniversary throughout the year 2019. CBT's mission is to give artistic voice to the issues and dreams of people who have been silenced, to tell stories of empowerment, and celebrate African-American culture. CBT's work is based in community practice and is specifically designed to help people break through barriers that have oppressed them by creating the highest quality original works, centered in story, song and community collaboration. CBT creates work designed to generate deep discussion and healing around a number of issues, while serving impacted communities by returning their stories to them with honesty, dignity, and concern for the aesthetic of that particular community.

Our Story:

In 1969, Wilmer Francis Lucas, a writer and playwright who had been a participant in the Harlem Writers Guild, with his wife Cleo Lucas, an arts & history professor at Knoxville College, called a meeting with other members of Knoxville's African-American community to discuss the future of their beloved community. From this meeting, Wilmer, Cleo and others created The Carpetbag Theatre, Inc. (CBT). It was designed as an umbrella organization to promote and celebrate African-American Theater and the arts. The organization was formed with a purpose and focus similar to that of the Harlem Writers Guild – 'to share and give voice to our untold stories and the community of writers and artist of color searching to develop their craft and showcase their work at the

highest professional levels in their field.’ Today, CBT continues in that tradition, remaining an umbrella organization where young and developing artists feel seen, welcomed, and encouraged.

In 1974, current Executive and Artistic Director, Linda Parris-Bailey, began working with CBT as the Artistic Director. Her first task was to establish CBT-sponsored Theater and Acting Workshops at Knoxville College, one of Tennessee’s first Historically Black Colleges. This effort paid off through the development of CBT’s first ensemble from workshop attendees and the development of the company’s first production under the direction of Mrs. Parris-Bailey, “Three Acts of Black Love.” The production consisted of three, one-act plays written by local African-American writers with “Love” as the central theme. This title is a fitting caption for the work and love affair CBT has exhibited throughout its’ history in the City of Knoxville and in the State of Tennessee.

Parris-Bailey, as the new Artistic Director, started with a plan and began to build Carpetbag as a touring company. She quickly developed into an exceptional playwright, working with the ensemble to become CBT’s primary writer-in-residence, writing and developing with the ensemble CBT’s touring pieces. Ms. Parris-Bailey, as the new Artistic Director, started with a plan and began to build Carpetbag as a touring company. She quickly developed into an exceptional playwright. Working with the ensemble, she became CBT’s primary writer-in-residence, writing and developing with the ensemble CBT’s touring pieces:

Cric? Crac!, a children’s play of African & Haitian folktales; *Ce Nitram Sacul*, a “Womentor” praise poem and tribute play; *Southern Sankofa: Flying Home*; *Nothin’ Nice*, a commissioned piece written for and about a community in the Lower 9th Ward of

New Orleans, LA that is environmentally challenged by toxic waste and other issues; *Dark Cowgirls and Prairie Queens*, CBT's signature play, a historical piece that recounts stories of Black women in the Old West in search of freedom, that toured extensively across the country, and boasts a multi-week run at the New Victory Theater, a Broadway Theater in NYC; *SWOPERA* (A Spoken Word Opera) a play that centers around family dynamics to save a soul food restaurant from the effects of gentrification infused with music and hip hop poetry written by Knoxville slam poets; *Between a Ballad and a Blues* (BBB), a play that brings to life the untold stories and music of the legendary Howard "Louie Blueie" Armstrong, and the Tennessee Chocolate Drops, a string band originating in East Tennessee and rural Appalachia, whose sound contributed to the current traditions of what is now called "country music" - a LeMoyne-Owen College professor of history suggested that "BBB" presents enough material from the lives of the characters and the period for an entire year's history lesson in research; and finally, *Speed Killed My Cousin*, the powerful story of a young African-American female Veteran, driving the Long Island Expressway, voicing her inner struggles with Moral Injury, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) & Military Sexual Trauma. The creation of these pieces, the development of the ensemble, and touring built CBT into an acclaimed professional touring theater company.

Our Methods:

CBT has discovered creative ways to apply its story gathering abilities to digital storytelling and creative dramatics. CBT has developed and provided Culturally Driven Facilitation Services and special presentations to institutes, foundations and nonprofits, alike. Clients include, The Brushy Fork Institute, the Kellogg Foundation, Andrew W.

Mellon Foundation and Tennessee Valley Authority. CBT has also provided special services to a diverse group of community service providers; including job training and readiness programs, Higher Education programs, and mental health treatment programs. Clients for these services have included Sisters of the Rainbow/Women in Recovery, University of Tennessee, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, AIDS Response Knoxville, Plan ET, City of Knoxville and the Knox County Job Training Partnership (JTPA).

CBT has also contracted with the Knoxville Tourism Commission, the Beck Cultural Exchange Center and the University of Tennessee to produce digital stories for the “Knoxville African American Tours & Cultural Heritage (KAATCH) project. The digital stories were designed for tourists interested in taking a walking tour of Downtown Knoxville. The Digital Stories made it possible for bus riders, museum visitors and individual tourists to see and hear African American history; taking a look back at Knoxville's Black Business Community from the 1800's to the 1960's and listen to the stories, re-live the events, and view the history of noted landmarks and meet significant historical personalities from eras gone by.

Where We Are:

CBT has had a significant impact in Knoxville’s economy as our productions, collaborations, and activities have been responsible for millions of dollars flowing back into the local economy throughout our history. In the last three years, with generous assistance from the Roy Cockrum Foundation, CBT has remounted and locally produced six of its most memorable productions, leading up its 50th Anniversary Celebration. CBT has produced these plays locally, and in the last 3 years, have recorded expenditures of

over \$500,000 all spent here in East Tennessee. CBT has received funding from a number of sources including; The East Tennessee Foundation, Cornerstone Foundation, The Ford Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Doris Duke Foundation, Aslan Foundation, Roy Cockrum Foundation, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Tennessee Arts Commission, Network of Ensemble Theaters, Knoxville Arts Council, and Community Shares.

Through CBT's presence and participation in professional networks and collaborations, we have been able attract and host several national workshops, conferences and gatherings of professional artist to the Knoxville area; hosting the National Performance Network's Annual Meeting, bringing more than two hundred nationally recognized artists to the Knoxville; Hosting artists from the regional organization, Alternate ROOTS, to Knoxville on several occasions to produce workshops, trainings and performances; Collaborating with the Network of Ensemble Theaters (NET) to create a multi-city conference showcasing the artists of Appalachia; and in December 2019, will play host the New England Foundation for the Arts' (NEFA) Annual Conference in Knoxville. As the recipient of a generous grant from the Roy Cockrum Foundation, CBT has produced a six show retrospective series of our original work, over the course of the last three years, bringing nationally acclaimed directors such as Steven Sapp, Ebony Golden and Leilani Chan. Most recently CBT hosted the LANE (Leveraging a Network for Equity) Mid-Year meeting.

Where We Are Going:

Although CBT operates and thrives in Knoxville, CBT has remained an active participant and professional contributor to the arts field. As a founding member of Alternate

ROOTS, and Partners of the National Performance Network, Network of Ensemble Theaters, Black Theater Network, Women of Color in the Arts (WOCA) and many other networks, CBT continues to produce original works, remain steadfast in the goal of teaching and leading local artists, young and old, to discover their hidden talents, present nationally touring artists and companies to the city of Knoxville, and generate new partnerships with residencies designed to benefit our beloved community.

Annually, CBT hosts the Youth Theatre Festival showcasing the multifaceted artistic talent of youth in our community and region, as well as exposing young people to nationally-touring artists whose performances are by youth, or youth-centered. This event features a morning of performances and an afternoon of workshops designed to offer youth the affirmation “I CAN DO THAT,” a phrase shouted throughout the day, reminding participants, they can achieve anything.

This history, wealth of experience and contributions to the field, its economic impact on the local economy qualifies The Carpetbag Theatre, Inc. as a unique candidate for the Governor’s Arts Leadership Award.

To the Selection Committee,

I support the nomination of The Carpetbag Theatre, Inc. of Knoxville, Tennessee for the *Arts Leadership Award*.

Because of their sustained support of developing artists, the Theatre has been home and training ground to hundreds of young and older artists to explore their craft, be guided, encouraged and lifted up to their fullest potential. At Carpetbag Theatre they learn the teamwork, responsibility and discipline required to become the artist they dreamed of becoming under the guidance of Director Linda Parris-Bailey. Her steady hand and prolific creative works have created a healthy, supportive environment where the artists thrive beyond what they, alone, might not accomplish. Seasoned artists, too, have a place where they can continue expanding their craft while sharing their experience and knowledge.

During Carpetbag Theatre's incredible 50 year journey, I have had the pleasure-of seeing this company not only survive, but thrive when times were hard, funding limited and resources stretched thin. They persevered ... for the work, the art, for the opportunity to express what needed to be said. The creative works penned by Director Bailey required the performers to dig deep, to go beyond previous perceptions, to step into uncharted territory. This is fertile ground for artists, and the community benefits from their courage and strong determination.

As a professional, I have worked with The Carpetbag Theater on numerous occasions and can state without equivocation that they always delivered and continue to present moving performances not only with integrity and professionalism, but by touching the hearts and souls of audiences - making us think, feel, and examine collective human values.

May they continue to awaken us with their work, because our society, our culture, needs them.

I am proud to support their nomination knowing they fully deserve the distinction. Thank you for your consideration of this force of nature called The Carpetbag Theatre, Inc. for the *Arts Leadership Award*.

Sincerely,

Maggie Longmire

Professional Singer/songwriter

May 31, 2019

To whom it may concern:

I am happy to write this letter of recommendation for the Tennessee Governor's Award for the Carpetbag Theatre, Inc..

The Carpetbag Theatre, Inc. (CBT), founded in 1969 and chartered in 1970, is a professional, multigenerational ensemble company dedicated to the production of new works. Their mission is to give artistic voice to the issues and dreams of people who have been silenced by racism, classism, sexism, ageism, homophobia and other forms of oppression. CBT serves communities by returning their stories to them with honesty, dignity, and concern for the aesthetic of that particular community, helping culturally specific communities to re-define how they organize.

Throughout its 50-year history, CBT has worked in partnership with other community artists, activists, cultural workers, storytellers, leaders and people who are simply concerned, creating original works through collaboration in a style based in storytelling and song.

CBT uses cultural exchange; knowledge sharing; skills building; and the reclamation of history, culture, space and neighborhoods as an experiential process that brings about transformative change.

Given this is their 50th Anniversary, I cannot think of a better time for them to receive this award.

Peace, love, and justice,



Margo Miller
2726 Linden Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37919

May 30, 2019

Tennessee Arts Commission
Re: Nomination for The Carpetbag Theatre

How fitting it would be for the Carpetbag Theatre to receive your Governor's Award for the Arts in their 50th year of existence. Carpetbag is one of the longest running African American theatre companies in the country. They are internationally recognized, and we are fortunate to have them based in the state of Tennessee, and in Knoxville in particular. Their mission to give artistic voice to the issues and dreams of people who have been silenced by racism, classism, sexism, ageism, homophobia and other forms of oppression is quite powerful.

Even while they travel the country to perform, they always make sure to provide opportunities for local youth. They often provide youth workshops and youth productions, and for the last couple of years have been in residence for the Pellissippi State Community College Project GRAD Summer Institute hosted by the college at its Main Campus for nearly 200 young people from Austin-East and Fulton High Schools. Carpetbag has creatively interwoven their Digital Storytelling resource into the Summer Institute experience, providing a new software-based visual arts platform combined with their trademark story circle. Through this Carpetbag Theatre experience, these center city youth find and share their voice on deeply troubling experiences and unimaginable pain, helping them to process adverse childhood experiences in ways that help them move forward in a more emotionally healthy way, and in the process, they learn concept storyboarding, video design and editing. The Carpetbag Theatre also provides a placement site for a Project GRAD Knoxville Hands on the Future paid summer internship for a high school student to discover there are many careers related to the arts beyond the performance stage.

It is with great respect and admiration for the Carpetbag Theatre that I recommend them for the Governor's Arts Award.

Sincerely,



Vrondelia (Ronni) Chandler
Executive Director/CEO

May 30, 2019

To the Selection Committee:

It is my honor to submit this letter of support for The Carpetbag Theatre, Inc. for the Tennessee Arts Commission Governor's Arts Award.

The Carpetbag Theatre, Inc. (CBT) has made an impact by, not only being the longest running Black performing arts theatre in the United States, but by having a mission like no other theatre-giving artistic voice to the issues and dreams of people silenced by oppression. What makes the mission and their work even more remarkable to me is that they are giving artistic voice to local stories of those who live or have lived in our community are being brought to light and shared with multitudes.

From their signature works such as "Red Summer", which chronicles the story of the race riots in Knoxville, TN in the summer of 1919, to upcoming pieces like "Bricks", the story of one of East Tennessee's first black businessmen, CBT prides themselves on reclaiming and reframing the stories of Black History in Knoxville.

Even outside of production and presentation, Carpetbag has a rich history of community activism, intercultural work, and innovative and fulfilling storytelling. This organization has always seemingly taken pride in maintaining a team of immensely skilled and creative individuals that continue to drive the mission and it is my honor to be connected with such a group as this.

Founded in 1969, I couldn't think of a better time than their 50th anniversary year for this incredible organization to receive such a distinct honor as the Governor's Arts Award.

Sincerest Regards,

Rev. Renee Kesler
President
Beck Cultural Exchange Center

Selection Committee

2019 Governor's Arts Award

Nashville, Tennessee

To the Selection Committee:

I moved South in 1964. I had at that time met only two persons of color and had heard Dr. King preach once at my undergraduate school. I don't remember a single textbook speaking of ethnic identity. But I was immediately interested because of some things that happened at the University of Tennessee and because I actually began to meet some Black people. Carpetbag Theatre was an all-Black group that I only heard of in the early 1970s and that has stayed in the background and foreground of my life ever since.

Knoxville and the University were odd hosts for a new group, and as an outsider I don't really know what hardships a new Black theatre with a message faced in trying to establish an audience and gather resources. I only know that every time I heard about them or saw a performance, they mustered immense strength on their own and managed to make good things happen. Their tenacity was amazing. After the founder's death, the artistic director and a board made up of Knoxville citizens managed to sustain the group despite receiving little community recognition. Theatres all over the world knew about Carpetbag, but the recognition was slower at home. Carpetbag was indeed "a prophet in its own country" and survived on a succession of small grants and intense labor from board members.

They provided programs for youth that have had lasting impact. Some of the youth involved in coffee houses and productions are still working with the theatre in adulthood. When national theatre support groups came in with major support from the outside Carpetbag was able to extend PR and to gather itself for a celebration of fifty years of educational leadership in East Tennessee. I will be celebrating

with them because they made it possible for me, a “white girl,” to meet and enjoy and learn from Black and Hispanic artists and ordinary people. They have continued to enrich my life all these 50 years.

Director Linda Parris Bailey and her husband Emanuel, board president Margo Miller, board member Umoja Ahad have helped (sometimes forced) me to grow, and for this I am thankful. With the new support even the locals are beginning to come around, and I’m hoping for a grand celebration this year.

I can’t begin in a single letter to identify all the kinds of community service that Carpetbag has provided, but their programs have touched and encouraged area artists and have given rich experiences to young people who didn’t have much opportunity. I’ll just describe my own experiences at Café Noir, held on the Knoxville College Campus for neighborhood poetry readings. I watched college students, children from nearby, some adults like myself gather around chips and sodas to listen to each other, applaud, comment enthusiastically, and absorb the general ambience of self-mastery and community affirmation that Carpetbag always provided.

Black theatre companies were a “thing” in the late 1960s-early 1970s. Very few have survived.

Carpetbag’s organization has given Knoxville more than most people here know. Their support has included developing property for community use, providing programs for community education, and offering enrichment for the lives of people who had been stunted by the falsity that white supremacy spread through this country. I no longer feel stunted, and I give a chunk of the credit for that to Carpetbag Theatre. I have found others like me here in the city, who have come to value Carpetbag as well.

Clarksville Montgomery County Arts &
Heritage Council

AHDC Nomination. Clarksville, Tennessee is the fifth largest and fastest growing city in the state. It is blessed with many assets. Among these blessings are: industrious and honest citizens; a world-class military base; an excellent state university; a fine museum; and a complex community of artists. Nestled within this thriving city is a vigorous, unassuming, cultural leadership cell that goes unnoticed even though the fruits of its labors are regularly visible. That unheralded leadership cell is the Clarksville-Montgomery County Arts and Heritage Development Council (AHDC). The AHDC consciously encourages and promotes the area's cultural resources—both artistic and historic. The time has come to recognize that council's contributions. Therefore, I hereby nominate the Clarksville-Montgomery County Arts and Heritage Development Council for the **Governor's Arts Award** in the category of Arts Leadership.

The Clarksville-Montgomery County Arts & Heritage Development Council (AHDC) was initiated in 2000 as a 501(c)3 component unit of the City of Clarksville. The mission of the AHDC is to enrichen and celebrate the cultural climate of Clarksville, Tennessee and environs. We strive to make our city, a creative mecca and an inspiration to the surrounding region. To this end, we support arts organizations like Gateway Chamber Orchestra, Cumberland Winds, Community Concert Assn., Roxy Regional Theatre and Downtown Artists Cooperative through small grants and marketing efforts. We provide arts experiences through free arts workshops, Clarksville Writers Conferences, L&N Depot art exhibits and plein air painting events. We sponsor public art to stimulate an appreciation of art and of the city's heritage. We are proud of our role in preserving local, state and even national history. The AHDC is the agency responsible for the founding and operation of The Tennessee State Hall of Fame (THOF). THOF is a statewide institution that honors people and entities who have brought fame and

fortune to our state. It is currently a virtual hall of fame (tnhalloffame.org) poised to become a bricks-and-mortar institution in Clarksville when the state provides the funding. This is in accordance with Tennessee House Joint resolution No. 324, dated April 21, 2015. There are presently thirty-five honorees enshrined in THOF with four more approved and pending completion of the display citations. New nominations are accepted annually.

Financing is limited. The AHDC receives \$40,000 annually from the city to pay the salaries of a full-time executive director and part-time grants manager. Other income comes from grants, book and calendar sales, memberships, and donations. Our biggest annual program is the Clarksville Writers Conference, established to encourage aspiring authors and to celebrate Clarksville's connection with the Southern Renaissance in literature through residents Robert Penn Warren, Alan Tate, Caroline Gordon, and Evelyn Scott. It is a two-day program of workshops on writing, editing, publishing and marketing with discussions of new books for avid readers and aspiring writers. The conference is led by eight to ten published authors, agents, marketers, and editors. We serve as the designated agency for the Tennessee Arts Commission's Arts Build Communities program to manage mini-grants to organizations in seven counties. We administer Arts for Hearts, a program designed to bring the healing experience of art to people who face economic, physical, cognitive, or emotional barriers to arts experiences. We believe that "place" is important to a community's quality of life. To that end we have begun two public art initiatives: Tennessee Discovery Trails with small statues of state icons scattered along them and Tennessee Triumph, a 1.25 life-sized statue of a woman voting in the 1920 election to celebrate the county's role in passage of the 19th Amendment for its centennial anniversary.

It is not practical to enumerate the many offerings of the AHDC, but some highlights from the past three years are illustrative of the whole.

The year 2016 marked the twelfth anniversary of the Clarksville Writers Conference. In addition, we offered the sixth annual Valentine's Afternoon with the Arts featuring work by ten local artists, a local musical ensemble and chocolate samples by local caterers. We accepted no commissions for this event. As a designated agency for the Tennessee Arts Commission's Arts Build Communities grant program, we allocated and oversaw nearly \$17,000 to community groups in seven counties for arts projects. We worked with the city's Parks and Recreation Department to host the Riverfest Art Experience and awards ceremony, and with downtown churches to present Spiritfest, a pre-Christmas Parade festival with live musical presentations and an artisans' fair, with all area public high schools to organize exhibits and host receptions for student work throughout the school year. We sponsored a plein air paint-out where regional artists spent two days painting around the city and producing works of art en plein air; produced a Cultural Calendar featuring juried work by twelve local artists and listing arts events throughout the year; hosted an awards ceremony to recognize civic-minded Clarksvillians for their Lifetime Achievement contributions to the rich artistic and historic fabric of our community; sponsored a national hooked-rug exhibit which included work from local artisans; and sponsored arts exhibits by several local artists, Centerstone Mental Health students, and the Middle Tennessee Watercolor Society. We supported Gateway Chamber Orchestra, Roxy Regional Theatre, Lone Oak Picnic and Frolic on Franklin Street with small monetary donations. We also launched a program we call Arts for Hearts which brings the arts to community residents with physical, mental, cognitive, or economic barriers to arts experiences through free one- to three-hour workshops where participants have a piece of art to bring home. The AHDC executive director served on the unfunded City of Clarksville Public Art Commission. Since there was little money for public art, she began work on a multi-year affordable project to bring small pieces of art along three urban trails. AHDC worked with The Tennessee State Hall of Fame and the Women's Network to plan Tennessee Discovery Trails with small statues of Tennessee

symbols along with historical information about places along the trails. Phase I was to engage an artist to design two life-size poses of the state bird, the mockingbird, and to get the local Clarksville foundry to create a mold for each bird, and develop a mobile website with trail information and photos.

In year 2017, we repeated our annual programs: Riverfest's Arts Experience, Cultural Calendar, Valentine's Day Afternoon with the Arts, thirteenth annual Clarksville Writers Conference, Lifetime Achievement Awards Ceremony, Tennessee Arts Commission Arts Build Communities grants administration, Plein Air Paint-Out, Spiritfest, Middle Tennessee Watercolor Society and local artists' art exhibits. Our Arts for Hearts program grew so that we were offering five to six workshops a month. In addition, we presented a six-video series of films on Clarksville's past, present and future as part of a Tennessee Arts Commission Placemaking grant; donated a big screen, projector, sound system, DVD player to the Roxy Regional Theatre to bring classic movies back to downtown Franklin Street; worked with the Family and Community Educators to re-cane chairs for Emerald Hill Mansion; completed a year-long study of arts and economic prosperity for this community in conjunction with Americans for the Arts and the Tennessee Arts Commission; and partnered with the Montgomery County Historical Society to bring in consultants to advise on preserving a Uneeda biscuit ghost sign. The executive director again served on the City Public Arts Commission and was invited to join an ad hoc County Public Art Committee. In Phase 2 of the Tennessee Discovery Trails, we had fifty small mocking birds cast, produced a 16-page booklet for one of the trails, contacted property owners along the trail for bird placement. The year ended with the inauguration of the virtual THOF thanks to the technical support of interns from Austin Peay State University and web management by the Montgomery County IT Office.

In 2018, we conducted our annual programs as noted above. There was additional growth. Our Arts for Hearts continued to expand so that we were offering an average of two workshops a week in various

venues. In addition, we received a \$10,000 grant from the Tennessee Arts Commission to help six organizations embrace active military, veterans and their families in Clarksville's creative community; partnered with the Center of Excellence in the Creative Arts (CECA) and Customs House Museum to host the Tennessee Arts Commission's statewide Design Thinking Conference in Clarksville; sponsored with CECA a "Toast to the Arts" to recognize artistic accomplishments in Clarksville for the year; and worked with Austin Peay State University's video faculty to produce a documentary based on former Mayor Charles Crow's 1930s Clarksville film. In the area of public art, the executive director continued to serve on the city and county public art commission and committee. AHDC began Phase 3 of the Tennessee Discovery Trails to install the fifty mockingbirds along the trails. We also received a \$3,100 grant to engage an artist to create a second state icon—iris, box turtle or catfish—to install along the trails. We also initiated efforts to erect a statue honoring Montgomery County suffragists in time for the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment in 2020. Tennessee cast the decisive vote, and this statue will stand as a permanent and fitting reminder to our city, the state and the nation.

It is with great pleasure that I write to recommend the Clarksville-Montgomery County Arts and Heritage Development Council for the Governor's Arts Award in the category of Arts Leadership. With a very modest budget and a dedicated group of volunteers, the AHDC has had a profound impact on the Clarksville - Montgomery County area.

Of particular note to me as a visual artist, is the work that the AHDC recently completed with Dr. Jim Diehr to create cast metal sculptures of Tennessee's state bird, the mockingbird. My children and I have enjoyed "hunting" for the birds along the trails in the area. I look forward to the next phase of their Tennessee Discovery Trails project.

The AHDC has done a fantastic job of accomplishing a great deal with their meager funds. They wisely collaborate with many other organizations and are viewed as competent and trustworthy partners. I was able to witness this in person when the AHDC worked with CECA (the Center of Excellence for Creative Arts) at Austin Peay State University and the Customs House Museum to host the Tennessee Arts Commissions Design Thinking Conference in Clarksville. It was a real boon to our arts community to have the conference here, and it was a smashing success.

The Clarksville-Montgomery County Arts and Heritage Development Council are undoubtedly deserving of this award. The impact of their work will have a positive effect on the residents of our community for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Barry Jones

Professor of Art

Dean, College of Arts and Letters



BLF MARKETING

April 10, 2019

A letter in support of the Clarksville-Montgomery County Arts and Heritage Development Council

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this letter as affirmation of my hearty support for the nomination the Clarksville-Montgomery County Arts & Heritage Development Council for the **Governor's Arts Award** in the category of Arts Leadership.

The AHDC continues to be an extremely effective organization by providing leadership through advocacy, communication and programming as well as its recognition of individual artists and other arts, heritage and cultural organizations. Through its direct involvement, AHDC fosters a spirit of collegiality among the various entities with which it interacts...it has become the binder that holds our community's arts and cultural pages together. We would definitely be more "loose leaf" and fragmented without the AHDC.

Its track record is proven over nearly 20 years and it is a highly respected organization with great leadership and committed supporters. Now is the time to recognize the Clarksville-Montgomery County Arts & Heritage Development Council with the **Governor's Arts Award** in the category of Arts Leadership. It is well earned and well deserved.

Sincerely,

Frank Lott, Partner

BLF Marketing

April 12, 2910

To Whom It May Concern

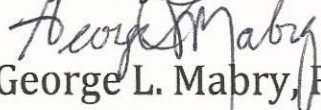
This letter is in support of the nomination of the Clarksville-Montgomery County Arts and Heritage Development Council (AHDC) for the Governor's Arts Award in the category of Arts Leadership.

Since its inception in 2000, the AHDC has proven to be the principal motivator and contributor to the regions cultural activities and resources – both historic and artistic.

The Arts and Heritage Development Council, by successfully producing and documenting a myriad of high quality arts programs outlined in Dewey Browder's extensive nomination, deserves to be further recognized with this coveted award.

The commitment and dedication of the Council's membership to the people of the region and their cultural heritage is exemplary. I hope this organization will receive a close scrutiny of its achievements that will support our claim that the AHDC is a truly valuable asset to the entire State of Tennessee.

Sincerely,


George L. Mabry, Professor Emeritus
Austin Peay State University
Choral Director Retired
Nashville Symphony



CITY OF CLARKSVILLE

MAYOR JOE PITTS

City Hall
One Public Square
Clarksville, TN 37040

OFFICE 931.645.7444
FAX 931.552.7479

joe.pitts@cityofclarksville.com

April 8, 2019

Dear Friends of the Arts:

I heartily endorse the nomination of the Clarksville-Montgomery County AHDC for the Governor's Arts Leadership Award. The AHDC is the umbrella organization for our region when it comes to the dual mission of cultivating the arts and amplifying our rich and varied history.

We enjoy an almost continuous stream of culturally rewarding performances, exhibits, and events for people of all ages, things that are in one way or another fostered by the AHDC. The nomination narrative itself speaks to the variety and nature of the AHDC's contributions. Rather than add to the already impressive list I want to add my voice to those leading citizens who have already offered their support in the form of letters. For the last two decades, the community of Clarksville-Montgomery County has benefited from the efforts put forth by the AHDC. The council is made up of volunteers from the community, some of whom are themselves artists, performers, and historians. Others are educators, administrators, businessmen and women and otherwise interested fans of the city, local and state accomplishments. While each member has his or her own talents and interests, they all pull together under the leadership of an Executive Director to make life better for the entire community. This council facilitates a richer life for us all by bringing quality programs that otherwise would not happen

I think you can tell that we are proud of our community and the Arts and Heritage Development Council that contributes additional flavor, variety, and meaning to our cultural life. We appreciate your consideration in this matter and invite you to come to see us in the Queen City of Clarksville on the Cumberland.

Sincerely,

Joe Pitts
Mayor

15 Trahern Terrace, Clarksville, TN 37040

To Whom It May Concern:

I believe in the truism, "An organization is only as strong as its leader." No where is this more accurate than in the case of the Arts and Heritage Development Council (AHDC) of Clarksville-Montgomery County, TN.

I have been honored to serve intermittently on this council since its inception in 2000, and I have been an avid observer and supporter even when not a member. This council's contributions to our area are too many to attempt to list, but I will cite some particular, recurring examples that I fondly recall. For several years, the AHDC sponsored performances of the historical drama "Dinner with the Dead," at the Smith-Trahern Mansion in conjunction with the Montgomery County Historical Society. This drama is a celebration of local history by local performers in a dinner-theatre setting featuring traditional food. It was a smashing success every time. Then the AHDC conducted historic-architectural tours of homes in the area three years running. Each year this tour was well attended and enjoyed. The nomination narrative speaks to the many and varied projects the AHDC has conducted/supported over the years. I mention only a few because they illustrate the community spirit exhibited by all.

I served as an active board member for six years and had the opportunity to participate in the AHDC's group dynamics and decision-making process. To the credit of our community, the AHDC has always been blessed with interested volunteers, but one constant factor responsible for success has been the leadership of Dr. Ellen Kanervo, the Executive Director. The AHDC is a strong, vibrant and successful body due mainly to her conscientious, competent, creative and compassionate leadership. She is a work-driven director who has been known to volunteer sans salary in order to get the job done. Another truism comes to mind here: "Any job worth doing is worth doing well."

I salute her with pleasure and appreciation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "RUBY PATCH". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right of the name.

Ruby Patch

Statement by Nominating Official

In the interest of full disclosure, I want the judges to know that I am a former Chair and current member of the Clarksville-Montgomery County Arts and Heritage Development Council. I contacted Kim Johnson, Director of Arts Access, and was assured that it is OK for me to do the nominating.

Dewey A. Browder
Chair, Steering Committee
The Tennessee State Hall of Fame

Coleman, Stephen

Nomination of Stephen Coleman
2021 Governor's Art Awards – Arts Leadership Award
Submitted by Todd Shipley | April 30, 2021



Stephen Clark Coleman (b. 1950)

Executive Director, ArtsEd TN
President, Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation
Retired Band Director, Tullahoma High School
Tullahoma, Tennessee

In Tennessee, we are fortunate to recognize many individuals who have paved the way for music and arts education to become a critical component of a well-rounded education and paramount to the development and nurturing of children to become productive, successful members of society. **Stephen Clark Coleman** is one such example and is deserving of the 2021 Arts Leadership Award. There is perhaps no greater example of a life-long Tennessean who has dedicated his life to the advancement of music and arts education; who has affected the lives of countless students through masterful teaching and providing once-in-a-lifetime educational opportunities; who has mentored generations of both aspiring and accomplished teachers; and, someone who works tirelessly to train, equip, and empower teachers, communities, and organizations to be fierce consumers, supporters, and advocates for the arts and arts education.

Stephen Clark Coleman was born on January 10, 1950 in Cookeville, TN. He attended public school in Dickon and Waverly and went on to graduate from Wavery Central High

School in 1968. Stephen attended Tennessee Technological University. It is impossible to mention Stephen without also mentioning his wife, Marion Dianne Lindsay. The pair met while attending TTU, married in 1971, and the powerhouse music educator team that was soon to be known simply as "The Colemans" was born. Both Stephen and Marion attended graduate school at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. The duo began their first teaching assignment together at Wartburg Central High School, taking charge of the instrumental and vocal programs.

In 1979, Stephen and Marion left Wartburg and began their next chapter at Waverly Central High School. Stephen spent nine years building the Waverly band program to an exceptionally high standard. The band was invited to perform at the Tennessee Music Education Association (TMEA) Conference in 1985, and the following year was selected to perform at the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) Southern Division Conference.

In 1988, the Colemans moved to Tullahoma, TN and took direction of the band program at Tullahoma High School. For the next twenty-two years, the duo transformed the band program into one of the state's premier flagship music education programs. The Tullahoma bands were twice invited to perform at the TMEA Conference. Under Stephen's leadership, the band also performed at the Fiesta Bowl, Rose Bowl, Chicago St. Patrick's Day Parade, and with the West Point Band. The band represented the state of Tennessee at the request of the U.S. Department of the Interior in a ceremony in Hawaii commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Attack on Pearl Harbor and also received an invitation from the

Mexican government to present a concert in Mexico to honor the 25th anniversary of the founding of Cancun. An avid supporter of new music for wind bands, his bands commissioned and premiered multiple new works including “Waverider” and “Cuico” by Tennessee composer Greg Danner. The Colemans’ influence on the quality, culture, and community of the entire Tullahoma City Schools music program and community remains evident to this day.

After retirement from Tullahoma City Schools in 2010, Stephen became Director of Bands at Cumberland University, while Marion continued teaching half time with the beginning band program in Tullahoma. Stephen also became heavily involved with the Tennessee Arts Academy (TAA), the nation’s premier, intensive week-long summer professional development experience for arts educators, and currently serves as the president of the TAA Foundation. His role with the foundation is to lead the implementation of programs designed to financially support the Academy. Through Stephen’s leadership, the Arts Academy continues to support Tennessee arts educators by equipping and motivating teachers, significantly raising achievement levels in the arts, and effecting positive and lasting change in arts classrooms across the state.

In retirement, Stephen—while reflecting on the value and importance of developing strong, positive relationships with communities, like the ones he cultivated at Tullahoma—recognized the need for an organization to represent and support education in all four arts disciplines. Stephen is a founding member and the executive director of ArtsEd TN. The organization strives to advance, promote and support music, theatre, dance, and visual

art education through a robust statewide coalition of arts education advocates, including education, community, business, and parent members. Stephen led the collaboration and partnership with Americans for the Arts (AFTA), the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), and ArtsEd TN to implement five day-long workshops across the state in the fall of 2019, bringing together stakeholders from urban, suburban, and rural parts of the state to build a collective vision for strengthening the work of educators, administrators, and supporters of quality arts education. ArtsEd TN continues to mobilize arts supporters and advocates across the state around issues affecting arts education, including through the COVID-19 Pandemic. Through his efforts, teachers, arts supporters, and community members are better equipped to advocate for visual and performing arts education for all students in Tennessee.

The Colemans still reside in Tullahoma, where Stephen continues to dedicate much of his time to the Tennessee Arts Academy and ArtsEd TN. He never ceases to amaze his friends and colleagues with his endless knowledge of jazz musicians and recordings, incredible culinary skills, and plethora of tasting notes as a wine connoisseur.

In addition to all of the lives he affected as a music educator, Stephen's profound sense of responsibility prompted him to serve in varied capacities in professional and community organizations. A short list of these accomplishments includes serving as president of the Middle Tennessee School Band and Orchestra Association (MTSBOA) and the Tennessee Bandmasters Association (TBA) and membership in the prestigious Phi Beta Mu Bandmasters Fraternity. In addition, both Stephen and Marion were inducted into the

TMEA Hall of Fame in 2009, honored by the Tullahoma City School System as Teachers of the Year, and awarded the National Band Association (NBA) Citation of Excellence.

Stephen's hallmark philosophy that guided every step of his teaching career was "it's all about the kids." Further, no award, trophy, citation, accolade, or concert is sought after until the musical, academic, and social well-being of the students in his care was first assured. That guiding principle is impressed upon all who entered his classroom, whether teaching artists, staff members, or student teachers. Students of the Tullahoma band program continue through life knowing and believing that the most important aspect of their experience with instrumental music education is that they matured as young adults with music as the catalyst for their growth. Stephen never lost faith in his students as young musicians and as young adults. For his students, what was truly memorable and treasured was the second family and, in some instances, the only real family that was created by the inclusive and welcoming teacher duo. Stephen saw to it that the musical, social, and academic well-being of each and every student was nurtured and fulfilled. It is safe to say that philosophy and estimable focus remains evident today as the motivating force in his work as an advocate and supporter of the arts.

It is evident that Stephen Coleman, in his role as a music teacher, has had a profound impact on countless Tennesseans and continues to advance the value of the arts and arts education in the state through his continued work as an advocate and arts leader. Stephen's significant contributions to advance the arts and arts education qualify him as a deserving recipient of the 2021 Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

May 7, 2021

Dear Members of the Governor's Arts Committee,

It is my great pleasure to recommend Stephen Coleman to you for the Governor's Arts Awards in Arts Education. I have known Stephen since 1988, when he and his wife Marion began their storied tenure as directors of the Tullahoma High School Band. As a young, enthusiastic musician, I was immediately taken by both his visceral passion for music and his firm belief in the importance of arts education.

Even in my formative years, I was keenly aware of how highly he was respected by his peers. His innate ability to give so generously of his time and energies to young teachers was, even then, nothing short of remarkable. As has been true for the countless educators he has mentored, he encouraged me from the moment I met him, and his influence directly changed the course of my life.

As both of our careers advanced, his unique gifts for human connection became much more clear to me. In almost every conversation we have, he is excited to share moving stories of Tennessee arts educators; Some are treasured mentees, some need basic encouragement to continue in a difficult profession, and some need help convincing administration, colleagues, and school board members that their beloved arts programs are vital to the cognitive and creative development of young minds; Tomorrow's important minds.

I believe, however, that beyond the lives of the thousands of students he has impacted as a public school music teacher, his most important legacy is the success and reach of the Tennessee Arts Academy. Professional development is largely nonexistent for arts teachers around the country (and around the world). My own experience as an international performer (I'm writing you today from Wiesbaden, Germany!) and mentor of impossibly gifted budding professional singers and pianists has shown me time and again the necessity of continued artistic inspiration. Without it, meaningful art is impossible. This assemblage of acclaimed national and international interdisciplinary arts experts in Nashville each summer was initially designed as a catalyst to remind arts educators why they chose the profession to begin with. Stephen has taken the Academy to the next level. Now, teachers are given tools not only for the classroom, but also for the board room. Mobilizing data, scouring potential harmful legislation, informing public servants, developing arts advocacy strategies, and acknowledging the significant power of a connected arts community has enabled arts educators across Tennessee to both save and enhance their treasured programs. It's the only program of its kind in the United States, and has served as a model, both domestically and internationally, for arts enrichment at every level. Perhaps most impressively, Stephen has accomplished all of these things as a volunteer, long after his "official" retirement as an educator

I hope you will choose Stephen for this prestigious honor. I can't think of anyone who deserves it more. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. I can extol his virtues with reckless abandon!

Many thanks for your consideration,

Craig Terry
Grammy-Award winning pianist
Music Director, The Patrick G. and Shirley W Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago

5/7/21

To: Tennessee Arts Commission
From: Erich Zimmerman, Band Director, retired
Re: Arts Leadership Award for Stephen Coleman

To the members of the Tennessee Arts Commission,

It is a distinct honor and great pleasure to write this testimonial for Stephen Coleman, regarding his nomination for the Tennessee Arts Commission's Arts Leadership Award.

I have known Stephen Coleman for over 30 years. We were colleagues in Middle Tennessee. He was the band director at Tullahoma High School and we became acquainted through our work within the Middle Tennessee School Band and Orchestra Association (MTSBOA). Over the years our acquaintance became friendship as we collaborated on activities inside and outside of our respective programs. We planned joint honor band activities between the Tullahoma High School Band and the Martin Luther King Magnet School Band. We collaborated on the restructuring of the TMEA (Tennessee Music Education Association) governing body, out of which grew the Elementary Treble Choir and the State Concert Festival. These are just two examples of Stephen's leadership in promoting arts for students.

After Stephen's retirement from public schools he became the band director for the Cumberland University instrumental music program. There he worked tirelessly to provide the instruction and knowledge necessary for graduates of that program to enter the teaching profession. Throughout his years as a high school and college band director, Stephen found time to be on the board of the Tennessee Arts Academy. Through Stephen's leadership arts educators from across the state, from every grade level, and from every content area have had professional development sessions from some of the world's greatest artists. These experiences find their way into the arts classes in every district across our state.

Finally, Stephen has dedicated countless hours of his own time and resources to promote his greatest passion, Arts Advocacy. This passion manifests itself with his directorship of ArtsEd Tennessee. This advocacy group is dedicated to ensuring that arts education is given the opportunity to flourish in every county of our state. Through Stephen's leadership all of the major arts education associations have joined this group to advocate for the arts and its place in every school's curriculum.

I can think of no individual who deserves the Arts Leadership Award more than Stephen Coleman. He has dedicated his entire life to the arts and its presence in the Tennessee educational system. His work and leadership have touched literally tens of thousands of students and teachers. As a nominee for this award I give him my highest recommendation without reservation and I ask you, the Tennessee Arts Commission, to give him any and all consideration to present him with this honor.

Sincerely,

Erich Zimmerman
Instrumental Music Educator, retired
Music Education Representative for The Music Stop



TULLAHOMA BAND
927 North Jackson Street
Tullahoma, TN 37388
931-454-2629
www.tullahomabands.org

To Members of the Tennessee Arts Commission,

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Stephen Coleman for the 2021 Tennessee Governor's Art Award in Art Leadership. In the history of Tennessee Arts Educators, our state has been blessed with many individuals who have distinguished themselves as teachers, mentors, organizers, and leaders. Rarely, however, has there been an individual so devoted to the cause of arts education that it continues past retirement from the classroom. When the term "Arts Advocacy" is mentioned, undoubtedly a majority of arts educators across the state think of Stephen Coleman first and foremost.

Throughout his lifetime, Stephen Coleman has dedicated himself to the cause of arts advocacy at both the regional and state levels. Having served as president of many organizations including the Tennessee Music Education Association, he is no stranger to advocating for the causes of all art disciplines. He is a founding member of ArtsED Tennessee, a group which continues to make significant contributions by advancing the value of the arts in our state. On a weekly basis, Stephen is either on the phone or traveling around our state to meet with legislators and state level educators to collaborate on behalf of the arts. In addition, he spends countless hours securing funding for the Tennessee Arts Academy, a premier week long professional development program for arts educators of all levels in the state of Tennessee. Because of his influence in securing funding, thousands of students across our state are positively affected through their teachers.

Stephen Coleman is such a deserving candidate for the 2021 Governor's Art Award in Leadership and it is an honor to recommend him.

Sincerely,

Justin Scott
Director of Bands
President, MTSBOA
615-944-9075
justin.scott@tcsedu.net



May 6, 2021

Dear Governor's Arts Awards Committee,

I write in enthusiastic support of Stephen Coleman's nomination for the 2021 Governor's Arts Awards for Arts Leadership.

I met Stephen during my tenure as director of Metro Nashville Public Schools' Music Makes Us initiative. He was a guest clinician for a series of professional development sessions with our band directors. His fine work as a music educator is known throughout the state; he is highly regarded by the profession. In recent years I have come to really know first-hand of Stephen's commitment to music and arts education through our work together on ArtsEd Tennessee, an organization Stephen founded.

Launched in 2017, ArtsEd Tennessee is a volunteer association governed by a core leadership team that includes leaders of the primary arts education teachers' associations and key allies. ArtsEd Tennessee advances, promotes and supports dance, music, theatre, and visual art education through a statewide coalition of arts education advocates, including education, community, business, and parent members. It is the only statewide K – 12 arts education advocacy organization that represents all arts disciplines—dance, music, theatre and visual art.

ArtsEd Tennessee is the embodiment of Stephen Coleman's vision for universal access to music and the arts for all Tennessee students. As director, Stephen works to ensure supportive policies and essential funding to advance quality, accessible arts education for all students. In addition to actively monitoring legislation in the General Assembly, Stephen embraces a wide network of colleagues in order to build a coalition across arts disciplines and stay informed about key issues in education. A believer in open and honest conversation, Stephen builds relationships by picking up the phone and talking to anyone who may have an interest or an opinion. He's a listener, with a keen interest in learning what is really going on at the ground level. A field builder by nature, Stephen has been adept in framing the work of ArtsEd Tennessee with a positive, can-do attitude. It's hard to say no to Stephen Coleman.

In a few short years, ArtsEd Tennessee has become a real voice for arts education in the state, thanks to Stephen Coleman's leadership. Recent successes include:

- Sponsoring Joint Resolution 759, affirming the value of arts education
- For the first time, co-sponsoring a series of 5 arts education advocacy workshops in communities across the state
- Building positive relationships with key legislators
- Promoting arts education through a statewide candidate survey
- Creating an Action Response Toolkit (ART) for arts educators
- Building awareness and knowledge through a website, newsletter, and social media

Stephen Coleman has dedicated his life and career in the advancement of the arts and arts education in Tennessee. As the director of ArtsEd Tennessee, he is creating value for the arts in education among a broad cross section of community stakeholders—parents, educators, decisionmakers, arts nonprofits, and business leaders. The impact of Stephen’s work is both immediate and far-reaching; his legacy will serve as a model for future arts in education leaders.

I highly recommend Stephen Coleman for the 2021 Governor's Awards for Arts Leadership. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Laurie T. Schell

Laurie T. Schell
Founding principal, Laurie Schell Associates | ElevateArtsEd
Founding member and advisor, ArtsEd Tennessee



1900 Belmont Boulevard
Nashville, TN 37212-3757

Governor's Arts Awards Selection Committee
Tennessee Art Commission
401 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

May 6, 2021

NT of THEATRE & DANCE

p 615.460.5503

f 615.460.8642

www.belmont.edu/theatre

Dear Selection Committee:

It is my pleasure to write a letter supporting the nomination of Stephen Coleman for the 2021 Governor's Arts Award in Arts Leadership.

I have known Stephen for over 40 years in my roles as

- Music consultant for the Tennessee Department of Education (1985-1991)
- University music education professor and administrator
 - Middle Tennessee State University School of Music, 1991-1998
 - Belmont University School of Music, 1998-2020
- Director of the Nashville Children's Choir Program (1990-2019)
- Campus Director of the Tennessee Arts Academy (1999-2019).

I am in a unique position to speak of his leadership in diverse areas of arts education in Tennessee. Below, I highlight the aspects of Stephen's leadership with which I am particularly familiar:

Leadership in Tennessee Music Education Association (TMEA)

I am a forty plus year member of TMEA and served as TMEA President from 2000 - 2002. Stephen was TMEA President-elect during these two years, and I served with him on the TMEA Executive Council for over six years. During the years Stephen and I led TMEA, we led the Executive Committee and the membership to substantially revise and reorganize the TMEA governing structure and constitution. The changes would have been impossible without Stephen's knowledge of TMEA, the teaching profession, and a deep understanding of the Tennessee teachers' and students' needs. During our many small group meetings which led to the reorganization, Stephen was ALWAYS positive, a skillful communicator, and a good listener. As I worked closely with Stephen in TMEA, I came to highly value his depth of thought, his dedication to the arts and arts education, and his respect for colleagues who held diverse points of view.

Leadership in TAAF (Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation)

The mission of the Tennessee Arts Academy is to provide exceptional quality professional development, arts training, support, encouragement, information and renewal to K-12 teachers and to promote and honor the role of the arts in the lives of all Tennesseans. Stephen has served as President of the Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation Board of Directors since 2011. The Foundation Board meets regularly to aid and assist in the growth and expansion of TAA. Under Stephen's leadership, the board has grown in number and has greatly increased its financial support. He has worked tirelessly with TAAF board members from across the state and travels extensively, helping local school administrators from Memphis to Tri Cities understand the importance of Academy training. Literally, hundreds of thousands of Tennessee students have felt the impact of the TAAF board supported Tennessee Arts Academy.

Arts Teacher and Mentor

In my years as a music education professor, I frequently took my music education students to observe Stephen in his high school instrumental music education program in Tullahoma. His level of preparation, musicianship, knowledge of pedagogy, and conducting were an inspiration to my students. And Stephen was always willing to come to Belmont to speak to my classes, encouraging students to think broadly about arts education, not just about a band competition or the next concert. Among the many impressive components of Stephen's high school program was his consistent involvement with the local Tullahoma community—with other musicians, artists, and community political leaders. I have been with Stephen when he has been reunited with former students at national conferences. It became obvious to me that his mentorship and leadership have led generations of students to hold the arts as a core value throughout their lives.

Dedication to the Arts and to Arts Education

From my perspective, a compelling reason that Stephen deserves this recognition relates to his lifelong commitment both to music performance as well as to music/arts education. In my forty plus years of work with Tennessee teachers, I have come to understand that some arts teachers teach only to supplement their desire to perform or make art; some other arts educators teach the arts, but do not participate in or support the arts in their wider local, state, and regional communities. As long as I have known Stephen, he has attended performances, exhibitions, and other artistic presentations of widely varying styles. This support of artistic performances and presentations, of course, is in addition to his unwavering support of arts education in the school. In recent years, Stephen's vision and service as Founding Director of Arts Ed Tennessee serves as a capstone of this lifelong commitment.

In conclusion, I urge the Tennessee Arts Commission to carefully consider Stephen Coleman's nomination and grant him the Governor's Arts Award in Arts Leadership. He has been, and continues to be, an amazingly successful leader of the arts in multiple arenas. His record of positive support for the arts throughout his career is unparalleled. And all the while, all who know him are impressed by a leader who is intelligent, thoughtful, calm, focused, caring, and hardworking. He will be an honoree of which the Commission will always be proud.

Cordially,

Madeline S. Bridges, Ed.D.
Professor Emerita, Belmont University School of Music

Letters of Support for the Nomination of Stephen Coleman

2021 Governor's Art Awards – Arts Leadership Award

Submitted by Todd Shipley | April 30, 2021

April 30, 2021

To whom it may concern:

Pursuant to the attached email from Alicia Fuss, TN Arts Commission Director of Arts Education, the nomination narrative for Stephen Coleman is submitted absent the letters of support. Letters of support for the nomination of Stephen Coleman will be submitted no later than May 15, 2021.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd H. Shipley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Todd Shipley
Director of Fine Arts
TN Department of Education

Todd Shipley

From: Alicia Fuss
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2021 10:43 AM
To: Todd Shipley
Subject: RE: Gov Arts Awards

You rock. I appreciate you!

Alicia Lark Fuss
Director of Arts Education

Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin L. King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243
Office: 615-253-8914
tnartscommission.org

*Cultivating the arts for the benefit
of all Tennesseans and their communities.*

From: Todd Shipley <Todd.Shipley@tn.gov>
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2021 10:42 AM
To: Alicia Fuss <Alicia.Fuss@tn.gov>
Subject: RE: Gov Arts Awards

No worries Alicia! I'm going to move forward with Stephen. I'm glad you emailed this morning and advised the letters could be attached later. I have been waiting on a few recommendation letters for him. I will definitely have the application submitted by the deadline.

Thanks!
Todd



Todd Shipley | Director of Fine Arts & Special Projects
Academics & Instructional Strategy Division
Andrew Johnson Tower, 9th Floor
710 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, TN 37243
O: (615) 762-6330
Todd.Shipley@tn.gov
tn.gov/education
tn.gov/education/instruction/state-of-the-arts
#TNBestforALL

We will set all students on a path to success.

From: Alicia Fuss <Alicia.Fuss@tn.gov>
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2021 10:40 AM

To: Todd Shipley <Todd.Shipley@tn.gov>

Subject: RE: Gov Arts Awards

Ch-ch-changes!

Sorry for the double emails. I just learned that the same person, and the same organization, cannot submit more than one nomination for a Gov Arts Award. I am so incredibly sorry that I missed that detail, and for the time you've put into preparing nominations for both Stephen and Tiffany.

If someone from outside DOE can sign off on one of the nominations, they can both be submitted. Otherwise, you'll need to choose one to submit (and perhaps save the other for next year).

Again, my apologies for complicating things last-minute.

Alicia

Alicia Lark Fuss
Director of Arts Education

Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin L. King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243
Office: 615-253-8914
tnartscommission.org

*Cultivating the arts for the benefit
of all Tennesseans and their communities.*

From: Alicia Fuss
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2021 8:24 AM
To: Todd Shipley <Todd.Shipley@tn.gov>
Subject: Gov Arts Awards

Hey Todd,

Just wanted to send a reminder that today is the deadline for Gov Arts Awards nominations. It's best if the whole packet is ready to go including the letters, but the nomination itself is the part that HAS to be submitted today by midnight.

Please let me know if you have any questions!

Thanks,
Alicia

Alicia Lark Fuss
Director of Arts Education

Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin L. King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243
Office: 615-253-8914
tnartscommission.org

*Cultivating the arts for the benefit
of all Tennesseans and their communities.*

Gatlin, Connie

The Governor's Arts Award

Nomination Narrative for Connie Cox Gatlin

As long as I can remember my mother has been involved in the arts. Not just involved serving on this or that board, or attending this show or that exhibit, but she has worked to make sure that our community in Cleveland, Tennessee has had access to the arts. So she *started* the committees, she *produced* the events and she *directed* the plays.

My mother tells this story about being a sophomore in college and deciding to drop out. She was taking English and French courses and her parents were footing the bill and she was just no longer sure of what she wanted to study. And then her dad, who only had a high school degree, suggested "Why don't you go back over there and take some a' them the-A-ter classes. You kinda' like that stuff." And so she did.

A college degree in theatre landed Connie a job teaching theatre at Bradley Central High School. She found that there was not a comprehensive theatre textbook that was fun and accessible to high school students, so she created her own curriculum encompassing technical theatre, directing, acting, and theatre history. She was invited to be a part of the committee that wrote the test for Theatre Licensure for the state of Tennessee. Along with this she established a fully operating theatre program with two (sometimes three) full-length performances yearly. High school performances ran the gamut from *South Pacific* to *Little Shop of*

Horrors, from *Grease* to *Steel Magnolias*, over 45 full length productions in twenty years. She sponsored yearly theatre trips to New York City for students to experience professional theatre and workshop with working actors. I was so lucky as a kid to go along and see shows and experience NYC, and for the past eight years I've made my living there as a professional actor and I teach workshops to visiting students from around the world. My mother also sponsored Thespian Troupe Twenty (the honor society for student actors, the 20th one established in the country). She coached students in "drama league" competitions, winning numerous awards and several first place ribbons at the state level. Some of my favorite memories are traveling to New York, Chicago, New Orleans, and Orlando for competitions with the show choir she directed and choreographed, Ranstrassy. Through fourteen years of these choral competitions they placed first in all but two competitions.

As a community theatre director she directed locally written *Cry of the Owl* (author John Bradley), performed at Red Clay State Historic Park, presenting a story about the removal of the region's Cherokee, complete with children, families, and horses...as well as the nightly burning of a cabin. She also directed numerous other more traditional community theatre presentations, including *Shenandoah*, *The Man of La Mancha*, *On Golden Pond*, and *Bye Bye Birdie* to name a few.

From the classroom, she moved to the staff of a start-up museum in the Ocoee Region where she originated seven regional living history characters, with complete

personal histories and a storyline connecting them to seven important periods of local history. In doing so she researched and wrote monologues for each character, eventually overseeing the filming of videos for each character, with the videos incorporated into the exhibit of this new museum, the Museum Center at Five Points. She also researched and wrote the “story” of the new exhibit; as well as all words for the knee rails and the wall panels. In my estimation this new Museum Center at Five Points simply would not have happened without my mother. There she served as Education Director, developing educational experiences for students, a series of traveling history trunks, and live presentations of the seven characters. She costumed and coached each of these characters to promote the new museum and shed light on the history of our region. She originated the first quilt exhibit (Stitches in Time) which continues today as an exemplary showcase of regional quilting artwork. She established the Volunteer Program for the museum. She developed a “theatre wing” of this organization to further expand our involvement in the arts. Several theatre productions were offered in the museum space: *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Love Letters*, *The Hobbit*, as well as writing and directing a musical to accompany and highlight a traveling exhibit from the Smithsonian. It was called *Red, Hot and Blue*, and with a cast of 30 singers and dancers all performances of this production were sold out.

In 1993, my mother worked with a few local arts supporters and began to lay structure for Cleveland’s first local arts council. It was called the Allied Arts Council

and she served as president of this new endeavor for the first three years. She co-founded a fundraising project called “Chair-rees Jubilee” which has now raised in excess of \$450,000 for local teacher-written grants for the children of Cleveland and Bradley County in classroom arts-based experiences. She has also worked to secure over \$20,000 Tennessee Arts Commission and Southeast Tennessee Development District grant dollars for local arts activities and experiences. She also established and chaired a free local community concert series, “Evening Shade”, presenting local artists as well as professional performers such as Goose Creek Symphony, Karen Peck and New River, Cumberland County Playhouse, and Leon Redbone, to mention a few. And she’s still at it. Last year she planned and chaired a year-long celebration of the Arts Council’s 25th Anniversary through monthly events that highlight the arts in Cleveland and Bradley County, culminating in a gala that presented the Glen Miller Orchestra.

The list goes on. In 2005 she purchased a local dance studio, Cleveland City Ballet. She moved the business to a dance-friendly (wooden flooring throughout) historic woolen mill. She hires experienced and highly qualified dance instructors from New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Nashville, and Chattanooga. The business has grown substantially since she took the reins and this past recital performance saw 165 young dancers participating. For our studio’s 75th anniversary celebration, she developed a ballet of *Peter Pan*, blending the music of four different composers in a re-telling of J. M. Barrie’s well-loved tale, complete with the hiring of Flying by Foy

to “fly” our lead dancers. In 2016 she transitioned this business into a 501C3 foundation, to secure its continuance for posterity.

Connie has also incorporated the arts into our church, First Baptist of Cleveland, TN where she has been a member for over 25 years. She has encouraged ecumenical dance and developed a drama program that included short dramatic moments to help illustrate sermon points and ideas. She has also developed a dinner theatre program for the church, presenting a variety of theatrical works, including *The Apple Tree*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *The All Night Strut*. And, to my complete dismay as her daughter, while recuperating from a two-month coma, she created a country music variety musical for a wildly successful presentation at the church called “*Heartstrings and Bootstraps*.”

And she’s a writer! For local public television station WTCI, she wrote the script for their award-winning video “The Ground Beneath Us.” And she has written a book of family and childhood stories about “a small town, a small church, a small child, and a big laugh” which is currently being published. It’s called *Sunday after Sunday*. She has always written, as I’ve detailed here, but I am so proud of her for following through with publishing her stories.

Her accomplishments were acknowledged last spring with the Cleveland State Community College’s “Community First” awards in the area of the arts, and a

number of years ago she received the Athena Award, presented by the local Chamber of Commerce.

Lastly, it brings tears to my eyes when my momma says that her most treasured moments were watching me perform as a Rockette on the stage at Radio City Music Hall, as a “silly girl” (*Beauty and the Beast* national tour), and now on stage at The Barter Theatre in Virginia. She has always said that what truly brings her joy is standing in the back of any theatre house watching students and friends that she has coached, and threatened, and loved into proudly doing their best; and then seeing them succeed in making their audiences hold their breaths...laugh...and cry.

Senator Mike Bell



425 5th Avenue North
Suite 716
Nashville, TN 37243
(615) 741-1946

261 County Road 757
Riceville, TN 37370
(423) 829-0058

sen.mike.bell@capitol.tn.gov



Senate Chamber State of Tennessee

NASHVILLE

May 29, 2019

9th Senatorial District
Bradley, McMinn, Meigs
Monroe and Polk Counties



COMMITTEES:

Chairman, Judiciary
Government Operations and
Education

It is with great honor that I write this letter of recommendation for Connie Cox Gatlin for the Governor's Arts Award.

Connie Gatlin received her college degree in theatre and began teaching at Bradley Central High School. After realizing there was not a comprehensive theatre textbook that was fun and accessible to high school students, she created her own curriculum encompassing technical theatre, directing, acting and theatre history. She was also invited to be a part of the committee that wrote the test for Theatre Licensure for the state of Tennessee. She helped produce numerous performances, including South Pacific and Grease, along with many others.

From the classroom, she moved to the staff of a start-up museum in the Ocoee Region where she originated seven regional living history characters and eventually into filming the videos for each character. This new museum is called the Museum Center at Five Points where she served as the Education Director.

In 1993, she began to lay the group work for the Allied Arts Council, which became Cleveland's first local arts council.


In 2005 she purchased a local dance studio, Cleveland City Ballet. She has also incorporated the arts into her church, First Baptist of Cleveland, where she developed a drama program at the church where she has been a member for over 25 years.

Connie has been inspiring people through the arts since I first met her as one of her drama students almost 40 years ago at BCHS. There are literally thousands of students and adults whose lives she has touched and influenced with her passion for the arts and positive outlook on life.

Page 2
May 29, 2019

Having known Connie Gatlin for many years, I truly believe she would be a great candidate to receive the Governor's Arts Award. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time if you have any questions or if I can provide any additional information. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Senator Mike Bell

MB:sl

Greetings.

I am writing in support of the nomination of Connie Gatlin for the Tennessee Arts Commission Governor's Arts Award. I have known this talented lady for over 30 years and during that time have watched her pour her talents into her community. Not only is she a consummate performer in her own right but she has the ability to encourage others to bring their talents to the stage and help them showcase those talents.

As a high school student, I had the privilege of being a part of the award winning show choir under her direction. She was not only able to help each young performer reach their potential but also enriched our experience with exposure to a variety of art forms and musical genres. Ms. Gatlin has made a profound impact on countless numbers of student performers who were fortunate enough to bloom due to her influence. That influence did not stop after her retirement. She worked tirelessly for many years as the coordinator for school programs at Museum Center at 5 Points in Cleveland, TN. She was instrumental in revitalizing the inclusion of the arts in education through this venue. Ms. Gatlin continues to lend her talents to the Museum Center as a featured story-teller bringing the history and folklore of the Bradley County/Cleveland community to life for all generations.

In 2005, she became the owner of what is now known as Cleveland City Ballet and Bang-a-Rang Productions where she currently serves as artistic director. Ms. Gatlin has created a studio that has become the backbone of dance and the arts in Cleveland, Tennessee. She has made a significant and lasting impact in her community by fostering a love and appreciation for the arts, in all forms, and strives to provide a plethora of opportunities and artistic outlets, not only for those within her studio but her community at large. There is no way to adequately express the affect that her efforts have had on the Bradley County/Cleveland area and beyond. She is a highly respected performer, teacher, director, writer and story-teller and, in my opinion, is deserving of an honor of this magnitude.

Thank you for the opportunity to endorse this incredibly talented and deserving individual.

Lesley Ratcliffe



Tom Rowland

Mayor Emeritus
City of Cleveland, TN
1991-2018

May 28, 2019

Re: Governor's Award for The Arts 2019

It is an honor for me to recommend and endorse Connie Gatlin of Cleveland, TN for the Governor's Award for The Arts.

The name of Connie Gatlin is synonymous with the arts in the Cleveland and Bradley community. She has a lifetime of achievements in the area of arts, especially in working with programs to inspire and educate young people in the arts – whether it be theatre, musicals, dance or show choir.

Connie not only has a love and talent for the arts, but she shares it freely with her community. She is responsible for productions running the gamut from classics to musicals, to comedies and drama. As a member of the mass choir at her church, First Baptist Church in Cleveland, her talents are shared often. Whether she's producing a musical using choir talent, or providing dramatic dancers for a program, Connie is often called upon for her expertise and creativity.

As Mayor of Cleveland, I had the privilege of appointing Connie to a committee to help secure a performing arts center for Cleveland. She founded the education programs at our Museum Center at Five Points and led a team of artist to create a local council – The Allied Arts of Cleveland. This Council is now in its 25th year and Connie has been a driving force behind an annual fund raiser which raises money for local teacher written grants for local classrooms.

As a teacher, Connie has encouraged many young aspiring thespians and show choir students. As owner of City Ballet she continues to teach classical dance for children in our city. Last year, our community college honored her with the Community First Arts Award as part of their Community First Program – recognizing citizens who put community first in their respect fields.

My wife Sandra and I are proud to call Connie a friend and very appreciative of her influence in the arts in our great City. Her daughter Abigail became Cleveland's first Radio City Rockettes in New York City – a source of pride for Connie and her hometown.

I can think of no one in our State who has put more into the arts than Connie Gatlin. It has been honor to work alongside her through the years and even in retirement I can continue to enjoy the results of her creative genius in our church and our city.

Sincerely,

Tom Rowland

Mayor Emeritus
City of Cleveland, TN
1991-2018

The Governor's Arts Award
Recommendation for Connie Cox Gatlin

As a lifelong resident of BradleyCounty/Cleveland TN, I can't think of another person in our community whose name I would associate with the arts and arts education in our schools. In 1993, I had the privilege of serving on a committee that formed the Allied Arts and Leisure Council under the auspices of the Bradley/Cleveland Chamber of Commerce. Connie was the primary force behind the formation of the Council and has ensured its sustainability to the present; having raised hundreds of thousands of dollars through an annual fundraiser called Chairees Jubilee.

Connie also had the privilege of serving as the first Education Director at the Museum Center at 5points, where she designed a traveling display of historical characters that were used successfully in the schools to teach elementary and middle school students about the history of our region.

Having the privilege of attending Cleveland's largest church along with Connie, her creative ability is highly noted in seasonal choir performances. She incorporates appropriate dance and ballet into these performances to accompany a 160 voice choir.

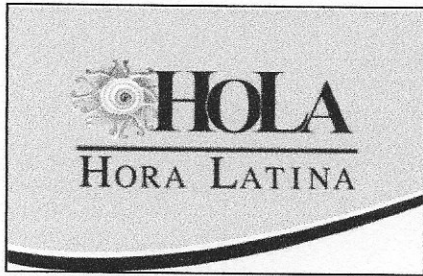
My mother was Connie's supervisor at Bradley Central High School. Connie taught there from 1975-1993 and again from 2003-2005. She was highly respected as an English and Drama teacher creating her own theater textbook. She instilled artistic interest in hundreds of students by establishing a theatrical group which performed three major performances annually. In addition, she took students to New York to experience the Broadway stage. My mother commented so often to me what a transformational impact Connie Gatlin was having on students who otherwise would remain shy, unnoticed and never allowed to express themselves artistically.

Her work in our community and for the State of Tennessee in developing a test for Theater Licensure cannot go unnoticed and deserves your committee's careful consideration.

I can't think of anyone more deserving of this honor than Connie Cox Gatlin and hope the committee will carefully consider her accomplishments and the impact that she has had and continues to have on students and the residents in our community.

Highest Regards
Dr. Rodney Fitzgerald

HoLa Hora Latina



100 S. Gay Street • Suite 112 • Knoxville, TN 37902 • (865) 335-3358
casahola@holafestival.org • www.holahoralatina.org

March 30, 2021

Dear TN Arts Commission Committee for the Governor's Art Award,

I am Pedro Tomás, President of HoLa Hora Latina. I have been involved with this great organization since 2015 when I first volunteered for the HoLa Festival that year. Ever since that moment, I fell in love with the mission HoLa had for the community of Greater Knoxville and beyond. I was voted President the following year by the Board of Directors and have been in this position since then. It is a voluntary position with much work attached to it, but the love for what HoLa does, continues to inspire me to make it even better and accessible to all in the Community.

The beginning of this organization in 1992 was small. Three devoted ladies who were meeting for coffee every once in a while, began to form HoLa Hora Latina and had their first festival with just two tables shortly after that at a local bookstore. The mission was to create bridges between the Latino community and the community at large by promoting Hispanic culture through art, culture, and education. The first large scale festival happened in 1999 in small venues such as large parking lots.

In 2002, Hola Hora Latina became a 501- (c) (3) non-profit organization and began to grow as an art, culture and education organization promoting equality in the community and the rich and vast Hispanic culture. Many programs began to be created such as Spanish classes, Art Classes and Craft Classes. All of these were free to the entire community regardless of race or

nationality. This was the beginning of that bridge that was part of the first mission as HoLa Hora Latina was formed. We are not open only to Hispanics but to everyone who wants to cross that bridge and learn about us as we also learn about them. It is the best way to understand each other in a world of such diverse communities.

HoLa Hora Latina found a place where it could have its headquarters and offer up and coming artists an opportunity to display their arts and/or crafts at no cost: Casa HoLa, HoLa Hora Latina's headquarters was founded at The Emporium for the Arts on South Gay Street in Knoxville, TN. It was then when we began to offer our monthly exhibits at the space that we had which also had a gallery. An up-and-coming artist could now have access to a gallery for one month at no costs. This program still exists today where a new artist is featured every month whether they are on Hispanic descend or part of the community at large.

In 2014, HoLa Hora Latina contacted The Knoxville Museum of Art to reserve one of their galleries to have a show of multiple artists to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, a proclamation that began with President Lynden B. Johnson in 1968 and later became an entire month of celebrating Hispanic Heritage. The celebration occurs from September 15-October 15. This time was chosen as the starting point for the commemoration because it is the anniversary of independence of five Hispanic countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, who all declared independence in 1821. In addition, Mexico, Chile and Belize celebrate their independence days on September 16, September 18, and September 21 respectively.

The name of this event became "Frutos Latinos", and it is first exhibited at Casa HoLa for Frist Friday and then moves to The Knoxville Museum of Art until October 15. At the beginning of this celebration, HoLa Hora Latina has an event where all of its members, city dignitaries and sponsors of the HoLa Festival are invited to celebrate the beginning of this celebration and

the art exhibit. This event is also a contest in which visitors to Casa HoLa vote for their favorite piece in that Frist Friday. The winners of this contest are announced at the museum event and the artist win prizes. A lot of information about the up coming HoLa Festival is also revealed at this event which offers traditional Hispanic foods and drinks along with entertainment and music.

“Baila con HoLa” became an event in 2016 and it was geared toward elementary schools where HoLa would hire local dancers to teach typical dances to school children such as Flamenco, Salsa, etc.... This program was very popular, but due to funding and the lack of schools’ interests in doing this program during school time, we had to cancel it. However, another children’s activity was born in conjunction with Barns and Noble’s Storytime on Saturday. This great bookstore allowed to promote a bilingual children Storytime in which children’s books are read in English and in Spanish page by page. It has been a very successful program and cannot wait to go back t it after we are cleared to g back due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

HoLa also had a great and very popular program called “Cine HoLa” which was offered every month at the gallery in which members of the community could come and watch original Hispanic films and have discussions about it. The popularity of this program diminished as streaming in our own homes became more accessible. We had to look for other means to do more for the community.

In 2016, we partnered with the University of TN to promote our culture with students there. HoLa Hora Latina became very involved with the Spanish Immersion Day, providing activities and funding as well as the “Day of the Dead Altar Exhibit and Contest”. the top three winners of this contest at the University are able to display their work at our gallery for our own Day of the Dead Exhibit which usually features a Mexican artist for the month of November.

We also partnered with the University of TN's Language in World Business Program and began Internships with their students interested in running non-profits. We have now gone through 16 students. All of these programs are still in existence today.

Our First Friday Exhibits feature a new artist every month, there have been artists throughout the years from all nationalities in Latin America and Spain as well as our American brothers and sisters. Students have also been able to show their work as featured artists. On this day, the gallery opens the new exhibit to the community for free at Casa HoLa. This event features the presence of the artist so that he/she can mingle with the visitors and broaden their contacts with other artists in the area and the art community in Knoxville and beyond. Every First Friday, a children's activity is offered and given to the children to do there. During the pandemic, we make a little package with all the necessary materials for the kids to take home and engage in arts and crafts and at the same time learn about the LatinX Heritage. Also, we offer the taste of Tamales which come from a local family restaurant and help promote that restaurant as well. Whenever possible and if funds permit, we offer traditional drinks like the Aztec/Mayan cocoa, Horchata, Matervas or Inca Kola (these last two are in the soda family) when it is available. This event is very popular with the community and it is wonderful to see the friends that we have made that come back to have this great experience. Artists are also able to sell their artwork if they so desire.

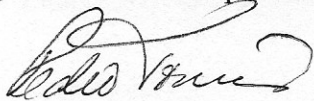
We had also noticed that there was some space that had not been used and we felt like it was wasted, so we decided to keep a permanent display of traditional folk crafts from local LatinX artists and imports. This part of our gallery which we call "Tienda HoLa" (HoLa Store), helps some local craftsmen to not only promote their crafts but to sell to the public. It has truly become a favorite of the regular visitors and the other art lovers.

In 2019, HoLa Hora Latina celebrated its 20th Anniversary with a huge celebration which, of course, began at the Knoxville Museum of Art with our Frutos Latinos Event and culminated in the HoLa Festival 2019 / 20th Anniversary Celebration. The festival always offers an array of entertainment ranging from Opera to Large Salsa Orchestras, from Salsa dance classes to great dance shows demonstrating Folkloric Ballets, Mayan Dances, Aztec Rituals, Flamenco and Gypsy Dances and also entertainment for Children. The Children's activities include face paintings puppeteers and science and magic shows. All of this in three different stages.

The Festival also offers a Food Fest featuring 20+ different food vendors from traditional food from all over the Americas by families in the Knoxville area. All food is authentic, and their booths decorated with the countries' colors and folklore. There is also a contest for the best food and best decorated food booth.

The festival kicks off on Saturday night with a Salsa party which culminates in fireworks. the next day, activities begin for the entire family at 11am offering all that was previously mentioned and more. The HoLa Festival reaches more than 20,000 attendees every year. Unfortunately, the HoLa Festival had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, but it is way into production for 2021 on September 25 and 26, kicking it off with Frutos Latinos on the 15th to celebrate Hispanic Heritage month.

Please, we urge you to consider HoLa Hora Latina for this great honor. It is a very well deserving organization for the promotion of art, culture, and education.



Pedro Tomás

HoLa Hora Latina / President
ptomas@holafestival.org
www.holahoraltina.org



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

30 March 2021

To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to write this letter in enthusiastic support of HoLa Hora Latina's nomination for a Tennessee Arts Commission Award. HoLa consistently supports the arts in Tennessee, and is absolutely deserving of this award.

I am the Language Program Director of our second-year Spanish program at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and we have had the support of (and collaborated with) HoLa over the past several years in various ways that greatly benefit our students and that also advance the value of the arts in our community.

HoLa has partnered with UT's Hispanic Studies program to support events that are geared specifically toward our students, including the annual Day of the Dead/Día de los muertos altar competition. Students work in groups to design and display their altars honoring loved ones or public figures in the UT Library. Votes are collected throughout the day, and then winning altars are transported to HoLa's venue at the Emporium in downtown Knoxville, and displayed as part of the following First Friday open house that attracts many visitors to this gallery space. I also note that HoLa's monthly exhibits in this venue are an important way in which they connect local Latino artists with the broader community. In addition, HoLa has supported UT's annual Spanish Immersion Day for students, which includes cultural and artistic activities such as dance, decorations and food. HoLa has also invited a series of UT student interns to work at HoLa, as part of our Language and World Business major. These internships provide students with a valuable experience working for a community-oriented non-profit, as well as connecting them more directly with HoLa's artistic mission. HoLa also sponsors student art contests, and sponsors an art scholarship – encouraging more participation in the arts.

In addition, HoLa contributes to the value of the arts in Tennessee far beyond UT. Perhaps best known in the community, HoLa organizes a large annual Hispanic Heritage festival downtown which informs and engages the wider community with Hispanic arts and culture. For the last several years, HoLa has invited UT students to participate not only by attending the festival, but by volunteering. This participation (which students can choose to engage in for extra credit, but is not required) is valuable and fun for them – and many of our students choose to participate and report that they very much enjoy the experience. The festival showcases many artisans, dances, presentations, and food from around the Spanish-speaking world. Thus, it exposes both our students and the larger community to the arts. Perhaps less well known but equally important, HoLa organizes readings of children's stories in Spanish at local Barnes and Noble bookstores on a regular basis, thus bringing the arts to children in Tennessee.

In all of these ways and more, HoLa Hora Latina fulfills a vital role in connecting the people of Tennessee, including the students of UT, with the arts and specifically with Hispanic arts and culture. I strongly support their nomination. Please do not hesitate to ask if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

Harriet Wood Bowden

Department of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures
701 McClung Tower Knoxville, TN 37996-0470
865-974-2311 865-974-7096 fax mfl.utk.edu

BIG ORANGE. BIG IDEAS.

Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System 



March 30, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to share what a special organization Hola Hora Latina is to the Knoxville and surrounding communities. I have been with the City of Knoxville Special Events office for the past 16 years and have seen firsthand what a gem this organization is to the arts and local community.

In Knoxville, the arts are a powerful resource for the growth and development that has taken place to help revitalize our downtown for over the last 20 years, and Hola Hora Latina has been the one organization to lead the way. HOLA collects, preserves, and exhibit artwork inspired by the Latina/Latino community for all to see and enjoy. The City of Knoxville celebrates their commitment to the art and cultural education. Hola presents all community members the opportunity to plan, experience and participate in a diverse range of high-quality arts, educational and cultural activities

In my role as the Director of The Office of Special Events for the City of Knoxville, I have seen this organization grow through one of their largest community outreach event's which Knoxville knows as The HOLA Festival. The HOLA Festival takes place during the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. The festival brings approximately 20,000 plus people to the two-day festival. Those that attend enjoy traditional South American culture. The festival presents a unique opportunity to teach the community about Latino culture, thorough music, art, delicious food, and a pass port system. The attention to detail is beyond amazing and all that attend leave feeling that they have traveled outside the county for a few short hours.

I commend the Event Staff and President of the Hola Hora Latina organization for the outstanding opportunities to the community. They make our city richer and brighter daily by their contributions to our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kyndra Brewer', written over a faint circular watermark of the City of Knoxville seal.

Kyndra R. Brewer

Director, Office of Special Events
City of Knoxville

CITY OF KNOXVILLE

INDYA KINCANNON, MAYOR



Patricia Robledo
Business Liaison
Office of Business Support

March 30, 2021

To the Governor's Art Awards Selection Committee:

It is with pride that I write this letter recommending HoLa-Hora Latina-for the Governor's Arts Award. I emigrated from Colombia to Knoxville in the early 80's. Throughout the years, I have witnessed the determination, growth, and accomplishments of this organization's efforts to carry out its important mission of promoting our communities' cultures through art, culture and education.

The annual HoLa Festival, the organization's premier event, celebrated its 20th Anniversary in 2019. I was honored to co-chair this event for a couple of years, when it was moved to the heart of downtown Knoxville, Market Square. Through music, dance, food, crafts, and arts, we have been able to share and highlight the incredible diversity of our communities.

HoLa also offers monthly programs at its gallery, Casa HoLa, located at The Emporium Center-Arts & Cultural Alliance. It features an up-and-coming new artist every month, at no cost to the artist. These events also to help members of the Latinx community feel part of the local arts scene.

HoLa has worked with local schools, by supporting and sponsoring cultural events, like "The Day of the Dead" and "Immersion Events", as well art contests. HoLa offers a monthly bilingual StoryTime for young children.

HoLa has demonstrated the importance of promoting the arts in our city and our region, especially as our immigrant Latinx community has grown throughout the years. It has been through HoLa's programs that we have been able to showcase the richness and diversity of our cultures, which leads to better understanding and appreciation.

Thank you for your service as members of the selection committee. I appreciate the difficult task ahead of you. Thanks for your consideration of HoLa-Hora Latina.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia Robledo".

Patricia Robledo



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

March 31st, 2021.

Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Ave, Nashville, TN 37243

Governor's Art Award Committee,

With this letter, I would like to show my support for HoLa Hora Latina to be awarded the Governors Art Award. As a long-standing community member, and member of the local art community, I have always admired HoLa Hora Latina's involvement and contribution to the arts in East Tennessee. I believe that our region should support organizations that promote diversity in their programs and help us broaden our understanding of what the local arts community has to offer. This is exactly what HoLa stands up for. Here are some examples of how this organization is doing it.

HoLa's art exhibits at their gallery in the Emporium, in Downtown Knoxville, include artists of very diverse backgrounds, and is a space that through the years has promoted other programs, including creative writing workshops, book presentations and international movie nights, amongst many others.

Another important contribution is the organization of the yearly HoLa festival, which include music, arts and crafts, culinary arts, kid's programming as well as a yearly art competition, Frutos Latinos.

HoLa's Storytime monthly program, fosters the love of reading and literature amongst the younger population, and they have also awarded and funded the Astrid Galindo Art Scholarship for young artists.

I believe that the array of diverse programs, scholarships and events, is the best demonstration that HoLa is really an award-winning organization that truly deserves the Governor's Art Award, as this organization has existed for more than 20 years and will continue to foster the value of the arts in our region. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Truly yours,

Rosy Toledo
Distinguished Lecturer, Hispanic Studies
MFLL, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Poet and writer
Art Committee Chair
Hola Hora Latina

Department of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures
701 McClung Tower Knoxville, TN 37996-0470
865-974-2311 865-974-7096 fax mfl.utk.edu

BIG ORANGE. BIG IDEAS.

Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System 

Hoomes, John



John Hoomes – Submission for Governor’s Arts Award

John Hoomes took the helm of Nashville Opera in 1996, a time when the company was struggling to find its place in Music City. In the 25 years since, Mr. Hoomes’ leadership has brought Nashville Opera to regional significance and national prominence, growing the company’s reach tenfold, from 4,000 people in 1996 to nearly 40,000 people in 2020.21 through all its programs.

As a freelance stage director, Hoomes has directed over 200 productions of opera and music theatre in the US, South America, and Canada. The New York Times declared his Nashville Opera world premiere of ELMER GANTRY “An Operatic Miracle...in Nashville.” A June 2010 Opera News feature article acknowledged, “Hoomes has proved himself one of the most interesting stage directors in the regional market today with a seemingly limitless knowledge of repertoire.”

Under Mr. Hoomes leadership, the company expanded its mainstage productions, and now presents four original productions each season celebrating the magnificence of the human voice, drama, set design and orchestration. A combination of traditional masterworks and newer, thought-provoking pieces attract nearly 10,000 people annually. Reaching outside of Middle Tennessee, Nashville Opera draws its audience from across 25 states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia and Kentucky.

Months after arriving in Nashville, Mr. Hoomes launched the company’s first education tour to Nashville schools, a welcome surprise to educators and a groundbreaking program in the area. Opera ON TOUR, as it is now known, offers live in-school performances of children’s operas and reaches nearly 24,000 students and family members each year.

Hoomes spearheaded the expansion of educational supports for Opera ON TOUR, including a curriculum-based study guide for teachers that meets Tennessee state standards. The perennially anticipated event is generously subsidized by corporate sponsors and includes several free public performances.

With talented young singers appearing each year in the tour, Mr. Hoomes saw an opportunity to expand Nashville Opera's education program and train them—the next generation of opera singers. Now in its 24th year, the Mary Ragland Emerging Artist program assists pre-professional artists transitioning to full careers. Four singers and one pianist are selected from up to 300 applicants through competitive national auditions each year. The 3-month residency runs from January through April and includes Opera ON TOUR casting, mainstage production roles, masterclasses with industry professionals, and career coaching on resumes, headshots, repertoire selection and audition readiness. Over 90% of MREA alumni have received post-residency contracts with other companies, appearing with New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, The Metropolitan Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Los Angeles Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago, among others.

Hoomes made it a priority to bring groundbreaking contemporary works to Nashville, which has enriched the cultural landscape of the region. In fall 2009 Mr. Hoomes directed the Tennessee premiere of *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER* by composer Philip Glass, a state of the art, multi-media production which involved cutting-edge, immersive video techniques. This innovative production was critically acclaimed both by the Wall Street Journal and Opera News. Mr. Hoomes staged the world premiere of Robert Aldridge's *ELMER GANTRY*, as well as a second new production of the same work for Florentine Opera (recorded on Naxos Records and winner of 2 GRAMMY Awards; also named the #1 opera CD release by Opera News), and the world premiere of songwriter Marcus Hummon's chamber opera, *SURRENDER ROAD* at Martha Rivers Ingram Hall in Nashville. Hoomes also directed the "Southeastern professional premiere" of five contemporary pieces: Poulenc's *LA VOIX HUMAINE*, Peter Maxwell Davies' *THE LIGHTHOUSE*, David Lang's *THE DIFFICULTY OF CROSSING A FIELD*, *ROMULUS HUNT* by Carly Simon, Michael Nyman's *THE MAN WHO MISTOOK HIS WIFE FOR A HAT*, and an acclaimed production of Daniel Catán's opera *FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS*. Mr. Hoomes later remounted Nashville Opera's

production of FLORENCIA for the New York City Opera in the Rose Theatre at Lincoln Center. In January 2017, he staged Nashville Opera's third world premiere, THREE WAY by Robert Paterson and David Cote. Nashville Opera's world-premiere production of THREE WAY was then remounted at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in June 2017 in collaboration with American Opera Projects. In September 2020, during the COVID pandemic, Mr. Hoomes directed Nashville Opera's first full commission, Dave Ragland's ONE VOTE WON, which was made available for on demand streaming in advance of the 2020 election.

Mr. Hoomes also introduced Middle Tennessee audiences to some of the largest masterworks in the canon, ensuring that Grand Opera has become embedded in the soundtrack of Music City. His 1999 production of R. Strauss' DER ROSENKAVALIER (with Kenneth Schermerhorn conducting the Nashville Symphony Orchestra) was a major turning point for the company. His 1997 AIDA was presented on a showstopping scale, including a trained elephant on stage, and the massive company-premiere production of TURANDOT in 2001—weeks after 9/11—was received by full houses as the triumph and healing power of beauty over terror.

Alongside his wife and former Nashville Opera Executive Director Carol Penterman, Hoomes spearheaded the construction of the Opera's permanent home, The Noah Liff Opera Center, in Sylvan Park. Sharing a campus with the Nashville Ballet, the Liff Center is an integral part of the cultural hub which has led the way to a West Nashville Renaissance. That the \$9 million facility is fully paid for is in large part due to John Hoomes' fundraising efforts and is a tangible representation of patron trust and belief in Hoomes and his artistic product. To this day the Noah Liff Opera Center houses the Nashville Opera headquarters, offers rehearsal and revenue-generating event space, and is the location for some of Nashville Opera's most cutting-edge performances.

In the twenty-five years that John Hoomes has led Nashville Opera, he has left an indelible mark on this community. Nashville Opera's mission, to create artistic experiences that elevate our world, has been fully realized through John Hoomes' passion, dedication, and leadership.

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Nashville Opera, it is my privilege to nominate John Hoomes for a **2021 Governor's Arts Leadership Award** in recognition of his 25th Anniversary at the helm of Tennessee's largest opera company. As President-elect of the Opera Board, I can speak to John's future vision for the company.

Under John's leadership, Nashville Opera received a prestigious 2021 Resilience Grant of \$100,000 from South Arts and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Unlike funds dealing with the immediate needs of organizations during the pandemic, the [South Arts Resilience Fund](#) asked arts organizations to look further toward the future. It recognized ***those with a history of visionary leadership and deep impact across their state and the region***, and placed an emphasis on historically under-resourced organizations and art forms. This extraordinary award will allow Nashville Opera to reimagine its work, serve as a model for other arts organizations, better serve its constituents, and increase the company's resilience and sustainability as our city and state re-open.

To that end, John has inspired the Board of Directors to embark on a strategic planning process which includes goals and metrics for diversity, equity and inclusion. We are currently engaging a nationally recognized arts consulting group to help design a comprehensive plan and vision that guides Nashville Opera for the next five years. The plan will have clear goals and metrics in multiple modules, including artistic, marketing, development, DEI, and community partnerships, and outlines a process for measuring progress toward goals on an ongoing basis.

I am proud to be part of an organization that is learning and growing, with careful planning and deep investments into the next phase of its work. None of this would be possible without the visionary leadership of John Hoomes, CEO & Artistic Director. He is committed to productions where the diverse populations we serve can see themselves reflected onstage. He will continue to create artistic experiences that elevate our world for years to come.

Respectfully,



J. Nathan Green
Vice Chancellor
Government and Community Relations | Vanderbilt University
615-343-7626 | nathan.green@vanderbilt.edu
Cell Phone: 615-500-3224

DONALD N. HOLMES

Delek US (Retired)



March 29, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0780

Esteemed Members of the Committee,

It is my great honor to support the nomination of John Hoomes, CEO & Artistic Director of Nashville Opera, for the 2021 Governor's Arts Leadership Award. Few arts leaders have made a bigger impact in Middle Tennessee than John has through his quarter century of education initiatives.

One of the first things John did upon joining the Opera in 1995 was create an education program to take fully staged children's operas directly into schools, i.e. Nashville Opera ON TOUR. Today the tour has reached over 600,000 Middle Tennessee students, while prioritizing underinvested communities with little or no access to the arts. Participating teachers are supported with extensive study guides that introduce opera through interactive games and projects that deepen their students' understanding and enjoyment of music and tie directly to Tennessee Curriculum Standards.

In 2020, the seven-week tour covered close to 3,000 miles and 13 counties, serving 19,830 children in 60 schools and community centers before COVID hit. This year, determined to continue during the pandemic, John remotely directed artists in four states to create a virtual tour children enjoyed on video followed by live Q&A with the artists via Zoom. The tour's reach expanded beyond Middle Tennessee to 23,574 students, and 74% of schools were Title I.

But that's not all.

The Mary Ragland Emerging Artists program, launched by John in 1996, helps develop the next generation of opera singers. This highly competitive program attracts nearly 400 applicants annually, from which four vocalists and one collaborative pianist are chosen through national auditions. During a three-month residency in Nashville, emerging artists perform in the school tour, take roles in at least one mainstage opera, and enjoy masterclasses, professional networking opportunities, and accessibility training. Housing, a modest weekly stipend, and fees for their mainstage performances are provided. Over 100 emerging artists have benefitted from this program, many going on to significant careers on stages all over the world.

This year, Nashville Opera is extending similar career-readiness benefits to 13 students at Tennessee State University and Fisk University respectively through monthly online masterclasses with nationally renowned artists and arts administrators. This new project is being supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation as a model for other U.S. opera companies aiming to improve career outcomes for HBCU students.

I have known John Hoomes since 2009 when I joined the Opera Board of Directors. In my role as Executive Vice President of Human Resources at Delek US Holdings, I aided John on human resource matters, and I continue to assist him with solicitation of corporate sponsorships for Nashville Opera. I have tremendous respect for John and all that he has accomplished and am happy to recommend him for the Governor's Leadership Arts Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donald N. Holmes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Donald N. Holmes

INGRAM INDUSTRIES INC.

MARTHA R. INGRAM
CHAIRMAN EMERITA

ONE BELLE MEADE PLACE · 4400 HARDING PIKE
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37205-2290
TEL. 615-298-8200 · FAX 615-695-3204

March 22, 2021

To whom it should be directed:

When John Hoomes became Artistic Director of Nashville Opera in 1995, the organization was holding on by a thread. Several Artistic Directors had come and gone and not one of them had been able to produce an operatic product that the community embraced. To be fair, there had been no opera in Nashville previous to 1980—when Tennessee Performing Arts Center opened, other than an occasional visiting singer—but never the likes of Pavarotti who was devoutly to be wished for especially by Mary Ragland, a prominent but then elderly soprano who had appeared at the Met in earlier days but gave up her career there to marry Mr. Ragland, a Nashville native. Mrs. Ragland bravely inspired a production of “Madama Butterfly” when the TPAC first opened in 1980, but no other productions caught the attention or enthusiasm of the Nashville public. Attendance was sparse.

When John Hoomes arrived on the scene in 1995, he began changing everything and he created a sense of excitement about the Nashville Opera that began to occur in conversations about town. John built upon this success slowly but surely and I think that the two break-through productions were: Richard Strauss’ “Der Rosenkavalier” soon followed by Puccini’s “Turandot”, both conducted beautifully by Nashville Symphony’s Kenneth Schermerhorn. For the latter, John Hoomes collaborated with Memphis Opera [something seldom done here before or after, perhaps because of Mr. Schermerhorn’s sudden death.]. All of Nashville Opera’s major productions are performed at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center.

Under John Hoomes’ leadership, Nashville Opera has managed to build its own home office, rehearsal and production facilities where newer operas can be performed for smaller groups. This is a continuation of John’s audience-building for the newer works but also this smaller facility has developed a love for the older, larger works as well. I salute and support John’s work because of the splendid artistic achievements that he has brought to the stage, for his balanced budgets and for the remarkable steady, sustainable growth that he has nurtured since his arrival on our scene in 1995.

Sincerely,


Martha R. Ingram



March 21, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
Nashville, TN. 37243

Dear Committee Members,

I am delighted to recommend John Hoomes, executive director of Nashville Opera, for the 2021 Governor's Arts Awards. Mr. Hoomes is the driving, creative force behind our nationally recognized Nashville Opera. Through his creative partnerships, and international reputation as an innovator and mentor, his presence in Nashville has attracted renowned artists and musicians who share with Tennesseans the same wonderful performances that they give at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City and other opera companies across the world.

His commitment to community and diversity is most impressive. Ensuring that opera is available to all is among his core beliefs. He puts together and takes productions to area elementary and high schools, introducing children of different backgrounds and opportunities to this enchanting art form. Moreover, I have personally witnessed performances of complete operas where disadvantaged families are provided with tickets to experience and enjoy an opera that otherwise they would not have the means to see and hear. By the company's constant public outreach, Nashville Opera serves the community in ways that are compelling examples of best practices and community service for all of us in the humanities.

John Hoomes is also committed to bringing new ideas to his audiences. In 2020, I had the distinctive honor of working with Hoomes and his colleagues on an entirely new opera, centered on the Tennessee 100th anniversary of woman suffrage, titled "One Vote Won." When the pandemic hit, Hoomes did not panic and set aside the idea, but instead pivoted to a video, online production. My role was distinctly minor but told me of his commitment to balance—since the opera was historic in theme, introducing the stories of J. Frankie Pierce and Diane Nash and their fight for African American suffrage, Hoomes wanted me to check and double check the libretto for accuracy. Then Nashville Opera asked the Center for Historic Preservation to produce a teacher's guide so educators not only in Tennessee but across the nation could use the video opera and the guide to construct lesson activities for their students.

Few experiences in my career have been as meaningful. Here school children could be introduced to two important Tennesseans, and a truly significant event in state history, not merely by a lecture but through the arts—and a dynamic, emotional, entertaining production at that. But creativity, collaboration, quality, and impact—those words are what John Hoomes is all about. I cannot imagine a more deserving recipient of the Governor's Arts Awards.

Respectfully,

Carroll Van West, PhD
Director and Professor, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation
Tennessee State Historian

21 APR -1 AM 10:35

March 25, 2021

T.A.C. OFFICE

Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

RE: Nomination of John Hoomes for the 2021 Governor's Arts Award

Ladies/Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I write you to support the nomination of John Hoomes to be the recipient of a Governor's Art Award for 2021. I have worked with John in his capacity as the CEO & Artistic Director of Nashville Opera for approximately 20 years. My wife, Judy Liff Barker, and I made the lead gift for the construction of the Noah Liff Opera Center. John was the driving force behind this project which compelled our family and Martha Ingram, along with many others, to make the financial commitments which permitted this facility to come into being.

John's vision for the Noah Liff Opera Center as a cultural hub for Middle Tennessee and beyond was central to our participation in the development of this facility. John as the Artistic Director of Nashville Opera has consistently brought the art form of opera to all of Middle Tennessee through mainstage productions of opera that are creative, entertaining, and thought provoking. Not only have these presentations been widely applauded by national art critics but by the audiences who have attended the events. Additionally, through his personal efforts and leadership of his staff, John has made opera an educational tool for school districts throughout the mid-state area, with presentations developed at the Noah Liff Opera Center and then "taken on the road," so to speak.

The education programs are two-pronged. That is, they obviously provide an exposure of opera to thousands of Tennessee students, but also provide opportunities for rising young stars of the opera world to perform in front of these audiences and hone their skills. The local students are taken behind the scenes to learn the mechanics of presenting an opera, from wigs & makeup to costume design to set production and engineering. There is direct interaction between students and the performers. During the pandemic John's attitude was that "the show must go on" – and go on it did from the Noah Liff Opera Center, with technology that allowed the presentation to be streamed to an even wider group schools than before, and a live Q & A online with singers after each show. This is but one innovation that John has created at the Noah Liff Opera Center.

John conceived of the Noah Liff Opera Center as not just administrative offices and home to the Nashville Opera, but as a facility where new techniques for opera could be tried, performed, and perfected. The versatile studio, which is larger than TPAC's Jackson Hall stage, doubles as a rehearsal space for grand operas and a black box theater for more intimate chamber performances. As an example of the way John encourages collaboration with other artistic groups and uses the Noah Liff Opera Center for entirely new ways of making opera as an art form approachable to new audiences across the region, he hosted Dave Ragland and Inversion Vocal Ensemble in a performance of Scott Joplin's ragtime opera, *Treemonisha*, in 2019.

Under John's guidance, Nashville Opera has an incredible record of creativity, not only with live presentations, but also using film, video, and remote production techniques that even the major opera companies are just beginning to adopt. This was his vision in developing the Noah Liff Opera Center as a cultural hub. During the recent pandemic he and his staff produced and developed the critically-acclaimed presentation, *One Vote Won*, a new opera based upon Tennessee's pivotal role in ratifying the 19th Amendment. While other arts companies were "dark" this production was streamed across the country, used in colleges and other schools and is still being viewed as a groundbreaking move for opera companies to reach wider audiences.

As CEO of the Nashville Opera, John has also built a strong financial record for the organization. While arts organizations across the country are closing their doors, Nashville Opera has consistently met its budget requirements, has a growing endowment, owns its own facility, and has no debt outstanding against the Noah Liff Opera Center. John has used the Noah Liff Opera Center as a tool in this process by turning it into a venue that produces approximately \$250,000/year (10% of the annual operating budget) for Nashville Opera on a consistent basis as a sought-after place for corporate meetings, weddings, and other events. John moved the Nashville Opera from a marginal rental space next to a pet food factory in an industrial park to its present location as a beautifully designed facility in a thriving residential and artistic neighborhood that serves as a focus for the Nashville arts community.

It has been my pleasure to serve on the Board of Nashville Opera for several years as a representative of our family and I can personally vouch for John as the driving force that has shaped this organization into a formidable player in the art world for the State of Tennessee.

What an asset he has created for all of us! Vision and creativity, along with the ability to make things happen would be the best way to describe John Hoomes.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joseph N. Barker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "B".

Joseph N. Barker

Chairman of the Executive Committee

March 25, 2021

Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

RE: Nomination of John Hoomes for the 2021 Governor's Arts Award

Ladies/Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I write you to support the nomination of John Hoomes to be the recipient of a Governor's Art Award for 2021. I have worked with John in his capacity as the CEO & Artistic Director of Nashville Opera for approximately 20 years. My wife, Judy Liff Barker, and I made the lead gift for the construction of the Noah Liff Opera Center. John was the driving force behind this project which compelled our family and Martha Ingram, along with many others, to make the financial commitments which permitted this facility to come into being.

John's vision for the Noah Liff Opera Center as a cultural hub for Middle Tennessee and beyond was central to our participation in the development of this facility. John as the Artistic Director of Nashville Opera has consistently brought the art form of opera to all of Middle Tennessee through mainstage productions of opera that are creative, entertaining, and thought provoking. Not only have these presentations been widely applauded by national art critics but by the audiences who have attended the events. Additionally, through his personal efforts and leadership of his staff, John has made opera an educational tool for school districts throughout the mid-state area, with presentations developed at the Noah Liff Opera Center and then "taken on the road," so to speak.

The education programs are two-pronged. That is, they obviously provide an exposure of opera to thousands of Tennessee students, but also provide opportunities for rising young stars of the opera world to perform in front of these audiences and hone their skills. The local students are taken behind the scenes to learn the mechanics of presenting an opera, from wigs & makeup to costume design to set production and engineering. There is direct interaction between students and the performers. During the pandemic John's attitude was that "the show must go on" – and go on it did from the Noah Liff Opera Center, with technology that allowed the presentation to be streamed to an even wider group schools than before, and a live Q & A online with singers after each show. This is but one innovation that John has created at the Noah Liff Opera Center.

John conceived of the Noah Liff Opera Center as not just administrative offices and home to the Nashville Opera, but as a facility where new techniques for opera could be tried, performed, and perfected. The versatile studio, which is larger than TPAC's Jackson Hall stage, doubles as a rehearsal space for grand operas and a black box theater for more intimate chamber performances. As an example of the way John encourages collaboration with other artistic groups and uses the Noah Liff Opera Center for entirely new ways of making opera as an art form approachable to new audiences across the region, he hosted Dave Ragland and Inversion Vocal Ensemble in a performance of Scott Joplin's ragtime opera, *Treemonisha*, in 2019.

Under John's guidance, Nashville Opera has an incredible record of creativity, not only with live presentations, but also using film, video, and remote production techniques that even the major opera companies are just beginning to adopt. This was his vision in developing the Noah Liff Opera Center as a cultural hub. During the recent pandemic he and his staff produced and developed the critically-acclaimed presentation, *One Vote Won*, a new opera based upon Tennessee's pivotal role in ratifying the 19th Amendment. While other arts companies were "dark" this production was streamed across the country, used in colleges and other schools and is still being viewed as a groundbreaking move for opera companies to reach wider audiences.

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It has been my pleasure to serve on the Board of Nashville Opera for several years as a representative of our family and I can personally vouch for John as the driving force that has shaped this organization into a formidable player in the art world for the State of Tennessee.

What an asset he has created for all of us! Vision and creativity, along with the ability to make things happen would be the best way to describe John Hoomes.

Yours truly,



Joseph N. Barker

Chairman of the Executive Committee

Litch, Debbie

Nomination for Arts Leadership Award: Debbie Litch

Dear Governor Lee and Members of the Governor's Arts Awards Committee,

In the storied history of the oldest continuously operating community theater in the State of Tennessee* and one of the oldest in our nation, one arts leader - Debbie Litch - has accomplished unparalleled success in her role as Executive Director of Theatre Memphis. Since June 2004, with commitment and discipline, she has orchestrated the full recovery and transcendent advancement of Theatre Memphis to the preeminent position this theater now holds in Memphis, in the State of Tennessee, and throughout the United States, after accepting the leadership role of this treasured theater at the lowest ebb since its founding, when the very viability of the theater was under threat of bankruptcy, with a debt of \$570,000. Under the guidance of Debbie's passionate and careful management of community volunteers, resources, and dollars, Theatre Memphis

- Is flourishing as one of the oldest continuously operating theaters in the United States, established in 1921
- Produces nationally recognized award-winning theater on two stages – The Next Stage, a black box theater with changeable seating capabilities for 100 + seats, and The Lohrey Stage, the grand hall with 400+ seats - with annual season offerings of 12 season productions, in addition to special events
- Practices year-round Outreach and Education Department to serve the underserved through theater education, playwriting, and on-site productions, including present/past collaborations through publicly and privately funded projects in programs affiliated with Orange Mound, Frayser, Binghampton, Shelby and Charter Schools, with past and present Past/present collaborators include the Caritas Village, The Grizzlies Charitable Foundation, Chatterbox Audio Theater, the Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, The Dixon Gallery and Gardens, the University of Memphis Social Work Department, Red Zone Ministries, The Memphis Public Library System, Shelby County Schools, The Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, Story Booth of Crosstown, New Ballet Ensemble, Blues City Cultural Center, the Visible Community School, and Rhodes College
- Engenders and organizes the yearly participation of 800 volunteers
- Operates with an annual budget of \$1.5 Million, is fiscally solvent, and maintains a positive and balanced budget each year
- Is currently conducting a \$10,000,000 Shine-On Community Capital Campaign to repair, refurbish, and enhance Theatre Memphis' physical building and grounds, while also creating an endowment fund for future sustainability

- Maintains the highest standards of artistic excellence at Theatre Memphis, as recognized locally, regionally, and nationally.

With a graduate degree in mathematics, Debbie monitors the business side of Theatre Memphis, while using her rich background in the arts to achieve the highest artistic goals for the community at large. Previously she held the position of Director of Development at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, and Interim Executive Director, Director of Marketing and Development at the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, and President of the Memphis Symphony League. Early in her career, she was Entertainment Director for the Boca Raton Hotel and Club, and Royal Viking Cruise Line. As actor and soloist, Litch's Memphis performance credits include Featured Soloist with the Memphis Symphony Pops Orchestra, and singer/soloist at Theater Memphis in *The World Goes 'Round, My Way, Godspell, Thoroughly Modern Millie, Hot 'n Cole, Curtains, The Sondheim Celebration, The Boy from Oz, and Debbie Sings JUDY: Just for You.*

Honors and awards for Debbie's arts leadership are manifold. She is the recipient of the Memphis Symphony Hebe Award, Germantown Arts Alliance Patron of the Arts Award, Gyneka Award from the Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis, and the Memphis Ostrander Theatre Janie McCrary "Putting It Together" Award for her work at Theatre Memphis. Litch garners national recognition for Theatre Memphis from the American Association of Community Theatres by accepting the Twink Lynch Award for "successfully completing major steps in new directions, expanding services to communities, or moving to then to the next level of organizational development." She has fostered actors at Theatre Memphis who have likewise won awards from The American Association of Community Theatres. Debbie is the 2018 recipient of the Amphion Award from the Memphis Symphony League for her "national and international contribution and service to the arts in the community." On March 1, 2019, the American Association of Community Theatre Awards Committee announced Debbie Litch as the national winner of the Distinguished Merit Award for her "exceptional service and contributions in community theater."

It is in calling upon her experience, education, and passion for Theatre Memphis that Debbie has established Theatre Memphis as the model arts organization for the City of Memphis, for the State of Tennessee, and for the United States, through her three-fold commitment to community, artistic excellence, and financial responsibility. ArtsMemphis, with full confidence in Debbie's community service, artistic achievement, and fiscally responsible stewardship of dollars, awards Theatre Memphis annual grants of public funds, and has periodically awarded special grants to Debbie for Theatre Memphis' special projects. Under Debbie's arts leadership, the brightest days are ahead for Theatre Memphis, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary year of operation with a renewed facility and endowment fund, in the 2020-2021 season.

In acknowledgement of Debbie Litch's leadership in the regeneration and restoration of Theatre Memphis from the ashes of demise to present glory and soaring future goals, for the international, national, state, regional, and City of Memphis acclaim she brings to the State of Tennessee through her work at Theatre Memphis, for her dedication to fulfill

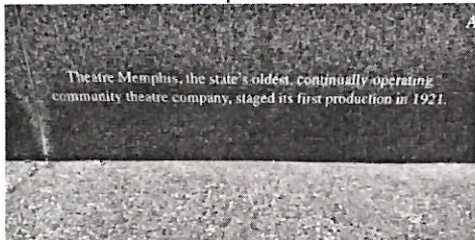
the Theatre Memphis byline of “unrivaled performance unending applaud” through 210 performances a year with as many as 14 annual Memphis Ostrander Theatre Awards in every category of theater, including music direction, acting, costume, set, lighting, hair, and makeup design, in tribute to the Theatre’s serving 30,000 Tennessee underserved students annually in community outreach and theater education, for her efficient and organized engagement of 800 volunteers to manage, promote, and dispense the good works of Theatre Memphis within our State, and in celebration of her championing this heralded community theater through its historic 100th year of continuous operation, in the 2020-2021 season, I, Dabney Coors, do, hereby, nominate Debbie Litch for the Tennessee Governor’s Arts Award in Outstanding Arts Leadership.**

In gratitude, and with warmest regards,



Dabney Coors, President of the Board of Theatre Memphis (2018 - 2021)
235 Baronne Place
Memphis, TN 38117
901 210-0054
cdcoors@gmail.com

*Please see below photograph of tribute to Theatre Memphis carved into granite at the Bicentennial Capital State Park in Nashville.



**Please see the attached letters of support for this nomination from Honorable Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland, University of Memphis Dean of College of Communications and Fine Arts Dr. Anne Hogan, Orpheum Theater President and CEO Brett Batterson, Mark Luttrell (retired Honorable Shelby County Mayor), and ArtsMemphis President and CEO Elizabeth Rouse.

October 15, 2018



Governor Bill Haslam and the Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 38243

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Dear Governor Haslam and Tennessee Arts Commission panelists,

On behalf of ArtsMemphis and the Memphis arts community, I am honored to submit this letter of support for Debbie Litch, nominee for the Tennessee Governor's Arts Leadership Award. Debbie's commitment to advancing the arts in Shelby County for decades is truly unparalleled.

As Memphis prepares for its Bicentennial, we reflect on the arts assets that are part of our city's rich history and more importantly part of our city's thriving future. We are fortunate to have a 100+ year old Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, a newly energized Memphis Symphony Orchestra and one of the largest, oldest and most well-run community theatres in the Country. These three institutions, and many others, have been greatly impacted by the leadership of Debbie Litch.

The active Board of Directors, artistic quality, financial health, loyal patronage, and community focus that Debbie has built at Theatre Memphis are models for every arts organizing. Under Debbie's leadership, Theatre Memphis continues to have record breaking attendance, balanced budgets and award winning productions year after year.

Debbie's leadership is also a model for engaging staff, volunteers and partners. She is a "yes" person and always explores new ways to use theatre as a vehicle for impacting the lives of Memphians, especially children. This year Theatre Memphis will partner with a Memphis iZone school and community outreach groups for *A Memphis Carol*, the classic Charles Dickens story brought forward to be placed in current day Memphis. She's fostered strong partnerships with organizations such as: Caritas Village, The Grizzlies Charitable Foundation Mentoring Program, Chatterbox Audio Theater, the Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Blues City Cultural Center and Creative Aging of the Mid-South.

Debbie's commitment to Memphis, the arts, and Memphians of all ages is truly amazing. There is no one with more energy and dedication to advancing the arts in innovative and sustainable ways. Knowing the high caliber of Governor's Arts Award nominees, it is with great confidence that I recommend Debbie Litch for this prestigious award.

With gratitude for your consideration,



Elizabeth Rouse, President & CEO

ArtsMemphis®
Powering Authentic Assets.

Mark Luttrell

331 Freedom Woods Cove
Memphis, TN 38018
markluttrelljr@gmail.com

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

October 11, 2018

Dear Members of the Tennessee Governor's Arts Awards Committee,

With pleasure I support the nomination of Debbie Litch, Executive Director of Theatre Memphis, for the Governor's Arts Leadership Award. I have known Debbie personally throughout her tenure at Theatre Memphis for the past 14 years, and, earlier, as she was serving in roles at Brooks Museum and the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. It is Debbie's commitment to Theatre Memphis that is of particular importance to me personally.

As Shelby County Mayor for the last 8 years, a position from which I recently retired, (and 8 years as Shelby County Sheriff before this) I have seen the positive impact Theatre Memphis and its Outreach Program has on Shelby County. 800 volunteers of the community help produce nationally recognized theater for our citizens, and Debbie balances the \$1.5 M budget of Theatre Memphis every year. Under Debbie's leadership, the Outreach Program collaborates with many organizations to help the underserved in our community. Some of these partners in the community include Caritas Village, The Grizzlies Charitable Foundation, Chatterbox Audio Theater, the Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, The Dixon, the University of Memphis Social Work Department, Red Zone Ministries, The Memphis Public Library System, Shelby County Schools, The Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, Story Booth of Crosstown, New Ballet Ensemble, Blues City Cultural Center, the Visible Community School, and Rhodes College.

As the father of a child who has volunteered for acting roles in productions at Theatre Memphis, I know firsthand that, through Debbie Litch, Theatre Memphis offers the community the richest arts experience for all of our people, regardless of age, gender, economic background, education, faith, race, or geographic location. Theatre Memphis serves the entire Tri-State area of Memphis. I frequently attend productions and can attest to the artistic excellence Debbie maintains in 12 productions a year in one of two theaters within the facility.

In sum, Debbie Litch is a standard bearer for all that is good in the arts and in community service in Tennessee. I second the nomination for her to receive our State's Arts Leadership Award. The timing of this award could not be better, because it coincides with the celebration of Theatre Memphis' 100th year of continuous operation, in the 2020-2021 season, after the completion of a renovation and endowment fund to make the theater sustainable, envisioned and executed under the leadership of Debbie Litch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Luttrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping tail.

Mark Luttrell

City of Memphis



JIM STRICKLAND
MAYOR

TENNESSEE

September 20, 2018

To the Members of the Governor's Arts Awards Committee:

I am writing to endorse Debbie Litch for the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award for Outstanding Arts Leadership.

Currently the Executive Director of Theatre Memphis, Ms. Litch is a respected leader in the art community. Her skilled direction has left an indelible mark on not only Theatre Memphis, but Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, the Memphis Symphony Orchestra and the Memphis Symphony League, in addition to providing expert support to countless individuals and organizations throughout the Memphis arts community.

Ms. Litch gives generously of her time and expertise; her outstanding service has earned her the Memphis Symphony Hebe Award, Germantown Arts Alliance Patron of the Arts Award, the Gyneka Award from the Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis, the Memphis Ostrander Theatre Janie McCrary "Putting It Together" Award, and the respect of leaders across the country. Debbie's business acumen lifted Theatre Memphis from the brink of bankruptcy into a vibrant period of growth resulting in an influx of generous financial contributions, dedicated volunteers and ultimately, a strong, balanced budget equipped for future growth and development.

Debbie Litch plays a vital role in the promotion, stability and growth of the arts in the City of Memphis and is more than deserving of the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award for Outstanding Arts Leadership. Thank you for your favorable consideration of her nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Strickland".

Jim Strickland
Mayor, City of Memphis



Brett Batterson
President & CEO

August 31, 2018

To: Members of the Governor's Arts Awards Committee

Re: Letter of support for Debbie Litch Nomination

It is my honor to support the nomination of Debbie Litch for the Outstanding Arts Leadership Award.

I have known Debbie since my arrival at the Orpheum. Debbie is a wonderful colleague and friend. Her commitment to theatre in Memphis is unparalleled. Her passion for arts education is contagious.

Memphis is blessed with numerous producing theatre organizations, and all do great work. However, Theatre Memphis, under Debbie's leadership, consistently receives more Ostrander recognitions than the other theatres. This is a testament to her leadership.

Although I am not privy to the organization's finances, I understand Debbie has kept the financial reports positive and is undertaking a major campaign to refurbish the facilities.

Finally, as a community partner, Debbie is always willing to offer advice and assist other arts organizations in the city. She is an active member of the Memphis Cultural Coalition, a roundtable of the city's cultural leaders. Her spirit of collaboration is strong. I am thankful for her friendship.

In closing, I am happy to offer the highest form of recommendation for Debbie Litch. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information.

Respectfully,

To: Governor's Arts Awards Committee

From: Dr. Anne Hogan, Dean of the College of Communication and Fine Arts, University of Memphis

Subject: Nomination for TN Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership Award (Debbie Litch)

Date: September 5, 2018

Dear Members of the Governor's Arts Awards Committee,
I am delighted to support the nomination of Debbie Litch, Executive Director of Theatre Memphis, for the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership Award (Governor's Arts Awards).

Ms. Litch has tirelessly and passionately led Theatre Memphis from one success to another since undertaking her leadership role in June, 2004. Ms. Litch was well positioned to spearhead this impactful community arts organization, having previously held the positions of Director of Development at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, and Interim Executive Director, Director of Marketing and Development at the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, and President of the Memphis Symphony League. Ms. Litch's meticulous management of the fiscal and human resources of Theatre Memphis, including oversight of community volunteers, has facilitated extraordinary achievements for Theatre Memphis, which currently:

- produces nationally recognized award-winning theater on two stages – The Next Stage, a black box theater with changeable seating capabilities for 100 + seats, and The Lohrey Stage, the grand hall with 400+ seats – with annual season offerings of 12 season productions, in addition to special events
- operates community outreach into every segment of the under-served through theater education, playwriting, and on-site productions
- welcomes 800 volunteers a year to support its artistic mission
- serves 30,000 Tennessee students a year in community outreach and theatre education
- maintains a balanced budget (as it has for Ms Litch's 14-year tenure)
- is mounting a multi-million dollar community campaign to repair, refurbish, and enhance Theatre Memphis' physical building and grounds, and, additionally, to create an endowment fund

Theatre Memphis is recognized regionally and nationally by the numerous awards Ms. Litch has received personally, and for the volunteers of Theatre Memphis. These include the Memphis Symphony Hebe Award, Germantown Arts Alliance Patron of the Arts Award, Gyneka Award from the Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis, and the Memphis Ostrander Theatre Janie McCrary "Putting It Together" Award for her work at Theatre Memphis. Ms. Litch garnered national recognition for Theatre Memphis from the American Association of Community Theatres by accepting the Twink Lynch Award for "successfully completing major steps in new directions, expanding services to communities, or moving to the next level of organizational development." She has fostered actors at Theatre Memphis who have likewise won awards from The American Association of Community Theatres. Debbie received the Amphion Award from the Memphis Symphony League in 2018 for her "national and international contribution and service to the arts in the community."

I regularly attend performances of Theatre Memphis, and am consistently impressed with the caliber of its productions, the wide variety of theatrical genres presented, and the enthusiasm and loyalty of its audience. In my role as Dean of the College of Communication and Fine Arts (CCFA) at the University of Memphis, I have welcomed opportunities to endorse and maintain the college's historically close links with Theatre Memphis. These include student internships, CCFA student and alumni participation in nearly every production, and artistic direction of Theatre Memphis productions by CCFA faculty. In the current production of *Newsies*, for instance, four CCFA alumni and three current students are members of the cast. Faculty members who have directed at Theatre Memphis include Bob Heatherington, Stephen Hancock, and Jo Lenhart. Theatre Memphis and the CCFA Department of Theatre and Dance further collaborate by sharing props and costumes, when appropriate. These and other collaborative endeavors enrich the experience of our students, alumni, and faculty and also help to provide the local community further opportunities to explore and engage with a high-quality community resource.

In consideration of her inspired accomplishments as Executive Director of Theatre Memphis, I, Dr. Anne Hogan, do, hereby, support the nomination of Debbie Litch for the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award in Outstanding Leadership.



Dr. Anne Hogan
Dean, College of Communication and Fine Arts
University of Memphis
232 Communication and Fine Arts Building, Memphis TN, 38152
901-678-5086
Anne.Hogan@memphis.edu

Litch, Debbie

Nomination for Arts Leadership Award: Debbie Litch

Dear Governor Lee and Members of the Governor's Arts Awards Committee,

In the storied history of the oldest continuously operating community theater in the State of Tennessee* and one of the oldest in our nation, one arts leader - Debbie Litch - has accomplished unparalleled success in her role as Executive Director of Theatre Memphis. Since June 2004, with commitment and discipline, she has orchestrated the full recovery and transcendent advancement of Theatre Memphis to the preeminent position this theater now holds in Memphis, in the State of Tennessee, and throughout the United States after accepting the leadership role of this treasured theater at the lowest ebb since its founding, when the very viability of the theater was under threat of bankruptcy, with a debt of \$570,000. Under the guidance of Debbie's passionate and careful management of community volunteers, resources, and dollars, Theatre Memphis

- Is flourishing as one of the oldest continuously operating theaters in the United States, established in 1921
- Produces nationally recognized award-winning theater on two stages – The Next Stage, a black box theater with changeable seating capabilities for 100 + seats, and The Lohrey Stage, the grand hall with 400+ seats - with annual season offerings of 12 season productions, in addition to special events
- Practices year-round Outreach and Education Department to serve the under-served through theater education, playwriting, and on-site productions, including present/past collaborations through publicly and privately funded projects in programs affiliated with Orange Mound, Frayser, Binghampton, Shelby and Charter Schools, with past and present Past/present collaborators include the Caritas Village, The Grizzlies Charitable Foundation, Chatterbox Audio Theater, the Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, The Dixon Gallery

and Gardens, the University of Memphis Social Work Department, Red Zone Ministries, The Memphis Public Library System, Shelby County Schools, The Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, Story Booth of Crosstown, New Ballet Ensemble, Blues City Cultural Center, the Visible Community School, and Rhodes College

- Engenders and organizes the yearly participation of 800 volunteers
- Operates with an annual budget of \$1.5 Million, is fiscally solvent, and maintains a positive and balanced budget each year
- Is currently conducting a \$10,000,000 Shine On Community Capital Campaign to repair, refurbish, and enhance Theatre Memphis' physical building and grounds, while also creating an endowment fund for future sustainability
- Maintains the highest standards of artistic excellence at Theatre Memphis, as recognized locally, regionally, and nationally.

With a graduate degree in mathematics, Debbie monitors the business side of Theatre Memphis, while using her rich background in the arts to achieve the highest artistic goals for the community at large. Previously she held the position of Director of Development at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, and Interim Executive Director, Director of Marketing and Development at the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, and President of the Memphis Symphony League. Early in her career, she was Entertainment Director for the Boca Raton Hotel and Club, and Royal Viking Cruise Line. As actor and soloist, Litch's Memphis performance credits include Featured Soloist with the Memphis Symphony Pops Orchestra, and singer/soloist at Theater Memphis in *The World Goes 'Round, My Way, Godspell, Thoroughly Modern Millie, Hot 'n Cole, Curtains, The Sondheim Celebration, The Boy from Oz, and Debbie Sings JUDY: Just for You.*

Honors and awards for Debbie's arts leadership are manifold. She is the recipient of the Memphis Symphony Hebe Award, Germantown Arts Alliance Patron of the Arts Award, Gyneka Award from the Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis, and the Memphis Ostrander Theatre Janie McCrary "Putting

It Together” Award for her work at Theatre Memphis. Litch garners national recognition for Theatre Memphis from the American Association of Community Theatres by accepting the Twink Lynch Award for “successfully completing major steps in new directions, expanding services to communities, or moving to then to the next level of organizational development.” She has fostered actors at Theatre Memphis who have likewise won awards from The American Association of Community Theatres. Debbie is the 2018 recipient of the Amphion Award from the Memphis Symphony League for her “national and international contribution and service to the arts in the community.”

It is in calling upon her experience, education, and passion for Theatre Memphis that Debbie has established Theatre Memphis as the model arts organization for the City of Memphis, for the State of Tennessee, and for the United States, through her three-fold commitment to community, artistic excellence, and financial responsibility. ArtsMemphis, with full confidence in Debbie's community service, artistic achievement, and fiscally responsible stewardship of dollars, awards Theatre Memphis annually grants of public funds, and has periodically awarded special grants to Debbie for Theatre Memphis' special projects. Under Debbie's arts leadership, the brightest days are ahead for Theatre Memphis, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary year of operation with a renewed facility and endowment fund, in the 2020-2021 season.

In acknowledgement of Debbie Litch's leadership in the regeneration and restoration of Theatre Memphis from the ashes of demise to present glory and soaring future goals, for the international, national, state, regional, and City of Memphis acclaim she brings to the State of Tennessee through her work at Theatre Memphis, for her dedication to fulfill the Theatre Memphis byline of “unrivaled performance unending applaud” through 210 performances a year with as many as 14 annual Memphis Ostrander Theatre Awards in every category of theater, including music direction, acting, costume, set, lighting, hair, and makeup design, in tribute to the Theatre's serving 30,000 Tennessee underserved students annually in community outreach and theater education, for her efficient and organized engagement of 800 volunteers to manage, promote, and dispense the good works of

Theatre Memphis within our State, and in celebration of her championing this heralded community theater through its historic 100th year of continuous operation, in the 2020-2021 season, I, Dabney Coors, do, hereby, nominate Debbie Litch for the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award in Outstanding Arts Leadership.**

In gratitude, and with warmest regards,



Dabney Coors, President of the Board of Theatre Memphis (2018 - 2021)
235 Baronne Place
Memphis, TN 38117
901 210-0054
cdcoors@gmail.com

*Please see attached photograph of tribute to Theatre Memphis carved into granite at the Bicentennial Capital State Park in Nashville. A suggestion has been made that Theatre Memphis may be the second oldest continuously operating theater in Tennessee, but I cite the government's claim as my reference. **Please see the attached letters of support for this nomination from Honorable Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland, University of Memphis Dean of College of Communications and Fine Arts Dr. Anne Hogan, Orpheum Theater President and CEO Brett Batterson, Mark Luttrell (retired Honorable Shelby County Mayor), and ArtsMemphis President and CEO Elizabeth Rouse.

2021 Addendum to Nomination for Arts Leadership Award: Debbie Litch

Dear Governor Lee and Members of the Governor's Arts Awards Committee,

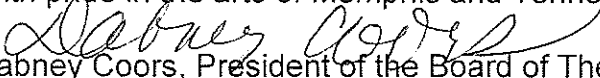
In the two years since I originally nominated Debbie Litch for the Governors Arts Leadership Award, she continues to conquer new ground by leaps and bounds for the arts at Theatre Memphis. Debbie's compassionate leadership during this difficult year is evidenced in the formation of TM CARES to help struggling actors during Covid, and the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Committee and Pledge

for all volunteers and staff at Theatre Memphis. Her first major accomplishment of 2020 was to seek from the Mayor and City Council the transfer of land on which the Theatre has operated since 1975 from municipal property to ownership by Theatre Memphis. In January 2020 this major coup was accomplished when the City of Memphis finalized the gift of the land to the Theatre.

Second, Debbie has increased revenues at Theatre Memphis tremendously since she became Executive Director in 2004, so that in 2020, Theatre Memphis completed a major renovation adding 8000 square feet to the facility to double the size of the Lobby and create a South Hall with catering kitchen, bar, and concessions area. In addition the number of restrooms were increased from 9 to 22, and our entire facility is now ADA compliant and on one level for accessibility for all. The building now functions beautifully for our award-winning theatrical productions and other special events for the citizens of Tennessee.

Finally, in 2020 Debbie Litch secured for Theatre Memphis the highest award in the country for community theatres. The American Association of Community Theatre, which is the governing body of more than 7000 community theaters in the United States, awarded Theatre Memphis, under Debbie's leadership, the **Diamond Crown Organization Award**. What a well-deserved 100th birthday present for Theatre Memphis this year (Our actual birthday is May 20, 2021.) would the **Governor's Arts Leadership Award** be for Debbie Litch, one who has served Tennesseans with excellence in leadership at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis Symphony, Memphis Symphony League, and for 17 wildly successful years at Theatre Memphis!

With pride in the arts of Memphis and Tennessee,


Dabney Coors, President of the Board of Theatre Memphis (2018 - 2021)
235 Baronne Place
Memphis, TN 38117
901 210-0054
cdcoors@gmail.com

*Please see 2021 attachments of renovation, Financial Improvement graph, and AACT letter.

Mark Luttrell

331 Freedom Woods Cove
Memphis, TN 38018
markluttrelljr@gmail.com

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

October 11, 2018

Dear Members of the Tennessee Governor's Arts Awards Committee,

With pleasure I support the nomination of Debbie Litch, Executive Director of Theatre Memphis, for the Governor's Arts Leadership Award. I have known Debbie personally throughout her tenure at Theatre Memphis for the past 14 years, and, earlier, as she was serving in roles at Brooks Museum and the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. It is Debbie's commitment to Theatre Memphis that is of particular importance to me personally.

As Shelby County Mayor for the last 8 years, a position from which I recently retired, (and 8 years as Shelby County Sheriff before this) I have seen the positive impact Theatre Memphis and its Outreach Program has on Shelby County. 800 volunteers of the community help produce nationally recognized theater for our citizens, and Debbie balances the \$1.5 M budget of Theatre Memphis every year. Under Debbie's leadership, the Outreach Program collaborates with many organizations to help the underserved in our community. Some of these partners in the community include Caritas Village, The Grizzlies Charitable Foundation, Chatterbox Audio Theater, the Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, The Dixon, the University of Memphis Social Work Department, Red Zone Ministries, The Memphis Public Library System, Shelby County Schools, The Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, Story Booth of Crosstown, New Ballet Ensemble, Blues City Cultural Center, the Visible Community School, and Rhodes College.

As the father of a child who has volunteered for acting roles in productions at Theatre Memphis, I know firsthand that, through Debbie Litch, Theatre Memphis offers the community the richest arts experience for all of our people, regardless of age, gender, economic background, education, faith, race, or geographic location. Theatre Memphis serves the entire Tri-State area of Memphis. I frequently attend productions and can attest to the artistic excellence Debbie maintains in 12 productions a year in one of two theaters within the facility.

In sum, Debbie Litch is a standard bearer for all that is good in the arts and in community service in Tennessee. I second the nomination for her to receive our State's Arts Leadership Award. The timing of this award could not be better, because it coincides with the celebration of Theatre Memphis' 100th year of continuous operation, in the 2020-2021 season, after the completion of a renovation and endowment fund to make the theater sustainable, envisioned and executed under the leadership of Debbie Litch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Luttrell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Mark Luttrell

City of Memphis



JIM STRICKLAND
MAYOR

TENNESSEE

September 20, 2018

To the Members of the Governor's Arts Awards Committee:

I am writing to endorse Debbie Litch for the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award for Outstanding Arts Leadership.

Currently the Executive Director of Theatre Memphis, Ms. Litch is a respected leader in the art community. Her skilled direction has left an indelible mark on not only Theatre Memphis, but Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, the Memphis Symphony Orchestra and the Memphis Symphony League, in addition to providing expert support to countless individuals and organizations throughout the Memphis arts community.

Ms. Litch gives generously of her time and expertise; her outstanding service has earned her the Memphis Symphony Hebe Award, Germantown Arts Alliance Patron of the Arts Award, the Gyneka Award from the Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis, the Memphis Ostrander Theatre Janie McCrary "Putting It Together" Award, and the respect of leaders across the country. Debbie's business acumen lifted Theatre Memphis from the brink of bankruptcy into a vibrant period of growth resulting in an influx of generous financial contributions, dedicated volunteers and ultimately, a strong, balanced budget equipped for future growth and development.

Debbie Litch plays a vital role in the promotion, stability and growth of the arts in the City of Memphis and is more than deserving of the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award for Outstanding Arts Leadership. Thank you for your favorable consideration of her nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Strickland".

Jim Strickland
Mayor, City of Memphis



Brett Batterson
President & CEO

August 31, 2018

To: Members of the Governor's Arts Awards Committee

Re: Letter of support for Debbie Litch Nomination

It is my honor to support the nomination of Debbie Litch for the Outstanding Arts Leadership Award.

I have known Debbie since my arrival at the Orpheum. Debbie is a wonderful colleague and friend. Her commitment to theatre in Memphis is unparalleled. Her passion for arts education is contagious.

Memphis is blessed with numerous producing theatre organizations, and all do great work. However, Theatre Memphis, under Debbie's leadership, consistently receives more Ostrander recognitions than the other theatres. This is a testament to her leadership.

Although I am not privy to the organization's finances, I understand Debbie has kept the financial reports positive and is undertaking a major campaign to refurbish the facilities.

Finally, as a community partner, Debbie is always willing to offer advice and assist other arts organizations in the city. She is an active member of the Memphis Cultural Coalition, a roundtable of the city's cultural leaders. Her spirit of collaboration is strong. I am thankful for her friendship.

In closing, I am happy to offer the highest form of recommendation for Debbie Litch. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information.

Respectfully,

To: Governor's Arts Awards Committee

From: Dr. Anne Hogan, Dean of the College of Communication and Fine Arts, University of Memphis

Subject: Nomination for TN Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership Award (Debbie Litch)

Date: September 5, 2018

Dear Members of the Governor's Arts Awards Committee,
I am delighted to support the nomination of Debbie Litch, Executive Director of Theatre Memphis, for the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership Award (Governor's Arts Awards).

Ms. Litch has tirelessly and passionately led Theatre Memphis from one success to another since undertaking her leadership role in June, 2004. Ms. Litch was well positioned to spearhead this impactful community arts organization, having previously held the positions of Director of Development at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, and Interim Executive Director, Director of Marketing and Development at the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, and President of the Memphis Symphony League. Ms. Litch's meticulous management of the fiscal and human resources of Theatre Memphis, including oversight of community volunteers, has facilitated extraordinary achievements for Theatre Memphis, which currently:

- produces nationally recognized award-winning theater on two stages – The Next Stage, a black box theater with changeable seating capabilities for 100 + seats, and The Lohrey Stage, the grand hall with 400+ seats – with annual season offerings of 12 season productions, in addition to special events
- operates community outreach into every segment of the under-served through theater education, playwriting, and on-site productions
- welcomes 800 volunteers a year to support its artistic mission
- serves 30,000 Tennessee students a year in community outreach and theatre education
- maintains a balanced budget (as it has for Ms Litch's 14-year tenure)
- is mounting a multi-million dollar community campaign to repair, refurbish, and enhance Theatre Memphis' physical building and grounds, and, additionally, to create an endowment fund

Theatre Memphis is recognized regionally and nationally by the numerous awards Ms. Litch has received personally, and for the volunteers of Theatre Memphis. These include the Memphis Symphony Hebe Award, Germantown Arts Alliance Patron of the Arts Award, Gyneka Award from the Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis, and the Memphis Ostrander Theatre Janie McCrary "Putting It Together" Award for her work at Theatre Memphis. Ms. Litch garnered national recognition for Theatre Memphis from the American Association of Community Theatres by accepting the Twink Lynch Award for "successfully completing major steps in new directions, expanding services to communities, or moving to the next level of organizational development." She has fostered actors at Theatre Memphis who have likewise won awards from The American Association of Community Theatres. Debbie received the Amphion Award from the Memphis Symphony League in 2018 for her "national and international contribution and service to the arts in the community."

I regularly attend performances of Theatre Memphis, and am consistently impressed with the caliber of its productions, the wide variety of theatrical genres presented, and the enthusiasm and loyalty of its audience. In my role as Dean of the College of Communication and Fine Arts (CCFA) at the University of Memphis, I have welcomed opportunities to endorse and maintain the college's historically close links with Theatre Memphis. These include student internships, CCFA student and alumni participation in nearly every production, and artistic direction of Theatre Memphis productions by CCFA faculty. In the current production of *Newsies*, for instance, four CCFA alumni and three current students are members of the cast. Faculty members who have directed at Theatre Memphis include Bob Heatherington, Stephen Hancock, and Jo Lenhart. Theatre Memphis and the CCFA Department of Theatre and Dance further collaborate by sharing props and costumes, when appropriate. These and other collaborative endeavors enrich the experience of our students, alumni, and faculty and also help to provide the local community further opportunities to explore and engage with a high-quality community resource.

In consideration of her inspired accomplishments as Executive Director of Theatre Memphis, I, Dr. Anne Hogan, do, hereby, support the nomination of Debbie Litch for the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award in Outstanding Leadership.



Dr. Anne Hogan
Dean, College of Communication and Fine Arts
University of Memphis
232 Communication and Fine Arts Building, Memphis TN, 38152
901-678-5086
Anne.Hogan@memphis.edu



February 13, 2020

Theatre Memphis
Debbie Litch, Executive
Producer 630 Perkins Ext
Memphis, TN 38117-4712
Theatre
Dear Memphis:

It is with great pleasure to announce that the American Association of Community Theatre (AACT)'s Awards Committee would like to honor and recognize you for your exceptional service and contributions in community theatre with the:

Diamond Crown Organization Award

This award recognizes longevity and vitality of AACT member theatres that have expanded programming and/or facilities in the past ten years and have the administrative leadership to remain vital to their communities for the next ten years. Recipients must have been in continuous operation for 75 years and organizational members of AACT for the past ten years.

This award will be presented during the aactWorldFest 2020 Festival, June 22-27th in Venice, Florida at the Venice Theatre. For more information on the Festival or to register, please visit aact.org/aactworldfest. Festival registration is not required to attend the awards presentations. Presentation of the awards will be scheduled towards the end of the festival week, and we will send more information soon. Please send notice to Executive Director, Quiana Clark-Roland (quiana@aact.org) if you are able to attend. If you cannot attend, we will make other arrangements for presentation.

Your award will also be publicized to AACT Members. Please send us your theatre's logo (color, if applicable). Please also send a brief bio about your theatre's contributions as a community theatre. Email publicity items to david@aact.org or mail to the address below. Please send by March 13th.

Please feel free to call with any questions that you might have. Thank you for being part of community theatre. Congratulations!

Sincerely,

Quiana Clark-Roland
Executive Director

PO Box 101476 Fort Worth, TX 76185 T: 817-732-3177
info@aact.org www.aact.org

October 15, 2018



Governor Bill Haslam and the Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 38243

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Dear Governor Haslam and Tennessee Arts Commission panelists,

On behalf of ArtsMemphis and the Memphis arts community, I am honored to submit this letter of support for Debbie Litch, nominee for the Tennessee Governor's Arts Leadership Award. Debbie's commitment to advancing the arts in Shelby County for decades is truly unparalleled.

As Memphis prepares for its Bicentennial, we reflect on the arts assets that are part of our city's rich history and more importantly part of our city's thriving future. We are fortunate to have a 100+ year old Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, a newly energized Memphis Symphony Orchestra and one of the largest, oldest and most well-run community theatres in the Country. These three institutions, and many others, have been greatly impacted by the leadership of Debbie Litch.

The active Board of Directors, artistic quality, financial health, loyal patronage, and community focus that Debbie has built at Theatre Memphis are models for every arts organizing. Under Debbie's leadership, Theatre Memphis continues to have record breaking attendance, balanced budgets and award winning productions year after year.

Debbie's leadership is also a model for engaging staff, volunteers and partners. She is a "yes" person and always explores new ways to use theatre as a vehicle for impacting the lives of Memphians, especially children. This year Theatre Memphis will partner with a Memphis iZone school and community outreach groups for *A Memphis Carol*, the classic Charles Dickens story brought forward to be placed in current day Memphis. She's fostered strong partnerships with organizations such as: Caritas Village, The Grizzlies Charitable Foundation Mentoring Program, Chatterbox Audio Theater, the Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Blues City Cultural Center and Creative Aging of the Mid-South.

Debbie's commitment to Memphis, the arts, and Memphians of all ages is truly amazing. There is no one with more energy and dedication to advancing the arts in innovative and sustainable ways. Knowing the high caliber of Governor's Arts Award nominees, it is with great confidence that I recommend Debbie Litch for this prestigious award.

With gratitude for your consideration,



Elizabeth Rouse, President & CEO

ArtsMemphis®
Powering Authentic Assets.

McKissic, James

I am honored to nominate James McKissic for the 2021 Governor's Arts Awards in the Arts Leadership category. James is one of the most talented people I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with in Chattanooga. He is both a skilled visual artist and a fierce arts advocate and he combines those two passions with a commitment to serving his community.

James has worked in the nonprofit and public sectors for more than 25 years, including seven years at the Chattanooga Urban League, followed by six years as an administrator for my office as Mayor of Chattanooga. James rejoined the Urban League for a short period before being selected for his current role as President of ArtsBuild in 2019.

From 2012-2018, James served as my Senior Advisor and the Director of the City of Chattanooga Office of Multicultural Affairs. His role for the City included linking diverse businesses to city government contracting opportunities, improving the City's supplier diversity efforts, and working to promote justice, inclusion, and equity among the employees and citizenry of Chattanooga. Among the many projects he initiated as the Director of Multicultural Affairs was the City's art supply donation program for Hamilton County Schools. James was also the unofficial arts curator for my administration, regularly bringing exhibits of local artwork and performances by local musicians into City Hall which both enlivened our offices and offered our city's creators valuable exposure.

James was instrumental in making Chattanooga a "Kiva City" for small business lending activity. Kiva is an international nonprofit that provides loans as small as \$25 to help a borrower start a business, go to school, or realize their potential in any way. More than 97% of the loans are repaid into a revolving loan fund that then aids other ventures. Although the initiative continues to be managed by The Company Lab, James helped plan the venture and secure

\$43,000 of city funding along with foundation support to launch the loan program in early 2018.

James has served in many ways as a strategic thinker in the arts community. Heavily influenced by creators like Marta Morena Vega, Margaret Burroughs, and Arthur Mitchell and committed to the idea that marginalized people must establish their own arts and cultural programs and institutions, James founded Friends of African American Art, which funded purchases of art by Kerry James Marshall and Sam Gilliam for the permanent collection of the Hunter Museum of American Art. He also helped to establish the Sankofa Fund for Civic Engagement, whose members have collectively funded more than \$300,000 in arts and related community needs, such as new band instruments for Brainerd High School, summer camp at SPLASH Youth Arts Workshop, library equipment at Calvin Donaldson Elementary, and books for the Howard School of Academics and Technology book club. Additionally, he created the African American Cemetery Preservation Fund to provide funds for Chattanooga's historic Black cemeteries; initiated "Rooted in Color," the first Regional Art Collectors Conference in Chattanooga focused on African American Art; co-founded Responsive Initiatives for Social Empowers (RISE) Chattanooga; established the Chattanooga Readers and Writers Fair, Chattanooga Outdoor Ambassadors, the African American Family Film Series in Miller Park; and raised funds for and designed the Ancestral Roots Community Garden in the Menlo Park Neighborhood which was featured during the third International Placemaking Week held in Chattanooga in October 2019.

James McKissic was hired in December 2019 by ArtsBuild's Board of Directors after a long and thorough national search for the organization's next President. One would think he

might struggle beginning his new role just as the year 2020 began with social unrest and a worldwide pandemic that caused an abrupt pause to the social gatherings and performances that define the arts. But James did not hesitate to step up and lead the organization and to be a strong leader in the arts sector last year.

Since coming to ArtsBuild, James has worked to support artists and arts organizations through the COVID-19 pandemic by raising funds, establishing supportive shared services, creating an Artists Emergency Fund, establishing a recovery fund for grassroots arts and culture orgs, and advocating for arts inclusion and arts funding at the local and state levels.

One of the first things he did in 2020 was to reconfirm ArtsBuild's commitment to racial equity in the arts, making a public statement (<https://artsbuild.com/racial-equity>) and setting the stage for conversation and training around systemic and structural equity concerns in programming, policies, community engagement, recruitment, advancement, and governance for ArtsBuild and all arts organizations in Chattanooga eager to explore and address this important topic.

Expanding on the topic of equity, James reached out to Chattanooga's Tech Goes Home organization to develop a digital equity program specific to artists and arts organizations. The program offers digital access and resources for any artist or small arts organization striving to continue their work and grow their audiences online, a skill that became essential during the months of the pandemic. So far, about 40 participants have graduated from the 15-hour program, with technology and arts-based workforce development skills, a free laptop, and a collection of resources to help them share their art on virtual platforms and fund their artistic profession and endeavors.

In service to the arts sector, James also established a new Shared Services program managed by ArtsBuild to assist nonprofit arts organizations with a network of consultants and services in the areas of human resources, accounting, fundraising, social media, and grant writing among other topics. In some cases, arts organizations have been able to save money in their own budgets by participating in the program. Proudly, most of the partnering businesses and consultants providing these services are local and minority- or women-owned. ArtsBuild now has an ongoing weekly series of public workshops as part of the Shared Services program.

James has also actively cultivated partnerships to provide paid opportunities that connect individual artists with partners such as EPB for a public mural project, the new Kinley Hotel on Chattanooga's south side, and the Artists Work Grant program in collaboration with Public Art Chattanooga.

The values of family, community, the arts, and philanthropy have guided James McKissic's personal and professional endeavors. James holds a Bachelor of Science in secondary education from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, a Masters of Nonprofit and Public Administration from the Robert F. Wagner School at New York, and an executive certificate from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He completed the Harvard Business School's Young American Leaders Program (2017), the National Arts and Cultural Strategies Executive Program at the University of Pennsylvania (2018), and the Business for Impact/New Strategies in Fundraising Program at the Georgetown University McDonough School of Business (2019).

James is passionate about empowering communities, connecting cultures, and changing lives through the arts, cultural preservation, and philanthropy. Living this passion, he fundraised

for and established an African American Arts and Culture Speaker Series, which to date has featured James Beard Award winner Michael Twitty; Visual Artist Shanequa Gay; Tiffany LaTrice of TILA Studios; H. Beecher Hicks, III, President and CEO of the National Museum of African American Music; and Doug Shipman of the Woodruff Arts Center. In the fall of 2019, the series hosted poet and Pulitzer Prize winner Jherico Brown. Currently, James' community projects include working with Public Art Chattanooga to raise funds for a Bessie Smith Memorial/Statue in downtown Chattanooga, designing curriculum for and facilitating a ten-session arts incubator program for local creatives, organizing community around designating the MLK Corridor as an African American "Cultural District," and working to establish the Chattanooga Center for Racial Equity and Inclusion.

As someone whose life's work has been dedicated to elevating the quality of creative work in our state, as well as opportunity and access among new audiences for artwork everywhere -- especially among underserved communities -- there is no one more deserving of this honor than James McKissic, and I am very proud to nominate him for this distinguished honor.

Carmen J. Davis



3601 Wauchula St., Chattanooga, TN 37406
423-255-9315
chattabelle@gmail.com

03/15/2021

To whom it may concern,

I am pleased to nominate James McKissic for the TN Governor's Arts Awards (Arts Leadership Award).

James being a force in the arts community did not start when he became the president of ArtsBuild but the very moment he moved to Chattanooga from Connecticut. James has had a long and distinguished career touching many different aspects of the arts through creating and producing art as well as supporting the arts financially and through public service.

James is one of my closest friends so I jumped at the chance to write this recommendation but as I began the process, I realized that even if this letter were 10 pages long, I would not be able to fully convey the impact that he has made in our community.

I met James in 2009 during his time at the Urban League when he reached out to me about collaborating with the Bessie Smith Cultural Center on a youth program that they offered. He wanted to add the arts to the curriculum and asked us to assist. That collaboration led to many more both inside and outside our places of employment at the time.

It has always been important to James to make sure that the arts are accessible to all including making his personal collection available for loan to public spaces and public schools. He has used his time, talent, and treasure to support the arts locally and even when we travel with our group the Art Bandits. We formed the Art Bandits because we learned that many people were intimidated by museums. Especially those who are part of the non-traditional museum audience. Through these excursions we have introduced people to museums, galleries, and private collections all over the South East.

I have worked with James on art exhibitions (not involving his collection) that were showcased at Chattanooga City Hall, The Chattanooga Downtown Library, The Urban League, and the Jazzanooga/RISE space. We also partnered to create the Banks Art Center, an art pop-up in a local neighborhood that included music and dance



performances, interactive art activities and an exhibition. Using his own personal financial resources, he co-founded Jazzanooga (now RISE) with Shane Morrow and that organization has provided free music lessons to seniors and at-risk youth, festivals, exhibition space featuring artwork from local talent, dance lessons, musical theater, book signings and more. RISE is now the largest minority-run and focused arts organization in Chattanooga.

James has served on committees and boards for the Hunter Museum, Bessie Smith Cultural Center, Tivoli Foundation, ArtsBuild (before becoming president), and SPLASH arts program.

He has worked tirelessly to provide opportunities for all to experience each aspect of both the performing and visual arts. As a visual artist and a longtime art collector, he has brought his vibrant personality and encouraging nature to a whole new generation of artists and other professionals.

His willingness to take risks, be innovative and embrace change have provided Chattanooga with a more vibrant art community and served as a model for others. Even with everything I have listed in this letter I know I have not included all, of his contributions to the local arts community. That is why I can't think of anyone more deserving of the TN Governor's Arts Awards (Arts Leadership Award) than James McKissic.

Warmest Regards,

- Carmen J. Davis





March 11, 2021

Dear Selection Committee:

It is indeed my pleasure and honor to write a letter of recommendation for James McKissic, a nominee for the Arts Leadership Award. I have known James since I arrived in Chattanooga two years ago. Our organization has a long history of partnering with James – first when he was at the Urban League and now at ArtsBuild.

I admire James' commitment and support of artists in our community and his commitment to ensuring that our Black and Latino artists receive equitable resources and support. He has brought renewed energy to the local arts scene during a time when so many artists are suffering from the impact of the pandemic.

Our organizations have partnered to share resources for artists – technology and support to learn how to market and sell online, support for artists that hoped to apply for loans and grants, and assistance to help artists organize the business side of their work. It has been a joy to see how this vital and vibrant arts community has embraced the opportunity to shift their practices to ensure long term sustainability of their work. James' support has been essential to making this partnership succeed because the artists know and trust him. And we know trust plays an indispensable role in building collaborations.

I admire his willingness to engage in the hard conversations. On his weekly calls with artists and supporters, he challenges people to speak, to engage, and to learn. He calls for civil discourse but encourages that honest and sometimes painful truths be spoken. His skill as a facilitator is much like his skill as an artist – weaving thoughtful prompts here and there, adding just a gentle push to bring more voices to the table, and then wrapping up the session in a way that brings the conversation to a gentle close, leaving the participant with something important to ponder.

James is a humble man whose wisdom and strength are admired by many. I can give a concrete example. When the country was outraged by the events surrounding the murder of George Floyd, many organizations put out statements decrying the incident and calling for change. Not James. Instead, he put out a statement about actions *his* organization would commit to complete to ensure they were making fairer and more just decisions. It inspired me to do the same with our team at The Enterprise Center. He leads by example and is an inspiration to many.

I enjoy his energy, his love of the arts and artists, his own art, his amazing green thumb, his wonderful laugh, and his kind heart. I enjoy his honesty, his courage, and his capacity to build trust across a wide range of organizations and people. I cannot imagine there could be a more deserving recipient of the Arts Leadership Award than James McKissic.

I would be very happy to speak with you if you have further questions.

Best,

Deb Socia

Deb Socia
President/CEO
The Enterprise Center

March 29, 2021

**Tennessee Arts Commission
2021 Governor's Arts Awards**

Dear Selection Committee,

It is my great privilege to provide this Letter of Support for James McKissic for consideration in the Arts Leadership Award category as you review nominations for the 2021 Governor's Arts Awards.

Believing that the arts have the power to move communities forward, ArtsBuild initiated a brave new chapter with the adoption of its vision of "More Arts in More Places for More People" several years ago. As this vision took hold, the arts have played an even more important role in Chattanooga's growth and current culture. This environment for the arts to thrive has provided ArtsBuild with many new opportunities it had not previously explored – in arts education, community outreach, tourism, economic development, individual artist support and much more. The central focus of our mission to build a stronger community through the arts became the city of Chattanooga itself and its future as a vibrant, open, and creative community that uses the arts to move the city forward.

The vision of an organization can only be enacted if it finds the right leader at the right time. James McKissic joined ArtsBuild as President in December 2019 at just the right time. His ideas and understanding about artists, community outreach, and the needs of the city exactly matched the vision that ArtsBuild had articulated for itself. By fostering the most positive interactions with the Board of Directors, the staff, more than twenty local arts partner organizations, city and county elected leaders, and individual artists and gallery owners throughout the region, James has more fully led ArtsBuild into a new era.

The timing of his hire also intersected at a time of crisis in this country and the world with the COVID-19 pandemic. But instead of shying away from the challenges, he very boldly stepped in and moved forward to position ArtsBuild in the central role of supporting our local arts sector through each phase of the pandemic. As one example, James quickly moved to set up flexible "emergency" grant funding strategies for ArtsBuild to be able to give financial support to individual artists and arts organizations, knowing immediately what hardships individual artists, performers, and all arts organizations would face due to cancelled gigs, shutdowns, and public health fears.

My respect for James only doubled at the start of his role with ArtsBuild as his deep love for the arts and the people who create them was demonstrated by the way he worked during this crisis to protect both.

Sincerely,



Mary P. Tanner
Chair, ArtsBuild Board of Directors

April 4, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

It is with great pleasure that I submit this letter of support for the nomination of **James H. McKissic** for the 2021 Governor's Arts Award.

I can attest to Mr. McKissic's worthiness for this nomination based on my affiliation with him in both a personal and professional capacity. Certainly, his contributions to arts and culture are well known to many. However, I have worked directly with Mr. McKissic in his tenure as the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Senior Advisor to the Mayor for the City of Chattanooga from 2013-2018. His role for the City included linking diverse businesses to city government contracting opportunities, improving the City's supplier diversity efforts and working to promote justice inclusion and equity among the employees and citizenry of Chattanooga. Mr. McKissic is keenly adept in using his academic preparation, over 25 years of experience in nonprofit management and public service and his giftedness as a visual artist and cultural strategist to transform organizations and communities.

His accomplishments in the field of arts and culture are simply too lengthy to contain within a brief letter. While serving the City of Chattanooga, Mr. McKissic created the "Arts at City Hall Program" which opened City Hall as an art gallery to showcase visual art from diverse and multicultural artists and programs within Chattanooga. In addition, he created the "City Hall Summer Performance Series" to showcase the variety of music talent from the City and the region. During his tenure as Director, he strengthened ties with Chattanooga Sister Cities and facilitated lasting cultural exchanges whereby foreign delegation and local ethnic groups shared artwork, dance, food and music in City Hall and other local venues. His research of existing City Hall artifacts, fixtures and history led to a formalized "Tour of City Hall and City Hall Ambassador Program" which provided guided tours of City Hall led by city employees who he trained as docents. Fully embracing his gift as a painter, James used his influence to make sure that local artists of diverse cultural backgrounds were exposed to opportunities to be part of local and large-scale paid artist opportunities as well receive education on how to work with the City's Public

Art Office to compete for commissioned art projects. Always open for ways to celebrate and preserve artistry and history, James supported and coordinated the Chattanooga Readers and Writer's Fair to showcase the works of local authors and storytellers on the campus of City Hall as when local of three abandoned African American Cemeteries reached out to him for assistance, he established the African American Cemetery Preservation Fund.

James is a creator whether at work or play. Outside of work, he co-founded Jazzanooga, which started as a one-day event to celebrate the influence of Jazz music and grew to a month-long festival to include music education, preservation, and performances from local, regional and national acclaimed jazz artists. After many successful years, it was rebranded and expanded to become the nonprofit (RISE) Responsive Initiatives for Social Empowerment. An avid art collector, he also founded the Friends of African American Art which has collected funds for permanent collections at the Hunter Museum of American Art. The Sankofa Fund for Civic Engagement, a giving circle that he established to address the needs of the local community has collected nearly \$200,000 in arts and community needs such as purchasing school band equipment, books for school libraries, supplies, and fees for local arts camps for youth and more.

James is passionate about empowering communities and believes that the arts can help elevate, provide equity, and connect cultures. If he encounters a problem to which there is no remedy or a scene that needs a splash of vibrancy, he is ready to contribute his giftedness for the greater good. This is a natural calling for him and simply who he is and how he moves. These are just a few highlights of his handiwork and contributions to our State's rich tapestry. His connections are dynamic, eclectic, and electric and we are fortunate that he is a son of Tennessee.

Thank you for considering him for this distinction.

Sincerely,

Vanessa A. Jackson
Program Coordinator
City of Chattanooga Office of Multicultural Affairs



HunterMUSEUM

of American Art

10 Bluff View
Chattanooga, TN
37403-1197

tel 423.267.0968
fax 423.267.9844

huntermuseum.org

April 2, 2021

Re: Support Letter for Nomination of James McKissic

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my support of the nomination of James McKissic for the TAC TN Governor's Arts Award in Arts Leadership. Having been involved in the Chattanooga arts community for a number of years, I have witnessed the various roles James has played in advancing the arts in our region. An artist himself, James has made a career of centering the arts in all that he does.

I first worked with James when I was on the Chattanooga Public Art Committee and James served as the Chief Operating Officer of the Urban League of Greater Chattanooga. James understood the transformative impact public art could make on a community. He initiated and oversaw the installation of a Garry R. Bibbs sculpture on the front lawn of the Urban League offices. The sculpture now serves as a beacon and source of community pride for the neighborhood.

When he became the Director of Multicultural Affairs in the Mayor of Chattanooga's office, James was, among other things, very involved in the city's public art program and art programming at neighborhood recreation centers. James played a key role in more fully incorporating the public art program in the Mayor's Office. He has been involved for many years at the Hunter Museum, first as a member of the Friends of African American Art Committee and more recently as a member of the museum's Art Acquisition Committee and advising the museum's Black Professionals at the Hunter program.

After just one year as President of Arts Build, James has greatly expanded the scope of how Arts Build serves our community. Not only does it continue to raise critical operating funds for arts organizations, but Arts Build also serves as a valuable resource and advocate for them and for all the arts in Chattanooga. A skilled convenor, James has brought many new voices and perspectives to the table and has made advocacy, partnering and accessibility priorities in our community. The arts advocacy and resource building skills James brings to the organization have been so beneficial, especially this past year in which artists and arts organizations have been impacted so negatively.

The contributions James has made and continues to make to the arts in Chattanooga are substantial. It is my honor to support his nomination for the Tennessee Arts Commission Arts Leadership Award.

Sincerely,

Virginia Anne Sharber
Executive Director

Memphis Music Initiative

In 2014, (now Executive Director) Darren Isom, engaged a range of young people and community groups in the Memphis community with the express purpose of identifying youth and community arts education needs, from the perspective of the stakeholders themselves. That engagement culminated in a report on those needs—one which detailed a plan to align the city’s cultural legacy (Memphis music) with its most important asset (Memphis youth). The community stakeholders consulted became the budding initiative’s advisory group, ranging from youth, musicians, educators, and school leadership, to organizers, nonprofit founders, and local philanthropic leaders. That work caught the attention of an anonymous donor, and set the stage for the formation of the Memphis Music Initiative (MMI). Initially just designed as a five-year initiative, MMI has evolved into the city’s most diverse and innovative philanthropic, teaching artist, and youth development spaces in Memphis, as a long-term arts hub and convener.

Our work is visionary in its approach, and progressive in its execution. Our approach aims to reorient not just youth development as it is practiced within the city of Memphis, but also challenge and uproot traditional funding practices that otherwise preclude the sustainability of organizations already servicing Memphis’ poor and disenfranchised communities.

As a result, MMI uses music to address issues of access and participation, relationship building, and equity in a bidirectional and sustained way. It has incorporated an intentional variety of music engagement, including band, orchestra, choir, and hip-hop production. Such diversity allows responsiveness to the interests of youth, schools, and the community at large. Music education and programming become tools for youth development and community engagement, as opposed to products or commodities imposed upon—or inserted into—the community. MMI operates within the unique context of Memphis and Shelby County, Tennessee. The city and county have a profound impact on the mission, vision, and philosophy

of the organization. Many ongoing barriers in Memphis, including the socioeconomic climate, undermine youth success.

This is the work of the Memphis Music Initiative—to use investments in high-quality music engagement activities and organizations— with a specific focus on Memphis’s black, Latino, and traditionally underserved communities—to drive student, youth, and community outcomes, while building an equitable arts ecosystem that supports and sustains the creative class as a social justice and economic driver in our city.

How do we carry out this mission? We invest in two ways: through direct programs that connect youth to high-quality in-school, after school and summertime opportunities, and by providing funding and resources to advance organizations working with young people. Since our inception, we have used four primary strategies to encourage youth success:

1. MMI provides in-school time programming to sustain existing music education and expand high-quality instruction through partnerships with local musicians.
2. MMI provides a professionals skill building and career prep program for high school aged youth, providing them with paid internships at arts organizations and a professional development curriculum driving growth in personal communications, goal setting, arts appreciation, and understanding of community systems.
3. Through its Institute for Nonprofit Excellence, MMI identifies and supports music organizations serving black and brown children, supplying them with significant grants and other resources to help them enhance their operations and sustainability.
4. Through its Program Development Institute, MMI supports organizations in focusing on program quality for existing and emerging programs, to enhance the music engagement offerings available to black and brown youth.

In-schools Program

Our original direct program is our in-schools music engagement, which helps transform music classrooms into learning laboratories for personal development, growing student confidence and self-efficacy. The program pairs professional musicians (music fellows) across a wide range of genres with schools across four school systems in Memphis, to provide both enhanced music instruction to existing music programs and to provide music instruction in schools where there is no music programming. MMI also funds music related field trips for students in the school programs where we have music fellows. In 2019, we had 33 paid music fellows serving in 49 schools across Memphis, serving approximately 4,500 students. Our participant data reveals:

- 73% of students reported that working with the music fellow has helped them build confidence in their ability to learn about music.
- 74% of the surveyed students agree that working with the music fellow improved them as musicians.
- 76% of students agree that music fellows are positive role models.
- 70% of students report that working with music fellows make them want to continue learning about music.
- 78% of students agree that music fellows have helped them to increase their effort.

Our in-schools program positions a class of music mentors within the local arts ecosystem to the end of servicing Memphis' youth, and boosting Memphis' cultural legacy by retaining musical talent within the city.

MMI Works Program

Another critical direct services program is MMI Works. MMI Works creates paid summer opportunities for youth to work at music and arts organizations and offers equitable access to career training and professional/personal development. Returning interns can work multiple summers and build on their skills and career training and maintain professional relationships with worksites, which include local theaters, museums, and music studios.

Our extensive work with youth and arts organizations yields great responses from participating interns and partners. We host multiple touch-points with worksite partners to enhance the program quality and experience for incoming interns. Also, during our weekly professional development (PD) sessions with interns, we give young people a diverse curriculum that focuses on their socio-emotional growth and goal setting for future work, life, and community success. The program continues with additional PD sessions throughout the school year to reinforce the lessons learned throughout the summer intensive. The program makes critical partnerships within Memphis' arts ecosystem by engaging young people with long-standing arts organizations, and increases the number of trained young adults in arts-related career technical paths and nonprofit management fields.

Grants & Capacity Building

MMI invests to build strong and effective music organizations serving youth through operational grant funding and supports that foster sustainability and improve program quality.

MMI has worked with over 30 local music and arts organizations in our signature grantmaking and capacity building programs, the Institute for Nonprofit Excellence (INE) and the Program Development Institute (PDI). Our INE program provides unrestricted cash grants, consultant services, executive coaching, and a cohort model to selected participants. The PDI

provides grants, consultation, and program quality learning modules to participants. Notable results include:

- Grantees in the INE program saw a 49% increase in youth served through the first half of 2018.
- Participants in the Summer Beats program, a part of the PDI that supports summer arts programming for youth, saw a 54% increase in youth served in 2018.
- On average, INE grantees saw a 45% increase in new funding (beyond MMI's support) during the year, including sharp increases in individual support.

Serving as both a direct service provider and a community funder, MMI has the distinct advantage of understanding community need through its programming and responding to organizational and ecosystem needs through its grantmaking. There are few organizations in the country, and even fewer in the South, serving as a service provider and a funder, with a specialization in understanding the needs of black and brown led organizations.

Since 2016, MMI has given over \$2.6 million, thousands of hours of consultation, led over 40 cohort learning convenings, and most importantly, demonstrated that equity and trust based philanthropy can be successful for grant makers and grantees.

In recognition of our contributions to Memphis' music and arts community, we submit our organization, the Memphis Music Initiative, for consideration for the Tennessee Governor's Award for Arts Leadership in 2019.



HYDE FAMILY FOUNDATIONS

17 WEST PONTIOTOC AVENUE, SUITE 200 MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38103
901.685.3400 FAX 901.683.7478

To the Governor's Arts Awards Committee,

Not unlike many cities across our nation, the City of Memphis struggles with the usual difficulties such as poverty and the scarcity of resources that come with it. This scarcity makes its way into our schools in the form of the challenging choices principals must make when it comes to providing curriculum options for their students. Often, the arts are the first subject on the chopping block or the last topic added to the school. In Memphis' distressed communities of color, a student's access to the arts, specifically to music, remain scarce or non-existent. However, one of our partners, Memphis Music Initiative (MMI) made it their mission to address these inequities and provide high-quality music instruction to black and brown students within some of Memphis' most economically challenged neighborhoods.

The Hyde Foundation chose to support MMI not only because their work fills an essential gap in our overall arts education ecosystem but also because the organization's rigorous process allows students to receive the highest degree of music instruction. Additionally, the organization completes their work in 45 schools across the City at no cost to the schools.

MMI builds relationships with principals, with students, and with communities. The leaders of the organization embody the type of the authentic grassroots approach that imbues the neighborhoods they work within with something far beyond the quantifiable work MMI produces each year. The organization presents a different set of outcomes- hope, excitement, curiosity; the type of qualities that the Foundation cannot measure, but we can witness and feel in action.

Every single decision of Memphis Music Initiative occurs with the distinct purposes of supporting our students of color and disrupting a system that often fails them. In the City that gave the world Soul, Blues, and Rock n' Roll we owe our students much more than a school year devoid of music. The Hyde Foundation is forever grateful for the tenacity and leadership of Memphis Music Initiative, and we wholeheartedly and without a single reservation, support them in their application to receive the Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rachel Knox

Program Officer-Thriving Arts and Culture



May 28, 2019

Mr. Hal Partlow
Associate Director of Grants
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Ave
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Mr. Partlow:

As Chief Executive Officer of Momentum Nonprofit Partners, I am writing this letter to express my support of Memphis Music Initiative (MMI) and to endorse their nomination for the Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

Memphis Music Initiative is a significant and positive force in our community. The organization invests in youth development through transformative music engagement. They help sustain existing in-school music education and expand instruction. The organization's out-of-school programs reach even more youth and remove barriers to youth engagement and participation. They are dedicated to creating equitable opportunities for youth of color in Memphis.

MMI has played an important role in setting a higher standard for equity amongst Memphis nonprofits. They have served as a thought leader and a model for other organizations seeking to center community voice and drive diversity, equity, and inclusion. In a very short time, less than five years, they have become an invaluable addition to the arts nonprofit sector in Memphis as a funder, a creative youth development center, and an exemplar of equity in programming, governance, and operations.

I'd be happy to answer any questions or discuss my recommendation further. I can be reached at (901) 726-5725 x128.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Dean", written in a cursive style.

Keven Dean, CEO
Momentum Nonprofit Partners

To Whom It May Concern:

I am extremely honored to offer my support of the Memphis Music Initiative. After working with them for over three years and being a part of their first Institute for Nonprofit Excellence cohort, I can proudly say that they are most deserving of the TN Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership. Their support and programming have been extremely impactful to my organization and my growth as a leader. MMI offers much more than funding. They provide training, an executive coach, and other support services that are sure to influence Stax Music Academy for years to come.

At SMA, we aim to change lives through music and holistically equip the next generation of Soul Communicators to positively impact the world. One barrier to touching more lives has been a lack of musical experience, particularly in regard to instrumental music. Last year we realized we were missing an opportunity to reach students who could not afford to purchase their own instruments and/or whose schools offer little or no music instruction. MMI equipped us to bridge this gap by funding STAX 101, a beginner group lesson program for fifth- to ninth-grade students. This September, Stax 101 will provide students the opportunity to learn a new instrument and eventually matriculate into one of our eight ensembles. We are so excited to welcome a new group of students into the Stax family and increase access to our program!

Funding was only a portion of what SMA gained as a part of the Institute for Nonprofit Excellence. MMI also provided trainings every month that contributed to our overall operational growth. One training in particular, Critical Program Questions, helped us tackle some very tough but necessary questions about our work. It led us to evaluate current programming, ideal participant subgroups, and capacity on a much deeper level. Subsequent discussions helped us be more thoughtful in building our new programs and zone in on the intersection of what we do well and community need. The Measuring Outcomes training session also helped us take a more strategic look at program effectiveness. It gave us a solid start on collecting the right data for our organization and provided some free resources we could use immediately.

MMI went yet another step further and provided executive coaching in between sessions. It was the number one aspect of the program that worked extremely well in support of us meeting our goals and enabled us to get the most out of module trainings. Having a confidante to bounce ideas off of and talk through some of the tougher questions raised during our module trainings was priceless. It also helped me grow in my new role as director.

MMI did not stop there. They were very communicative and most of all, *listened* to our organizational needs. This is something I have never experienced. Most funders give organizations money and only check in at the end of the grant term for reporting purposes. MMI was with us every step of the way. After speaking with their staff and expressing our data challenges, MMI provided an expert data consultant to help us measure our impact. I truly believe this work will take our organization to the next level. Knowing which programs are working and why will greatly equip us with making

programmatic decisions in the future, and being equipped with accurate data will help us tell a more compelling story for funding and community engagement opportunities.

In addition to helping us bolster our data collection, they also helped us with some Visioning and Core Value work with Jen Frank. The decision-making framework we developed specifically helped, and will continue to help, us set priorities and remain focused on what is truly important. It has furthermore given us more confidence in managing our resources. In the past, SMA accepted the majority of performance requests, which hurt the organization professionally and strained limited resources. More importantly, the resulting rigorous schedule negatively affected student and staff energy, grades, and stamina. With the combination of our training sessions and work with MMI consultants, I am confident that we will be able to look back on the 2017-2018 calendar and know exactly *why* we took on every project and be able to accurately measure the *effectiveness* of each project.

My INE cohort in itself was also a blessing. I have truly enjoyed connecting with other nonprofits and hearing their stories. We have been able to support each other's events, brainstorm a few collaborative projects, and learn a lot from each other in the process. As a new director, I feel lucky to have a cohort of people who support and understand issues surrounding the nonprofit music education field.

In closing, MMI's Institute for Nonprofit Excellence gave us not only the funds needed to expand, but also trained us to be more strategic about all of our programming. Their words and actions prove a genuine concern for the overall health of our organization and the arts community at large. Our story is only one of countless others that demonstrate Memphis Music Initiative's dedication and acumen for arts advancement. I wholeheartedly support their nomination for the TN Governor's Arts Award for Arts Leadership.

Adrianna Christmas
Music Director
Downtown Church
35 Union Ave.
Memphis, TN 38103
(219) 614-3676
adrianna@downtownchurch.com

Over the course of last summer I was given the opportunity to participate in the Memphis Music Initiative summer internship program, and I can honestly say it has been the most memorable two months ever. I would've never thought I could have so much fun with a group of people as much as I did with my colleagues. From concerts to movies to even hanging out on our own time we've only grown closer as the summer progressed. We are all so different, but all so alike in the same instance. This group of people I have been so fortunate to meet have become more than just coworkers and colleagues, they've become friends.

For the summer, MMI placed me with the STAX Museum of American Soul Music. I was a little skeptical going in on my first day because our job overview described how we would every now and then help with the tours that came in throughout the day. Talking in front of people has never been a strong suit of mine so the thought of me speaking in front of groups of people a day was definitely not my favorite part of the job. A couple weeks into the job I began getting comfortable with the museum and all the information in it, so when the time for me to talk did come I was more comfortable. Luckily for me we rarely helped with the tours that came in.

While being at STAX I've learned so much about the music industry, the artists, and even what goes on beyond the scenes, things that an audience never gets to see. Working at STAX was basically a backstage pass to R&B music from the 50's to the present day. My favorite part of the job had to be working in the back with all the archives and old photographs, it was very calming to be in the back and you'd be surprised by all the interesting things we come across. I was able to travel to Royal Studios thanks to my supervisors and see the recording studio of the late Willie Mitchell. I was able to meet one of his daughters and his grandson that still works out of his studio. I wasn't aware until we got there that Bruno Mars had actually recorded in that very studio. Being able to go to there not only with STAX but also other places with the rest of my colleagues was amazing because I've lived in Memphis for 17 years and most of the places they took us to I've never even heard of. It was like being a tourist in my home town.

MMI creates a unique environment that allows students to do a deep dive into their passion and really get a feel for the types of situations they'll encounter if they stick with that chosen career. By placing us at different nonprofits around the city, we learn first-hand what it is like to work at the heart of the city. Our day to day environment is typically centered around our interests, whether it be visual arts or performance arts, this program provides an original experience that focuses on our talents and helps us to better navigate through life.

I am more than thankful for everything MMI has done for me. It was amazing to have supervisors and employers that think of us as young adults instead of kids coming to

work for the summer. They uphold us to the same responsibilities as any other employee and that made the experience much more authentic. I've learned so much from not only my worksite but from the people around me. I have no doubt that all the professional advice and support I've gotten this summer will carry on with me throughout my last year of high school and my upcoming years in college. For all of these reasons, I think MMI should win the Tennessee Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

Respectfully,

Amiya Reed
Grade 12
MMI Works Intern

Memphis Music Initiative



Memphis Equity Through Arts (dba Memphis Music Initiative, or MMI) respectfully requests consideration for the Governor’s Arts Leadership Award as a West Tennessee leader in arts service and creative youth development.

Memphis Music Initiative (MMI) invests in youth through transformative music engagement, creating equitable opportunities for Black and brown youth in Memphis. MMI invests in two ways: through direct programs that connect youth to high-quality in-school, after-school, and summertime music engagement opportunities, and by providing resources to grassroots and community music programs serving Black and brown youth. These programs help strengthen the local arts ecosystem and ensure that Memphis’ young people always have access to quality arts programming regardless of their zip code.

Using Black and brown creative liberation as our guiding principle and curricular core, MMI cultivates a thriving arts and culture ecosystem that enhances the quality of life of residents, provides critical developmental opportunities for Black and brown youth, and serves the community health and vibrancy of our region.

MMI encourages young people to become creatively immersed in their past, critically engaged in the present, and more able to determine their future through the power of music and arts. We aim to create a classroom in which young people recognize and

acknowledge the challenges of current systems, yet feel equipped with the skills, agency, creativity, and liberation mindset to disrupt these systems for the benefit of self and community. We recognize that a civil and just society requires a multiplicity of voices and that the development of creative thinking, expression, and liberation in our young people is one key pathway to its fulfillment.

Our three primary programs operate year-round. The In-School program, led by an all-BIPOC team, matches working musicians with schools needing music professionals to supplement classroom programs. Our music engagement Fellows work closely with school partners to tailor the Black and brown creative liberation and other instructional curricula and field experiences to the needs of the students served. Fellows work with their classes over ten months, forming important mentoring relationships and encouraging students to pursue additional music opportunities during the summer. They also receive coaching and monthly professional development to help them navigate a pathway to sustainability as a working musician, teaching professional, or organizational leader. Our In-School Fellowship allows students (90% BIPOC and 81% from low-income families) to interact with, and be mentored by, a diverse group (72% BIPOC) of professional musicians.

MMI Works, led and executed by two Black women, creates paid summer opportunities for youth (97% BIPOC), grades 10-12, to work at music and arts organizations and offers career training and professional/personal development. Our students have paid summer internships at leading arts venues in Memphis, from Stax Museum to the Cloud 901 music studio. Participants attend weekly professional development workshops with youth-led

creative curricula that engage the mind and the creative spirit, and develop community involvement and leadership. Topics span from the role of music in civil rights activism, to Afrofuturism, to career-journey mapmaking. Importantly, our weekly sessions give our students a chance to bond with other young creatives in a peer learning environment outside of school, and work together to build connections bridging their school and work experiences and personal, professional, and leadership development.

During the 2020 program, participants also had the opportunity to participate in a discipline-specific creative track (instrumental, vocal, music production, creative writing, dance, visual art, film and video) to enhance opportunities to create self-led art during virtual programming. The final projects they created held a mirror and a microphone to the world of young Memphians of color: young women in the creative writing track generated thoughtful responses on colorism; youth in the vocal track recorded powerful performances on radical self-love; and students in the production track created an EP of songs addressing police brutality and the school-to-prison pipeline.

MMI's Grantmaking and Capacity Building program, also led and managed by two Black women, invests to build strong and effective organizations led by and/or serving Black and brown communities through grant funding and technical assistance that fosters organizational sustainability and improves program quality. We strive to build a sustainable Black arts ecosystem serving Memphis youth and ensure that small organizations, often the only ones providing free or low-cost camps, classes, and lessons in their neighborhoods, do not remain chronically undercapitalized.

MMI has a full-time Data, Evaluation, and Research Manager on staff who develops and executes evaluation metrics and methodologies for each of our programs. The Data, Evaluation, and Research Manager completes a comprehensive assessment and report including suggestions for improvement following every program cycle.

For the In-School program, surveys are conducted with students on our teaching artist Fellows' impact on musical skill building, teamwork, confidence, and persistence.

For MMI Works, pre- and post- surveys are conducted with participants on metrics including communication, active listening, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, an evaluator observes conversation in the form of a debate with questions designed to test youth awareness of and engagement with systemic issues.

The Grantmaking and Capacity Building program has a rubric of metrics that we track and measure for internal performance as well as partner performance. With each participating organization, we assist in setting and tracking goals and conducting regular progress reporting.

We consider our three programs to be interdependent and mutually reinforcing; further, we approach our leadership position in the community with the same spirit. MMI operates as a hub between school systems, arts organizations, youth service agencies, the philanthropic community, and individual musicians, teaching artists, and young creatives.

In six years of operation, we have become a trusted resource for these stakeholders, and have emerged as a leading voice for creative workforce development and youth investment in Memphis and West Tennessee.

In our first six years, we have seen individual-level change within our youth cohorts, and community-level change through organizational partners as we position them, and ourselves, for sustainability. What we are striving for in the years to come is systems-level change that brings Memphis and West Tennessee closer to the Beloved Community we wish to see by and for our young people. We thank you for your consideration.





April 28, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Committee Members:

As Chief Executive Officer of Momentum Nonprofit Partners, I am writing this letter to express my support of Memphis Music Initiative (MMI) and to endorse their nomination for the Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

Memphis Music Initiative is a significant positive force and leader in our community. The organization invests in creative youth development through transformative music engagement. They help sustain existing in-school music education and expand instruction. The organization's out-of-school programs reach even more youth and remove barriers to youth engagement and participation. They are dedicated to creating equitable opportunities for youth of color in Memphis and ensuring that zip code is no obstacle to access or engagement for any young person.

MMI has played an important role in setting a higher standard for equity amongst Memphis nonprofits. They have served as a thought leader and a model for other organizations seeking to center community voice and drive diversity, equity, and inclusion. In a very short time, they have become an invaluable addition to the arts nonprofit sector in Memphis as a funder, a creative youth development center, and an exemplar of equity in programming, governance, and operations.

I'd be happy to answer any questions or discuss my recommendation further. I can be reached at (901) 726-5725 x128.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Dean", written in a cursive style.

Keven Dean, CEO
Momentum Nonprofit Partners



April 24, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Committee Members:

As a current board member and community partner in creative youth development (representing The Orpheum Theatre Group) in Memphis, I am writing this letter to express my support for Memphis Music Initiative (MMI) and to endorse their nomination for the Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

MMI is truly an arts leader in our community and state, serving over 4,000 young people each year, with a focus on improving Black and brown students' equitable access to high quality music engagement in both in- and out-of-school programs. Further, MMI partners with small grassroots creative youth development organizations through a grantmaking and capacity building program. These partner programs are often the only providers of low- or no-cost locally-based music and performing arts camps, clinics, and performances in their areas, and serve an additional 4,500 youth combined each year. MMI's three core programs are mutually reinforcing and work in tandem to ensure that young Memphians of color have a robust array of options for accessible and affordable arts-based engagement where they live and attend school.

Memphis Music Initiative leads by example – always challenging ideas and practices around who gets to be an artist, whose voice is heard in a position of authority in education, and who deserves high quality artistic output as audience members. MMI achieves this by demanding more for our students – partnering them with other young creatives or sending them on virtual field trips to Lincoln Center. MMI also provides nationally recognized professional development for teaching artist Fellows and organizational partners.

As a convener and thought leader, MMI amplifies the voices of often under-the-radar or overlooked organizations and fights for equity and parity in investment and opportunity by leading a coalition of creative youth development programs led by and serving constituents of color– from start-up programs run out of church basements to the storied Memphis Black Arts Alliance and Blues City Cultural Center.

I serve on the board of MMI, not only because I believe in the work that they are doing, but also because of how and why they are doing it. This is an organization with a deep commitment to the students and communities it is serving, that is always pushing to innovate, elevate, and transform through the power of the arts, and it is my honor to be a part of this work.

Should you have any questions or require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached via email at mcgrath@orpheum-memphis.com or at 901.529.4243.

Sincerely,

Jennifer McGrath

Vice President of Education & Community Engagement, Orpheum Theatre Group
MMI Board Member

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Committee Members:

As a participant in the MMI Works Summer Internship program, I am writing this letter to express my support for Memphis Music Initiative (MMI) and their nomination for the Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

Being a young, black creative is not always easy. That is why being able to be a part of something as amazing as the summer internship with Memphis Music Initiative is so important to me. Joining the MMI Works program allowed me to learn and experience things I would have never had the opportunity- let alone thought of doing. I was able to better my practice of visual arts while learning about other career paths, as well. I am fortunate enough to have gone through this experience, and I couldn't have asked for a better group of people to have done this with.

At the beginning of the summer I was to report to Cloud 901's art studio in Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library and attend Professional Development (PD) days with the MMI cohort. I was nervous. While I previously had a job or two, I had never had the opportunity to work in an atmosphere centered around the arts. It seemed like a dream come true, and I soon found out that it was exactly that. On my first day, my colleagues and I were to brainstorm concepts we would like to execute. Said concepts were to be displayed in the Cloud 901's art gallery. We all realized that we had a great deal of ideas in common, causing us to become more comfortable with each other. Although everyone had similar suggestions, we had to work together to narrow them down. This is something I have struggled with in my art, so doing this repeatedly is something I am grateful for. I also became more comfortable accepting criticism due to the easygoing environment. Working in Cloud 901 taught me the essentials of being an artist, such as how to create an interesting composition or how to properly hang and display my work.

MMI Works pushed me out of my comfort zone, albeit rather slowly- but slow and steady wins the race. Being shy by nature, I appreciated this tremendously. During PD Days I began to connect with people who were actually my age *and* share the same passion for the arts. It was like I had stepped into a utopia. On these specific days, I started to acquire skills in workplace etiquette, presentation skills, and many more things of that nature. Of course these skills are necessities, but they weren't the lessons that were imprinted in my mind. Those happened to be the constant introspection that I was forced into. Questions were always being posed that more often than not required rumination. My colleagues and I would have to think back on why we did various things a certain way, and discuss whether it was beneficial to anyone. Reflecting upon these discussions, I would advise any new, or old, interns to take these sessions seriously and always speak your mind.

While this internship has come to an end, the knowledge I was able to obtain will stick with me until the end of time. The same sentiment extends to my supervisors, colleagues, and anyone I met along this

incredible phenomenal journey. I am grateful for every single moment of this program, from walking to our destination in the sweltering southern heat to painting inside the air-conditioned library. The Memphis Music Initiative summer internship has allowed me to change myself and my environment, and that is why I recommend them for this award.

Sincerely,

Tya Arnold
MMI Works program participant

Orpheum Theatre Group

There has been a theatre at the iconic intersection of Main and Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee for over 100 years. From vaudeville to Broadway and from the Great Depression to a global pandemic, the Orpheum Theatre Group (comprised of the Orpheum Theatre and the Halloran Centre for Performing Arts & Education) is a story of resilience and reinvention, continuity and creativity, adaptability, and artistic excellence. Its impact is personified through its history and the patrons, artists, staff, volunteers, students, teachers, donors, tourists, and families it has welcomed through its doors and on its stages.

On the site of a former coal yard, the Grand Opera House was born in 1890 presenting some of the best entertainment outside of New York City to the South. After joining the vaudeville Orpheum Circuit in 1907, the Grand was renamed the Orpheum. In 1923, a fire irreparably destroyed the theatre and four years later, a new Orpheum was constructed on that same corner – the building that remains to this day. This theatre was the largest in the circuit and featured brocade draperies, crystal chandeliers, gilded moldings, and a Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ. As the popularity of vaudeville waned, the building was sold to Malco, presenting first-run movies on its big screen until 1976. Less than 50 years after its revival, the theatre was in danger of demolition. A group of concerned citizens formed the Memphis Development Foundation to save the theatre in hopes of kick-starting a downtown reawakening. After purchasing the building in 1977, the group renamed the building the Orpheum.

By 2011, community and educational programming had reached more students, teachers, and families than the Orpheum could accommodate. To create space for these burgeoning programs, plans were drawn up for a new education facility adjacent to the theatre. A capital campaign was launched and in 2015, the Halloran Centre for Performing Arts &

Education opened - named for outgoing President & CEO Pat Halloran who had served for 35 years. This 39,000-square-foot facility featured a 361-seat theatre, classrooms, and multi-use event spaces that would be used for education programs and a new entertainment series called *On Stage at the Halloran Centre* presenting artists like Booker T. Jones, Mary Wilson, Pam Tillis, Rodney Crowell, and more.

After Halloran's retirement, Brett Batterson was named President & CEO. Under his leadership, the Memphis Development Foundation rebranded as the Orpheum Theatre Group and created a new mission statement: *The mission of the Orpheum Theatre Group is to enhance the communities we serve by utilizing the performing arts to entertain, educate, and enlighten while preserving the historic Orpheum Theatre and the Halloran Centre for Performing Arts & Education.*

Guided by this new mission, the Orpheum continues to make impactful gains in the areas of entertainment, education, and preservation.

In an average year, the Orpheum Theatre Group welcomes over 250,000 guests annually for concerts, comedians, Broadway shows, dance, special events, and more. Presenting nearly 60 Broadway seasons to date, the Orpheum has brought the best of Broadway to West Tennessee including most recently the state's premiere of the Broadway smash hit HAMILTON. According to a study done by The Broadway League in 2016, on average Broadway tours generate an economic impact of 3.27 times the gross tickets sales to a local metropolitan area's economy. Meaning that for the sold-out run of HAMILTON alone, the Orpheum had an economic impact in excess of \$21 million on the local economy by way of restaurant patronage,

hotel stays, and more. The total economic impact of the Orpheum Theatre Group exceeds \$38 million annually. While Broadway has been the Orpheum's bread and butter since 1984, the Orpheum has also brought in some of the biggest and most iconic artists and institutions in the world of entertainment including in recent memory Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, John Mellencamp, Willie Nelson, Jerry Seinfeld, The Beach Boys, Gladys Knight and so many more. The Orpheum has been the site of special events like the National Civil Rights Museum Freedom Award and the International Blues Challenge finals.

Additionally, the Orpheum Theatre Group regularly collaborates with other local arts organizations such as Ballet Memphis, Opera Memphis, and Hattiloo Theatre. As the largest performing arts organization in the city with an average operating budget of \$20 million, the Orpheum Theatre Group is a leader in the local arts and culture sector. In 2016 Orpheum President & CEO Brett Batterson formed the Memphis Cultural Coalition – a round table for leaders of arts and culture organizations to gather and exchange ideas.

Since the late 90s, the Orpheum has provided programming to equip and encourage youth in Memphis through the performing arts. On average the Orpheum welcomes over 40,000 students, teachers, and families a year through workshops, classes, camps, and family friendly performances. While some programs foster future artists other recently developed programs strive to shape and impact the lives of youth whether they plan on a career in the performing arts or not. Mending Hearts Camp, a performing arts camp for children who have experienced the death of one or both parents, and Camp SAY Across the USA: Memphis – a day camp for young people who stutter – are examples of the Orpheum's utilization of the performing arts to meet the needs of the Mid-South community at large. Programs like Listen

Up! and From Where I Stand use filmmaking and live performance to champion the stories of youth in their own words. Since 2010, the Orpheum High School Musical Theatre Awards has supported, promoted, and enhanced high school musical theatre. This program is part of The Jimmy Awards®, the national high school musical theatre awards program produced by The Broadway League. Other programs focused on training and equipping local artists and educators include the Teaching Artist Training Program and the Kennedy Center Partners in Education partnership that bring arts integration into classrooms across the city. The important work that comes out of the Orpheum's Education & Community Engagement department also connects the Orpheum Theatre Group to partners such as the Refugee Empowerment Program and Shelby County Schools.

Another vital tenet to the Orpheum's mission is preservation – a commitment to the historical integrity of the 92-year-old Orpheum Theatre. In 1977, the Orpheum Theatre became one of the first buildings in Memphis to be added to the National Register of Historic Places. Through regular upkeep and maintenance, the Orpheum preserves the theatre's 1928 splendor while also accommodating the needs of modern audiences. The Orpheum most recently raised money to restore the theatre's Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ original to the building – one of only 12 organs worldwide still housed in their original theatres.

Even when the world stopped in March 2020 and the arts were forced to take an extended intermission that shuttered theatres across the world, the Orpheum Theatre Group has continued to work to engage its audiences during this uncertain and critical time. From pivoting education programs to the virtual space to creating a Broadway themed mini-golf course on its empty stage, to using underutilized spaces of the campus to create a new outdoor

concert series, the Orpheum is not afraid to be creative and try new things when faced with unprecedented challenges.

The Orpheum has been in the memory making business for nearly a century. As a leading player in some of the most important milestones in people's lives – weddings, first dates, birthdays, anniversaries - the Orpheum Theatre Group will continue to be a part of the fabric of Memphis history for generations to come.

I salute the previous winners of the Governor's Arts Awards and I am honored to put forth the Orpheum Theatre Group as a nominee to join this distinguished list. Thank you for your consideration of this nomination. For more information on the Orpheum Theatre Group's history and current list of programming, please visit orpheum-memphis.com.



JIM STRICKLAND
MAYOR

March 31, 2021

To the Members of the Governor's Arts Awards Committee:

It is my honor to recommend the Orpheum Theatre Group in Memphis, Tennessee as a nominee for the 2021 Arts Leadership Award as part of the Governor's Arts Awards.

The Arts Leadership Award is "presented to individuals or organizations who have demonstrated significant contributions which have impacted or advanced the value of the arts in Tennessee." The Orpheum Theatre Group undoubtedly has made a lasting impact on the presentation and cultivation of the arts in Memphis, the state of Tennessee and throughout the Mid-South.

The Orpheum is an iconic cultural and historical landmark, and the Orpheum Theatre Group is a premier nonprofit performing arts organization. They provide quality entertainment, including the biggest shows from Broadway and some of the most legendary names in entertainment, as well as transformational education and community engagement programming.

The addition of the Halloran Centre for Performing Arts and Education, now in its sixth year, provides an intimate 361-seat theatre along with educational facilities. These additional facilities are a hub for creative programming designed to better the lives of Mid-South youth through the transformative power of the performing arts.

The Orpheum Theatre Group has been a unique part of our entertainment history since 1928, and continues to entertain, educate and enlighten generations of Tennesseans. It is truly deserving of the 2021 Arts Leadership Award, and I appreciate your favorable consideration of this nomination.

Sincerely,

Jim Strickland
Mayor, City of Memphis



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March 25, 2021

CHARLOTTE ST. MARTIN
PRESIDENT

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COUNSEL

JEFFREY A. HORWITZ, ESQ.
BERNARD M. PLUM, ESQ.

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

It is with pleasure that I write a letter of support for The Orpheum Theatre Group to receive a nomination for the Arts Leadership Award for the 2021 Governor's Arts Awards from the Tennessee Arts Commission. The Orpheum Theatre is a shining beacon of light for the arts in Memphis, the state of Tennessee, and the entire country.

The Orpheum Theatre's values and mission illustrate the ability to spread arts awareness throughout the State. In addition to hosting Broadway musicals and performing artists of all genres, the education programs at the Orpheum and Halloran Centre provide arts learning and engagement to students of all ages across the entire Mid-South.

The Orpheum Theatre Group is a prominent and productive Member of The Broadway League. They have received many awards here in New York including three Tony Awards® with the Independent Presenters Network for *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Spamalot*, and *The Band's Visit*. The Orpheum itself also received a Tony Award for *MEMPHIS the Musical* in 2010 and launched the first National Tour in Memphis.

The highly renowned volunteer usher program, Friends of the Orpheum (FOTO), received our Star of Touring Broadway Award in 2017 at the Spring Road Conference held in New York City. Since 2010, they have hosted the Orpheum High School Musical Theatre Awards which bring students from all over the Mid-South for the chance to compete to attend the Broadway League's National High School Musical Theatre Awards®, also known as the Jimmy Awards®. Their regional program nominees have received several awards presented by the Jimmy Awards over the years including Special Recognition Scholarships and multiple Finalist Scholarships.

The Orpheum Theatre is an organization that exemplifies what it is to be a Leader in the arts both locally and nationally. Thank you for your consideration of this recognition.

Sincerely,

Charlotte St. Martin



Elizabeth Rouse
President & CEO

March 25, 2021

Governor Bill Lee and Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Governor Lee and the Arts Awards Committee,

Executive Committee

On behalf of ArtsMemphis and the Memphis arts community, I am honored to submit this letter of support for the Orpheum Theatre Group, nominee for the 2021 Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

Pat Danehy
Board Chair

Kathy Gale Uhlhorn
Vice Chair

A historic cornerstone of downtown Memphis for decades, the Orpheum Theatre Group is committed to the communities they serve. While the original theatre, built in 1928, continues its classic elegance with theatre-for-all Broadway shows, the Halloran Centre has allowed the Orpheum Theatre Group to expand its partnerships and programming.

Greg Baudoin
Trow Gillespie
Bruce B. Hopkins
Lucy Lee
Jon Moorehead
Russ Wigginton
Gary Wunderlich

Their educational programs reach thousands of students all over the mid-south, particularly those in need. Some of their programs include:

- Mending Heart Camp, for youth who have experienced the death of one or both parents.
- Camp SAY, a free camp for students with a stutter.
- Arts Recharge, theatre exercises to help students focus during their school day.
- Free matinee performances for low-income schools.

Oscar Adams
Bo Allen
C. David Biggers, Jr.
Michael Campanaro
Bill Carkeet
Kate Connell
Bob Craddock
Maysey Craddock
Michael Drake
Greg Fletcher
Martin Hand
Whitney Hardy
Mary Hopkins
Dianne Mall
Juanita Ortiz
Reginald R. Paige, Sr.
Ashley Patterson
Ron Walter

The Teaching Artist Training Program trains local artists and educators to leverage their artistic practice in creating high-quality instruction and facilitation for youth. Through hundreds of trained artists, The Orpheum Group has expanded the opportunities for artists and the capacity of art education in the Mid-South.

The Orpheum Theatre Group continues to highlight youth and professional theatre talent in the Mid-South. The High School Musical Theatre Awards recognizes achievements in all areas of high school musical theatre and brings together hundreds of students from all over the region to share their talents and collaborate with one another. The Orpheum Theatre Group also hosts the Ostrander Awards, which celebrate the collegiate and professional talents in the Greater Memphis Community.

As a leader in the cultural sector of Memphis, the Orpheum Theatre Groups' President and CEO Brett Batterson formed the Cultural Coalition, a group built on creating racial equity and justice in the cultural sector. This is one on many examples of the Orpheum's leadership and role as serving as an anchor arts institution in the Mid-South.

The Memphis community continues to be led by The Orpheum Theatre Group's example. As a leader in arts education, community partnerships and collaboration, I can think of no better organization to nominate for the Governor's Award.

With gratitude for your consideration.

Elizabeth Rouse

ArtsMemphis[®]
Powering Authentic Assets.



March 22, 2021

To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to recommend the Orpheum Theatre Group for the 2021 Governor's Arts Award from the state of Tennessee. I am the President of Memphis Tourism, an organization responsible for marketing and promoting all things Memphis to the world and a financial supporter of the Orpheum for over 20 years.

The directors and staff are committed to improving lives through the performing arts to entertain, educate and enlighten while preserving the historic Orpheum Theatre and the Halloran Centre for Performing Arts and Education.

This organization provides a world-class venue that brings all sectors of the community together exposing them to all aspects of the performing arts including dance, music, and theater. It provides workshops, camps, and training programs that inspire up and coming artists who otherwise might not have the opportunity to expand their talents.

The positive impact that the Orpheum Theatre Group serves to Memphis and the surrounding area by providing inclusivity, integrity and innovation through the performing arts and is a priceless commodity benefiting not only the present generation of local artists but generations of artists to come.

We are honored to nominate the Orpheum Theatre Group for this year's award. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Kane". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kevin Kane
President & CEO

Dear Tennessee Arts Commission Staff and Commissioners,

I submit this letter in support of the nomination of The Orpheum Theater Group for the Arts Leadership Award. The Orpheum has had a long and vibrant history of promoting the arts in Tennessee through presentations of world-class live performances to our community.

I remember when The Orpheum started bringing Broadway Shows to its stage in the late 1970's. This was very exciting and played a pivotal role in revitalizing downtown Memphis. Over the years my family has enjoyed and continues to enjoy innumerable performances at the Orpheum. As our children were growing up my husband and I regularly took them to Broadway shows, concerts, and ballets for their enjoyment and to experience the arts. The Orpheum is enriching the lives of our family.

The Orpheum has had a tremendous impact on the arts in our community since 1890 with music, theater, and dance performances. The opening of The Halloran Center in 2015 expanded their facilities to increase its educational opportunities.

The Orpheum is an iconic treasure for the State of Tennessee with a national reputation and unmatched legacy. Its beautiful features and beaming Broadway lights glow on Main Street in Memphis as a beacon for the arts.

Warmest regards,

Lisa Bobango

Bobango4@gmail.com

901-763-2970

Oz Arts



**OZ ARTS 2021
NOMINATION GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARDS**

As Nashville and Tennessee's only contemporary performance and arts non-profit organization, OZ Arts has established its unique creative warehouse as a major national and regional laboratory for artistic experimentation, and a home for contemporary dance and performance. More than 50,000 audience members have been introduced to adventurous artists from around the world, and hundreds of local and regional artists have used OZ's 10,000 sq.ft. warehouse theater to develop new works. As a risk-taking incubator for innovation, OZ focuses on artists who reflect our diverse society, utilize new technology in creative ways, and provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with audiences, students and cultural and civic leaders.

OZ Arts entered Tennessee's diverse cultural landscape by launching the inaugural season of contemporary, interdisciplinary artistic programs in February 2014. OZ Arts is located in West Nashville, a 15-minute drive from downtown Nashville. OZ Arts works to fulfill its mission to support the creation, development and presentation of significant performing and visual art works by leading artists whose contribution influences the advancement of their field.

RECENT BACKGROUND

OZ was at a crucial and exciting turning point when the organization's 7th season of contemporary performances was halted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (preceded by facility damage from the March 2020 tornado) and featured more than 30 performances of 14 unique programs, half of which were premieres developed by local artists or regional guest artists from Florida, Kentucky and East Tennessee. The OZ Arts 2019-20 season, the first season curated by new Artistic and Executive Director Mark Murphy, reimagined and

expanded many of its programs, and revamped its business models, to focus on further supporting infrastructure for diverse artists in the region, with a unique mix of producing, presenting, and collaboration, while also increasing access by lowering ticket prices and enhancing off-site engagement activities. The programming more than doubled, despite the season being cut short, with more than 100 diverse regional artists engaged in premiering risk-taking work, and OZ Arts' hosting its first international artists from Brazil, Chile, and Japan. Most ticket prices were cut by half, yet earned income and number of audience members more than doubled due to strategic pricing, collaborative outreach, and dynamic programs and educational initiatives. Income streams diversified in the refreshed business model, and bold pilot initiatives were launched to address growth, stability, resilience and flexibility. OZ increased the number of performances by more than 300% compared to any previous season, and presented diverse free, accessible programs at off-site community locations, ranging from Tennessee Performing Arts Center to Plaza Mariachi, to multiple schools.

Since March 2020, OZ Arts has built capacity for online programming, live-streaming of events, and other virtual events to build on the success of OZ's initial forays into using live-streaming and video production. OZ had success with the May online video premiere, when performances of THIS HOLDING had to be "reimagined for the camera." Nearly 5,000 people viewed the work online, and many made donations. OZ has continued to produce 'virtual' work as part of our programs and our educational partnerships with schools teaching remotely, including virtual presentations by world class artists like Taylor Mac and Chicago's Manual Cinema as well as an online library of virtual educational videos integrating the arts into STEM subjects, distributed in partnership with MNPS. OZ will be incorporating virtual distribution into its programs long-term, increasing accessibility for patrons who may choose to watch events remotely.

THE ART, ARTISTS & AUDIENCES

OZ Arts sees its expansive warehouse in West Nashville as a creative laboratory for the region, and a vital resource for the field of contemporary dance, performance, music and media arts. In addition to

opportunities for many local artists, OZ Arts' last season incubated and premiered new work by Florida choreographer Rosie Herrera, Kentucky composer Moksha Sommer, and a Memphis-based music/multimedia team helmed by Wilco's Pat Sansone. Audiences hail from throughout Tennessee, and from at least six nearby states, including significant numbers from Kentucky, Alabama, and Georgia.

OZ has commissioned and premiered collaborative performance works that are now being presented throughout the country, including at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Kennedy Center, and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. OZ resident artists New Dialect, who have premiered four world premiere programs at OZ Arts since both organizations started in 2014, are 1 of 5 dance companies chosen for the inaugural year of South Arts' Momentum program and are preparing for regional and national touring.

Most artists championed by OZ are working outside of the predominantly Western European traditions of classical music, dance, and theater to highlight work influenced by such contemporary forms as Hip hop, jazz, percussive dance, and African-American spirituals, as well as post-modern dance and experimental theater. Dance programming has ranged from a Brazilian company merging Afro-Brazilian and Hip hop forms (Companhia Urbana de Danca), to the narrative dance-theater of Kyle Abraham, the contemporary tap of Michelle Dorrance, and the postmodern movement of Trisha Brown. Multimedia work has included Chilean visual theater ensemble TeatroCinema, Japanese video and dance artist Hiroaki Umeda, media and puppetry collective Manual Cinema, and adventurous DJ and performance artist Kid Koala.

OZ Arts' new initiative launched with National Endowment for the Arts support is the Nashville Interdisciplinary Creative Exchange, designed to make OZ a nexus for adventurous artists from throughout the region, the US and the world, with creative residencies that also engage Nashville artists and students in meaningful, collaborative interactions that encourage risk-taking, the invention of vital new forms, and the use of new technology. The initiative includes important visits from internationally renowned artists, and also supports the development and premiere of significant works by artists from throughout Tennessee and the Southeast in OZ's unique creative warehouse.

In addition to contemporary performance, OZ Arts hosts a rotating series of visual art exhibitions in an intimate gallery space connected to the creative warehouse. The visual art installations feature works by local artists, often reflecting a connection to the performance presentations showcased in the warehouse, whereas others celebrate a community collaboration or exciting emerging voices. Recent and upcoming visual artists include: Nuveen Barwari, Sibley Barlow, and Duncan McDaniel curated by Pam Marlene Taylor; Vadis Turner; Dorris Wasserman; and John Paul Kesling, among others.

Artistic and Executive Director Mark Murphy builds on national relationships from his work as a founding board member for the National Performance Network, an adviser to the National Dance Project, and chair of the NEA Choreographer's Fellowship panel. Artistic Associate, Daniel Jones, serves as the Vice President of Tennessee Presenters, a network of performing arts organizations, agents, and artists throughout the state and Kentucky.

OZ Arts helps address the lack of infrastructure for independent artists in Tennessee and the Southeast, especially for artists who are inventing new forms or working with experimental methods. OZ provides an additional level of artistic exploration through intentional local and guest artist interactions. Helping these artists develop their unique voices, build audiences, and expand their reputations with a goal for future touring is a unique service OZ provides to local artists.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As a contemporary arts organization with a community focus, OZ Arts focuses on new art forms that are underrepresented, such as contemporary dance and multimedia theater, while also working to develop strategies to ensure that the work reaches nontraditional and underserved audiences, engaging a wide-ranging community that reflects the demographics of the rapidly growing region. OZ Arts prioritizes arts access by providing free, low and/or reduced price opportunities to artists, creatives, neighbors, Metro Nashville Public School students and community organizations serving underserved and diverse audiences (adults, youth and

families) through intentional engagement programs both on stage and off the stage. The OZ Arts venue is ADA compliant.

OZ Arts hired its first full time Director of Community Engagement and Education, Rosie Forrest, in 2018, which has allowed the organization to expand its ambitious education and engagement programs, presenting exceptional free educational programs to area schools (K-12, higher-ed), and collaborating with community organizations to create meaningful interaction with a range of visiting and Tennessee-based artists. Special efforts are made to engage specific Metro Nashville Public Schools defined as in need of supplemental resources - 44% of district's students are classified as economically disadvantaged - and organizations such as the Global Education Center that are driven to provide quality arts programming for underserved communities. OZ connects artists to the community through free artist-specific special tours, workshops, masterclasses, pop-up performances, lecture demonstrations, artist talks, and field trips.

Now looking beyond 2020 - the unique mission of OZ Arts remains the same, now defined more intentionally. OZ Arts continues to invite artists, audiences, students, and youth of Nashville; Tennessee and beyond to participate in eye-opening programming that introduces the abstract, ideas that challenge, and art that uses a new vocabulary to respond to a rapidly changing society. Today, OZ Arts fulfills the dream of OZ founder, the late Cano Ozgener, who wanted to "change lives through contemporary culture;" and embodies the characteristics of a Tennessee Governor's Arts Award nominee through its artistic contributions to Nashville and Tennessee artists and audiences.

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Panelists:

I am writing to urge your positive consideration of the nomination of OZ Arts Nashville for a Governor's Arts Award. In my role as the Chief Diversity Officer at HCA, I am pleased to support the uniquely important cultural and educational programs that OZ Arts provides to the Nashville community. I am also proud to serve as a volunteer board member for the organization, which is leading the way as one of the region's most adventurous supporters of local, national, and international performing and visual artists.

I believe OZ Arts is an exemplary candidate for a Governor's Arts Award, which honors significant contributions to the arts or cultural life of Tennessee. Oz Arts plays a unique role as a cultural nexus for innovative Tennessee artists and distinguished visiting artists from throughout the world to engage with local audiences and a wide range of students. The programming highlights groundbreaking artists who often address vital and timely issues in thoughtful and dynamic ways.

Even during the Covid pandemic, OZ Arts found ways to continue expanding its ambitious community education and engagement programs, including exceptional free virtual programs to area K-12 schools and meaningful collaborations with other cultural and community organizations. Special efforts are made to engage specific Metro Nashville Public Schools defined as in need of supplemental resources at a time when 44% of district's students are classified as economically disadvantaged.

OZ Arts goes beyond the role of a standard "presenter" of performances and exhibits, such as a recent high-impact engagement of visiting artists from Brazil. OZ Arts helped produce the US tour by the extraordinary Rio de Janeiro-based dance company Companhia Urbana de Danca, including a 10-day residency in Nashville which introduced their unique blend of contemporary dance, Hip-hop and Afro-Brazilian forms to audiences and students throughout the city. In addition to four sold-out performances at OZ, the group performed two free shows at Plaza Mariachi, led school performances and workshops for hundreds of middle school students, and offered a free master class at the Global Education Center.

It is with great pleasure that I recommend OZ Arts for this honor, to celebrate their distinctive contributions to the advancement of the arts and cultural ecology of Nashville and Tennessee.

Sincerely,

Sherri Neal
Chief Diversity Officer
HCA Healthcare
Sherri.neal@hcahealthcare.com
615-344-5248

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Reviewers:

I am very pleased to express my enthusiastic endorsement for the nomination of OZ Arts Nashville to receive a 2021 Governor's Arts Award. I am honored to volunteer my services as the Secretary of the Board of Directors for OZ Arts, which is unique in the state for its bold commitment to contemporary performing and visual arts programming, as well as distinctive education programs for diverse youth.

I was drawn to OZ Arts initially as a Nashville resident and art enthusiast. OZ has introduced my family and community to contemporary artistic performances, programs and experiences that poignantly push the envelope - expanding our minds with diverse, relevant cultural programming. They give Nashville a "window on the world" by presenting leading artists from throughout the country and around the world, while also providing unique support for Tennessee artists to create innovative work.

As a leader on the Board of Directors, I am impressed with the diverse and expansive network of Middle Tennessee business leaders, philanthropists and community volunteers that have dedicated their time, energy and resources to support OZ Arts and its mission. OZ Arts works tirelessly to provide accessible arts programs to benefit audiences of all ages, backgrounds and locations as well as opportunities to support local artists and collaborative new projects.

Since it's opening in 2014, OZ Arts has enhanced the Middle Tennessee artistic community by:

- Engaging over 50,000 individuals and youth in contemporary arts programming
- Presenting world-renowned contemporary artists such as Renee Fleming, Bassem Youssef, Camille A. Brown & Dancers, Peter Brook's Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, Philip Glass and Tim Fain, Tim Robbins' The Actors' Gang, BANDALOOP, Vijay Iyer, Laurie Anderson, Kyle Abraham and Abraham.In.Motion, and SITI Company among dozens of others.
- Establishing a diverse, generous 21-person Board of Directors, of which 100% make charitable contributions annually.
- Gaining recognition from the National Endowment for the Arts, Tennessee Arts Commission and Metro Nashville Arts Commission in the form of grant awards.
- Partnering with Metro Nashville Public Schools, the Global Education Center, Nashville Public Libraries and Nashville higher education institutions for audience engagement and program development.

In less than a decade, OZ Arts has positively changed the landscape of Middle Tennessee with diverse contemporary arts programming. I am tremendously proud to support the nomination of OZ Arts for the Governor's Arts Awards for Arts Leadership.

Sincerely,



Laurie Seabury
115 Brook Hollow Road
Nashville, TN 37205



METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 29, 2021

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Metro Nashville Public Schools Director of STEAM and Science, I speak on behalf of our commitment to rich collaborations with community partners and their innovative contributions to STEAM learning. It is from this leadership position that I wish to recommend OZ Arts Nashville as a nominee for the Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

The MNPS STEAM work depends upon the creative thinking and multifaceted programming developed by our complex community partnerships. While OZ Arts has had an ongoing relationship with MNPS since first launching in 2014, the partnership with MNPS STEAM has blossomed into an array of inspiring opportunities for Davidson County students. Again and again, OZ Arts proves a dedication to STEAM engagement that goes beyond enrichment, accessing deeper levels of creative exploration, cross-curricular academic connections, belongingness and emotional well-being. Without a doubt OZ Arts has become a key partner, embracing complex goals, identifying and developing meaningful content, and maximizing the programmatic reach during a particularly challenging year.

As Nashville's premier center for contemporary arts, OZ Arts is committed to diversity, accessibility, and representation both on stage and in the classroom. Career exploration, mindfulness, engineering design, color theory, poetry, climate change, Foley sound and more provide inspirational anchors for STEAM content and arts-integrated learning.

OZ Arts has partnered with MNPS and the MNPS STEAM Initiative to provide the following impactful experiences:

- Six years of OZ Schools Days, a STEAM-based arts round-robin program for children ages 5-10, occurring on the four Monday holidays when MNPS is closed. OZ School Days provides full tuition scholarships for any MNPS student currently enrolled in a Community Achieves school, accounting for 42% of OZ School Days enrollment.
- OZ Arts coordinated free transportation, lunch, and free admission to OZ Arts Family Day for 250 MNPS students and families, providing access to OZ's singular family festival that celebrated the conjunction of global arts and technology.
- STEAM Fusion is OZ Arts' newest initiative combining a virtual library of 20 STEAM activities for students of all ages (1200 engagements), and the launch of an arts-integrated curriculum series for designated middle school classrooms in the fall of 2021.
- Dynamic movement workshops featuring international and local dance artists, energizing young people at Warner Elementary, McMurray Middle, Creswell Middle, Pearl Cohn.



METRO
NASHVILLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

- Virtual field trips connect students with hybrid experiences, combining OZ Arts' professional performances, pre and post supplemental activities, and real-time engagement with professional artists. March 2021 OZ Arts virtual field trip is accessible to 8th grade students district-wide.

The MNPS vision for STEAM education is to be a premier national leader in STEAM education by providing students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need as they move into high school, college, and careers in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics, in order to solve the problems of the 21st Century and beyond. Oz Arts helps us achieve our vision by providing students and teachers with real world engagements providing context to what they learn in the classroom and how that learning applies in the real world.

The MNPS STEAM Initiative is a collaborative endeavor; to see measurable impact with our students, our community partners must show up in extraordinary ways. OZ Arts has proven to be a generous, prolific, and reflective partner, prioritizing student and teacher needs especially during a year in which those needs have exceeded every expectation.

My understanding of the Governor's Arts Leadership Award is that it recognizes an organization that through ample contribution represents and advances the value of the arts in Tennessee. I believe strongly that OZ Arts Nashville is doing just that and so much more. They have been an invaluable partner in this work. We are honored to write and support the application for Oz Arts Nashville.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Berry, PhD
Director of STEAM and Science
Metro Nashville Public Schools
2601 Bransford Ave.
Nashville, TN 37204

Palazzolo, Mike

**Governor's Arts Award - Arts Leadership Award
Nominee - City of Germantown Mayor Mike Palazzolo**

During his 16 consecutive years in office, first as Alderman and now, in his second term as Mayor of the City of Germantown, Mike Palazzolo has made funding for arts and culture a priority. He understands the importance of arts, culture and creativity in creating vibrant and economically healthy communities. Since the beginning of his tenure, City support for the arts has grown to approximately \$1.9mm annually.

Just one year after taking office, Mayor Palazzolo spearheaded the creation of Germantown Forward 2030, a citizen-led strategic plan supported by clearly articulated key performance areas and objectives with the goal of moving the City toward a sustainable future. The outcome was a focus on quality of life issues, fiscal responsibility, and strong public and community safety. Intrinsicly woven into the plan is the strong desire to intentionally leverage the power of the arts, culture, creativity, entertainment and life-long learning to serve all residents, while driving a broader agenda for change, economic growth and transformation in a way that builds character and quality of place.

In 2016, Mayor Palazzolo attended the Mayor's Institute on City Design where he shared a case study involving maximizing use of the City's municipal block by and for residents with peer mayors and a host of city planning/design professionals. From there, the concept of an outdoor performance space and the idea of incorporating public art throughout the municipal block and central business district emerged.

Upon his return, he championed the creation of the first Germantown Public Arts Commission, which became a reality in 2019. Subsequently, under the Mayor's direction, the City administration, in partnership with Germantown Performing Arts Center (GPAC), applied for and received an NEA creative placemaking grant to develop a community-led public art master plan. The City matched the \$50,000 grant and the year-long

plan creation process began. The City also applied for and received a Creative Placemaking grant from the Tennessee Art Commission to support the completion of this plan. Today, the City of Germantown's Board of Mayor and Alderman stand ready to adopt the Public Art Master Plan. One of the Public Art Commission's first projects, an annual sidewalk poetry contest called ***Word Travels***, is about to be announced, coinciding with April which is National Poetry Month. Poetry submissions will be judged each year and selected works will be etched or stamped on city trails and park sidewalks, creating a wonderful chance for folks to serendipitously come across a piece of writing that might give them pause to think, imagine, laugh, or simply feel. With the opportunity for community wide participation, including school age children, the selected poems will eventually become a treasure trove of Germantown expression about all manner of things - including love, loss, friendship, nature, culture, and history.

In Spring of 2020 the City's visionary outdoor performance venue, The Grove, opened despite the pandemic. Mayor Palazzolo championed and led the highly successful \$7.5mm capital campaign to build and maintain this cultural and community asset in the heart of Germantown's municipal square. Instrumental in creating this locally unprecedented public, private and nonprofit partnership leveraging \$2.5mm of local taxpayer funding with \$5mm from the public and private sectors, he played a pivotal role in securing a \$2.5mm grant from State of TN (the largest non-transportation grant ever received by the City).

The Grove and its unique simulcast technology has put GPAC in the ranks of the most innovative performing arts centers in the nation, attracting new audiences for GPAC and the local and regional arts ecosystem, bringing new visitors to Germantown and providing new opportunities for the community to engage with each other and the arts.

The creation of The Grove, in synergy with the City's smart growth economic development planning, has catalyzed the entire area, bringing with it new housing developments and retail establishments, providing a robust boost to the City's tax base.

In 2016, when the citizen-led Germantown Arts Alliance became defunct,

Mayor Palazzolo led the effort to redirect the City's annual \$40,000 Arts Alliance contribution, earmarked for grants for local arts projects, to GPAC's Arts Education Fund. The GPAC Arts Grant Program was created using best practices at the state level in arts grantmaking and guidelines were established for a competitive annual process to provide grants up to \$5,000.

Mayor Palazzolo's vision for connecting Germantown's renowned Iris Orchestra to the students in the City's new Fine Arts Academy at Houston High School became a reality this year when the City directed a \$20,000 annual grant to fund this program. The Fine Arts Academy Mentorship program is designed to provide exceptional opportunities for developing musicians, supporting career preparation of students considering music as a career.

Under his leadership, the City increased its annual support of the 48-year-old Germantown Community Theater from \$45,000 to \$100,000. This additional funding supports training and the creation of programs that inspire generational appreciation for theater.

On November 14, 2019, the City of Germantown was awarded a 2019 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the nation's highest award for organizational performance excellence.

Mayor Mike Palazzolo's personal passion for the arts and understanding of its economic, social and educational benefits has translated into robust public leadership, driving City support for the arts and enhancing quality of life.



Brian Kelsey

State Senator

Chairman, Education Committee

District 31: Cordova,

East Memphis, and Germantown

Senate Chamber
State of Tennessee

744 Cordell Hull Building

Nashville, TN 37243-0231

(615) 741-3036

sen.brian.kelsey@capitol.tn.gov

March 3, 2021

Chairwoman Jan McNally

Tennessee Arts Commission

401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Nashville, TN 372743

Members of the Tennessee Arts Commission:

I offer my support to the nomination of the City of Germantown Mayor Mike Palazzolo for the Governor's Arts Award, in the Arts Leadership category. During his 16 years of public service, Mayor Palazzolo has led many initiatives to enrich the arts in our community. Notable accomplishments include the creation of the first Germantown Public Arts Commission, the funding and opening of outdoor performance venue The Grove, the creation of the Germantown Performing Arts Center Arts Grant, and the implementation of the The Fine Arts Academy Mentorship program. Mayor Mike Palazzolo's personal passion for the arts and understanding of its economic, social and educational benefits has translated into public leadership that supports City engagement in the arts to enhance quality of life.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this nomination. Should you have any questions for me in regard to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at (615) 741-3036.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Kelsey".

Brian Kelsey



November 18, 2019

To whom it may concern:

I am delighted to write this letter in support of Mike Palazzolo, Mayor of Germantown, for the Americans for the Arts (AFTA) Public Leadership in the Arts Award.

For 20 years, I have led the Iris Orchestra, the resident ensemble of the Germantown Performing Arts Center. We have brought great music, old and new, and world-class guest artists to our audiences over all these seasons. More importantly, our mission has been to make the case for the importance of the arts in communities throughout the Memphis area, and through real engagement and a devotion to the art, to make music matter in all of our outreach.

No one has done this more consistently, passionately or effectively than Mike Palazzolo. I write this not only because he is a longtime and committed Iris Orchestra supporter and season ticket holder, though he certainly is that, enthusiastically. It is exceptional for a community this size to have sponsored an orchestra of this caliber back in 2000, and all credit goes to the City of Germantown for having had the courage to nurture the only municipally funded orchestra in the United States. When Mike was elected Mayor, with his deep understanding of and love for music, he understood how innovative our partnership was from the start. But beyond that, he has consistently embraced the idea of the importance of all the arts to the economic health and quality of life throughout the community, for all of his constituencies. His vision to support the funding of the new Crescendo Project to mentor young musicians in the new Fine Arts Academy at Houston High School is but one example; another has been his leadership in the creation of the Germantown Forward 2030 initiative, which has been visionary.

Germantown is lucky to have such an enlightened and empathetic Mayor, and I cannot imagine anyone more deserving of this AFTA award than he.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Stern". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael Stern
Conductor & Artistic Director
Iris Orchestra

SHARON E. GOLDSWORTHY

March 15, 2021

It is a privilege and pleasure to applaud and support the nomination of Germantown Mayor Mike Palazzolo in the Leadership category of the Governor's Arts Awards. I've known Mike since the early 1990s, initially as a fellow member of the Germantown Area Chamber of Commerce and throughout my tenure as a city alderman (1992-94) and mayor (1994-2014).

During his decade as a city alderman, beginning in 2004, Mike demonstrated his interest and passion for the arts by his consistent support of municipal arts programs and facilities and his attendance and enthusiasm for performing arts events. Germantown has a considerable tradition as an arts-friendly community wherein artists, patrons and city government have cooperated to present quality artistic experiences through the Germantown Community Theatre, Germantown Symphony Orchestra, Germantown Community Chorus, the Germantown Performing Arts Center (GPAC), its Youth Orchestra and other organizations.

When Mike was elected mayor in 2014 (and continuing in his current, second term), he considerably expanded his understanding of the role of the arts in offering a vibrant quality of life to our citizens but also its contribution to the economic vitality of the city.

Within a year, he generated a citizen-led strategic planning process which identified the arts as integral to a sustainable city. From his participation in the 2016 Mayor's Institute on City Design, there emerged the idea of an outdoor performance space and the potential of public art in the civic and central business district. Mike created the Germantown Public Arts Commission; with his direction and in partnership with GPAC, the city received an NEA place-making grant to fund a citizen-led public art master plan.

The Grove, the city's extraordinary outdoor venue, opened in 2020 (despite the pandemic), financed by a public-private partnership for which Mike spearheaded a \$7.5 million capital campaign. It uses innovative technology to present exceptional artists; it is proving a catalyst for nearby housing and retail development.

There are multiple other outcomes of Mike's commitment to the arts: the GPAC Arts Education Fund, connection of Germantown's stellar Iris Orchestra with a new Fine Arts Academy at Houston High School, increased city funding for the community theatre, thoughtful landscape design and redesign of park and public spaces, progress toward public art installation, and other endeavors.

More concisely, the mayor's leadership has made the arts a primary consideration—not an afterthought—in the municipal government decisions that make Germantown a great place to live, work, play and visit. His vision is not a solitary effort but one derived from collaboration across the community, defined and developed with the people whose lives are enhanced by the journey and fulfillment of the vision for the arts.



Sharon Goldsworthy

Rejoice School of Ballet

REJOICE SCHOOL OF BALLET:

Transforming the Landscape of Youth Ballet to Embrace African American Students

After 30 years dancing with and managing professional ballet organizations, Rejoice School of Ballet's founder, Patricia Cross, a classically trained ballerina and highly educated dance instructor, looked across the stage of the ballet world and saw only white dancers. She knew that young girls of color could be excellent classical ballet dancers. She recognized that these youth had the same talents and ambitions as their white counterparts, but because of finances and long-standing limiting cultural expectations, no chance at seriously studying ballet. Ms. Cross, realized the cost of ballet classes was prohibitive to almost all students except for those from extremely affluent families. **She felt determined to change the classical dance landscape--one community at a time--and founded Rejoice School of Ballet to provide at-risk youth of all socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds with the joy and hope of high-quality classical ballet instruction.**

Rejoice School of Ballet started in 2000 with 14 dancers. Today Rejoice trains 135 students annually in four North and East Nashville locations. Rejoice is partnering with additional community organizations for the 2019-2020 school year; these organizations are requesting programming at their locations so that more diverse students have access to affordable, after-school mentoring, and classical ballet programs.

High Quality Arts Instruction

Rejoice School of Ballet's programs expose students to classical ballet and music, technical training by professional artists, the history of the ballet, and choreography adapted for their abilities from historically important ballets. These students work with Kayla Rowser, Gerald Watson, and Imani Sailers--all African American professional dancers from Nashville Ballet. Ms. Rowser, Mr. Watson and Ms. Sailers are simultaneously breaking racial stereotypes in their field and inspiring a new generation of dancers of all backgrounds. Rejoice students receive training, coaching, and mentoring from these professional dancers which results in improved technical, artistic, and leadership abilities. When Rejoice

students participate in a ballet, they learn the history of the ballet which includes all the different versions, choreographers, dancers and companies that have performed the ballet. Additionally, they learn choreography adapted to their abilities and are instructed on the acting and performance skills needed for the end production. Students are also exposed to classical music through these endeavors. These opportunities are beneficial for students as they experience how professional dancers work. Students learn how to present the choreography with artistic expression and gain unprecedented experience in the art of performing.

Transforming the Landscape of Dance to Embrace All Dancers

One of Rejoice's ultimate long-term goals is to assist, in the organization's own small corner of the world, youth of color in the pursuit of classical ballet with the hope that one day professional ballet companies will reflect the rainbow of colors that comprise the US. **So many factors contribute to the lack of diversity seen in ballet today—economic inequality, a lack of role models, and the sad notion that ballet is only for the wealthy and privileged.** As Dorothy Gunther Pugh of Memphis Ballet explains, "I love the beauty and esthetic of ballet, but I think it's been awfully rigid" (*Pointe Magazine*, May 21, 2014). Ms. Pugh's goals have included partnering with her local Memphis community ballet programs in order to introduce more youth of color to the art. Rejoice's collaboration with Nashville Ballet mirrors this approach. Paul Vasterling, Nashville Ballet's CEO and Artistic Director, echoes these goals: "It's key for children of different ethnicities to see themselves onstage. I've seen it, like when two little girls of color were sitting in front of me at a performance. They were wiggling and talking, as children do, until Kayla Rowser came out. Then they stopped, mesmerized. They connected to her. They could see themselves." As Cassa Pancho, founder of Ballet Black, explained during a recent *USA Today* interview, "Children and teenagers need to see someone who looks like them on stage to keep them invested in ballet."

REJOICE STUDENTS: Strong, Diverse, Talented, and Focused

At Rejoice, no dancer is turned away for inability to pay. Low income parents pay \$17 per month for tuition, dancewear and costumes. **Rejoice's intentional diversity brings together students from varied cultural, racial, and economic backgrounds which leads to true understanding and authentic friendship.** The organization's demographic breakdown reflects its diversity: African American: 32%, Asian: 1%, Caucasian: 47%, Haitian: 8%, Hispanic: 1%, Multiple Races: 11%, West Indian, 1%. Over 5% of Rejoice students are ESL students; 11% have a documented special need such as ADD or dyslexia. Rejoice provides students with an exceptional dance education—a gift that is unusual in a city where research proves that at-risk children lack opportunities to pursue quality after-school and summer enrichment activities. If not for Rejoice, these youth would never have an opportunity to formally study dance or be exposed to the mentoring and encouragement of seasoned professional dancers.

Rejoice: Nashville Ballet's Mentor School

In the fall of 2015, Nashville Ballet invited Rejoice to be the organization's official mentor school because Rejoice was the only classical ballet school in Nashville with a diverse student base and Nashville Ballet wanted to open up opportunities for youth of color to study dance. Nashville Ballet offers master classes to Rejoice students, scholarships to their Summer Intensive and academy programs, and costumes and scenery for ballet productions. In exchange, Rejoice offers Nashville Ballet the diversity they are interested in fostering. The organization accepted three students on scholarship to their prestigious Summer Intensive for 2019. Three students were accepted on full scholarship to their academy program.

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE® National Training Curriculum

Rejoice tracks both the personal growth and dance education growth of each participant using the AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE® National Training Curriculum (ABT), a nationally recognized dance education and training program. ABT's goal is to raise the quality of dance training nationwide by providing teachers with the information needed to more fully understand best practices in pedagogy, child

development, dance psychology, and anatomy. Rejoice is the only dance studio in Nashville to offer ABT testing for students. In 2017, all 23 Rejoice pre-professional students who took the American Ballet Theatre exam passed with distinction, meaning their scores were higher than necessary to pass; 5 received High Honors, 8 received Honors and 11 passed with Merit. Students will take the ABT exam again in May of 2019. Three Rejoice teachers have received scholarships for ABT training. In September 2013, American Ballet Theatre announced the formation of Project Plié, a **comprehensive initiative to increase racial and ethnic representation in ballet**, and Nashville Ballet is a member of this important initiative which positively impacts Rejoice as the ballet's official mentor school. Project Plié seeks to combine training and support of ballet students from communities previously underrepresented in American ballet companies with the creation of a nationwide network of professional ballet companies who are committed to diversity.

ORIGINAL BALLETS, IMPACTFUL COMMUNITY PERFORMANCES

Rejoice serves Nashville's community as well through excellent ballet performances at an affordable price, and the organization regularly invites organizations serving at-risk youth to rehearsal performances free of charge. Rejoice students receive valuable performing experience in a variety of venues which helps build self-esteem and confidence. Rejoice students are growing in social and leadership skills and in the ability to handle themselves in a variety of situations and cultures. Rejoice students have performed at the following venues: Nashville Ballet's 'Nutcracker,' Christ Church Cathedral's First Friday Service, Belmont University, Christ Church Music and Worship Conference, Nashville Public Libraries, Schermerhorn Concert Hall, Trevecca University, East Park Community Center, and countless other venues. Rejoice students have performed in the classical ballets 'Coppelia,' 'La Sylphide,' 'Les Sylphides' 'Peter and the Wolf,' 'La Fille Mal Gardee,' and 'Cinderella,' and 'Sleeping Beauty.' Unfortunately, it is incredibly rare for an African American dancer to perform a lead role in a classical ballet; however Rejoice's productions of 'Sleeping Beauty,' 'Cinderella,' 'La Fille Mal Garde,' and 'Coppelia' featured black dancers in lead roles. Original Rejoice ballets include: 'Growing Up Black

in America,' 'The Little Engine That Could' and the groundbreaking original performance 'Saam Psalms-Together Songs.'

During February of 2018, Rejoice first staged 'Saam Psalms - Together Songs,' a fresh, transformational ballet written as a memorial to the atrocities perpetrated upon African Americans, a celebration of African American accomplishments and a call to eradicate racism. The ballet was written by Patricia Cross, Rejoice's Executive Director, and Gerald Watson, Company Dancer with Nashville Ballet, and one of a handful of African American male dancers in the US. **This impactful ballet interpreted the experiences of slave children in the 1860's and incorporated dance interpretations of African Americans who have contributed to American culture and become successful citizens despite ongoing oppression and lack of opportunities.** A cast of 22 of Rejoice's most serious dancers performed six productions for sold-out crowds of over 1,000 total. This opportunity exposed students to classical ballet, modern dance, African Dance, African Drums, technical training by professional artists, the history of slavery/oppression of African Americans, and the powerful, encouraging biographies of African Americans who, despite their poor circumstances, rose up to achieve their dreams. 'Saam Psalms - Together Songs' proved to be an amazing success. Trevecca University found the performance so powerful the university requested Rejoice perform for their students and faculty. After an overwhelming number of additional requests from the community, **Rejoice plans to re-stage this powerful production during the week of January 21, 2020 to commemorate the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Observance, if funding allows.**

For the past almost 20 years, Rejoice School of Ballet has welcomed, encouraged, and trained dancers of all colors—the majority African American youth from disenfranchised backgrounds. Rejoice has created learning opportunities for African American youth to explore an art form that so few ever have a chance to embrace. Rejoice has transformed the classical ballet landscape in Nashville through transformative programming, impactful community collaborations, and groundbreaking performances. Rejoice is a deserving nominee for this key award. **Thank you for considering Rejoice School of Ballet.**

JIM COOPER
5TH DISTRICT, TENNESSEE

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM

WEB SITE: www.cooper.house.gov

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

PLEASE MAIL TO NASHVILLE OFFICE:

605 CHURCH STREET
NASHVILLE, TN 37219-2314
(615) 736-5295
FAX: (615) 736-7479

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
(202) 225-4311
FAX: (202) 226-1035

May 15, 2019

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Re: Arts Leadership Award

Dear Committee,

I am writing today to recommend the Rejoice School of Ballet for an Arts Leadership Award from the Governor's Arts Award Committee. Last year, I attended Rejoice's original ballet "Saam Psalms – Together Songs," a powerful presentation that artfully and authentically shared the story of the African American struggle.

Rejoice School of Ballet's dedicated professional faculty and staff provide transformative arts programming that addresses issues that impact the whole child. Excellent classical ballet instruction is the vehicle used to empower youth with discipline, personal leadership, self- appreciation and care, goal setting, team work, and the opportunity to reap the rewards of perseverance. Rejoice School of Ballet is equipping great dancers to be great people by providing excellent dance instruction in a safe, nurturing environment that acknowledges and celebrates the uniqueness of each student.

A recent study by the Nashville Metro Arts Commission pointed out the large discrepancy in arts education and leadership opportunities for poor/minority students. Rejoice is the only program in Nashville that offers children from low income families the opportunity to study classical ballet. If our community is going to empower disadvantaged communities to succeed, excel and move out of the cycle of poverty, we must provide young people in these communities with an excellent education and that includes the arts.

Thank you for your consideration of the Rejoice School of Ballet for this award.

Sincerely,



Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

May 23, 2019

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Committee,

When I think about a relatively small arts organization that has made an enormous impact on our community and enabled so many at-risk youth and community members to experience fine, affordable arts instruction, and high-quality performances, I think first of Rejoice School of Ballet.

Unlike any other organization in Nashville, Rejoice has encouraged, supported, and created opportunities for African American youth to study classical ballet. No other organization has impacted our arts community in this way, and Rejoice's commitment to encouraging diverse students to pursue classical ballet is why Nashville Ballet selected Rejoice as our Official Mentor School. With great excitement I recommend Rejoice School of Ballet for an Arts Leadership Award from the Governor's Arts Award Committee.

Rejoice has thrived under the steady leadership of the organization's founder and executive director, Patricia Cross, for over 19 years. Ms. Cross has attracted and retained incredibly high-quality faculty. All Rejoice instructors have professional and/or collegiate dance experience, and four faculty members are currently dancing professionally. Rejoice's talented instructors all have served for between 4 and 8 years which shows their deep commitment to students and this transformational programming. I have personally taught at Rejoice for the past 5 years and have had the privilege of choreographing and dancing in many performances.

I can think of no more deserving organization than Rejoice School of Ballet—the organization is truly impacting the arts in Nashville in a transformative and powerful way. I believe that 20 years from now when Nashvillians attend a classical ballet performance, they will see a rainbow of dancers gracing the stage thanks to the groundbreaking initiatives of Rejoice. Only through bold, ambitious initiatives like those led by Rejoice will our arts communities finally embrace performers of all races, ethnicities, and cultural perspectives. Only through seeing dancers who look like them on stage performing professionally will young girls of color finally believe that one day, they too, could be a ballerina.

Best,



Gerald Watson
Company Member
Nashville Ballet



RECEIVED

19 MAY 29 PM 3:08

T.A.C. OFFICE

P.O. Box 989
Colleyville, Texas 76034
Phone 817.313.9379

May 9, 2019

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Committee,

It is an honor to recommend Rejoice School of Ballet for a 2019 Governor's Arts Leadership Award. For the past 19 years, Rejoice Ballet programs have provided young people with productive activities that build job and life skills and reinforce community-mindedness. Rejoice serves an urban area in Nashville where homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, and low education levels are paramount. Their students learn responsibility and rigor through the demands of classical ballet. Rejoice students bring their gifts back to the community through public ballet performances, fund raisers, and outreach activities.

Through an ongoing partnership with the Nashville Ballet, young dancers at Rejoice have an opportunity to be taught by and dance with professional dancers. Three African American dancers with the Nashville Ballet give their time to teach and mentor Rejoice students. The personal relationships forged between these dancers and their students help lead these young people to embrace a future of success in their chosen career—be it dance or some other pursuit. Rejoice dancers take what they have learned through their Nashville Ballet mentors and become mentors themselves to younger Rejoice dancers. They are responsible for making sure these younger dancers are encouraged and uplifted, organized and prepared.

Rejoice provides excellent quality classical ballet instruction for students while simultaneously prioritizing development of the whole child. The organization's Four Pillars Program reinforces this holistic approach through the exploration of topics such as health, diversity, life skills, and spiritual formation. Each month, community experts present to Rejoice dancers on topics such as healthy eating, racial reconciliation, dealing with individuals who have special needs, injury prevention, and preparing for post-high school success.

The Holloway Family Foundation has supported Rejoice for the past several years, and each year I have seen first-hand how the programs at Rejoice School of Ballet have taken young people who had little drive and hope, and nurtured them through high school and beyond. Even students who stopped dancing to pursue other interests credit Rejoice with helping them learn how to prioritize and plan. Every low-income community deserves a ballet school like Rejoice where young people with an interest in dance can learn and grow in an affordable, encouraging, accepting and challenging atmosphere.

Thank you for considering Rejoice School of Ballet for this prestigious award!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beth Heimbürger".

Beth Heimbürger

May 10, 2019

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Governor's Arts Committee,

I am writing to recommend Rejoice School of Ballet as a strong candidate to receive the Arts Leadership Award from the Governor's Arts Award Committee. As Artistic Director of Nashville Ballet, I am a strong believer in the transformative power of dance. For the professional dancer, daily ballet class nourishes, feeding the soul and disciplining the body. For the audience, attending a live performance transports, taking viewers out of their ordinary lives to visit an enchanted lakeside or a kingdom of sweets.

For the past 19 years, Rejoice has both nourished and transported students, providing a safe and encouraging outlet for at-risk African American and other disadvantaged youth to learn to dance - one of the few affordable after-school arts programs in our tough North and East Nashville neighborhoods. Through Rejoice, youth, for whom life may be a series of daily trials and upheavals, have an opportunity to study an art form that demands an open spirit as much as a trained body. Rejoice teaches youth to be self-motivated, focused, and dedicated - to persevere through discomfort in pursuit of continuing to perfect an art form. These skills can be applied to life as much as to dance. A dedicated group of teachers and mentors creates a supportive environment, setting an example that lives up to the Rejoice motto, "Teaching great dancers to be great people."

Please consider Rejoice School of Ballet for this award which would provide additional support for this deserving organization that works so diligently to ensure that Nashville's disadvantaged youth can pursue excellent arts instruction in an artistically challenging and emotionally nurturing environment.

Sincerely Yours,



Paul Vasterling
Artistic Director of Nashville Ballet

JIM COOPER
5TH DISTRICT, TENNESSEE

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM

WEB SITE: www.cooper.house.gov

PLEASE MAIL TO NASHVILLE OFFICE:

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2019

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Re: Arts Leadership Award

Dear Committee,

I am writing today to recommend the Rejoice School of Ballet for an Arts Leadership Award from the Governor's Arts Award Committee. Last year, I attended Rejoice's original ballet "Saam Psalms – Together Songs," a powerful presentation that artfully and authentically shared the story of the African American struggle.

Rejoice School of Ballet's dedicated professional faculty and staff provide transformative arts programming that addresses issues that impact the whole child. Excellent classical ballet instruction is the vehicle used to empower youth with discipline, personal leadership, self- appreciation and care, goal setting, team work, and the opportunity to reap the rewards of perseverance. Rejoice School of Ballet is equipping great dancers to be great people by providing excellent dance instruction in a safe, nurturing environment that acknowledges and celebrates the uniqueness of each student.

A recent study by the Nashville Metro Arts Commission pointed out the large discrepancy in arts education and leadership opportunities for poor/minority students. Rejoice is the only program in Nashville that offers children from low income families the opportunity to study classical ballet. If our community is going to empower disadvantaged communities to succeed, excel and move out of the cycle of poverty, we must provide young people in these communities with an excellent education and that includes the arts.

Thank you for your consideration of the Rejoice School of Ballet for this award.

Sincerely,



Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

May 23, 2019

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Committee,

When I think about a relatively small arts organization that has made an enormous impact on our community and enabled so many at-risk youth and community members to experience fine, affordable arts instruction, and high-quality performances, I think first of Rejoice School of Ballet.

Unlike any other organization in Nashville, Rejoice has encouraged, supported, and created opportunities for African American youth to study classical ballet. No other organization has impacted our arts community in this way, and Rejoice's commitment to encouraging diverse students to pursue classical ballet is why Nashville Ballet selected Rejoice as our Official Mentor School. With great excitement I recommend Rejoice School of Ballet for an Arts Leadership Award from the Governor's Arts Award Committee.

Rejoice has thrived under the steady leadership of the organization's founder and executive director, Patricia Cross, for over 19 years. Ms. Cross has attracted and retained incredibly high-quality faculty. All Rejoice instructors have professional and/or collegiate dance experience, and four faculty members are currently dancing professionally. Rejoice's talented instructors all have served for between 4 and 8 years which shows their deep commitment to students and this transformational programming. I have personally taught at Rejoice for the past 5 years and have had the privilege of choreographing and dancing in many performances.

I can think of no more deserving organization than Rejoice School of Ballet—the organization is truly impacting the arts in Nashville in a transformative and powerful way. I believe that 20 years from now when Nashvillians attend a classical ballet performance, they will see a rainbow of dancers gracing the stage thanks to the groundbreaking initiatives of Rejoice. Only through bold, ambitious initiatives like those led by Rejoice will our arts communities finally embrace performers of all races, ethnicities, and cultural perspectives. Only through seeing dancers who look like them on stage performing professionally will young girls of color finally believe that one day, they too, could be a ballerina.

Best,



Gerald Watson
Company Member
Nashville Ballet

NOTE: Rejoice must attach this signed letter to the online application; please do not send individually.

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Committee,

Most of my life has been that of an East Coast dweller. I was a school guidance counselor in the heart of New York City for many years and in such a role, I experienced the beauty of diversity and wonder of amazing arts opportunities on various levels daily. Once I married and moved to Nashville, I wondered if my young bi-racial daughter would have the pleasure of being exposed to the abundant textures of diversity and the myriad of arts experiences in this "new land" of Nashville, TN.

My family first learned about Rejoice School of Ballet when my then 4yr old and I attended a performance of "Sleeping Beauty" at First United Methodist Church on the West End. We were both filled with joy from beginning to end. The multiplicity was lovely beyond measure! There were male and female children, tall and short children, stout and slim children. Caucasian, African American, Hispanic and Asian children. The children hair varied from straight, curly, braided, natural, long, short, blonde, black, brown, and red hair. These youth were from various socioeconomic backgrounds--all leaping, tapping, twirling, embracing, holding hands, and enjoying the rich beauty of diversity through dance.

Needless to say, the many layers of diversity combined with excellent arts instruction motivated me to enroll my daughter. It is extremely rare for a traditional ballet school to be so inclusive of different types of people from such varied socioeconomic and culture backgrounds. To say Rejoice has been a blessing in disguise for children, families, and the Nashville arts community at large is an understatement. Rejoice is trailblazing the path for promoting diversity in classical ballet and beyond. I could not be more pleased as a parent and an arts patron living in Nashville to witness such authentic diversity in motion. For these reasons, I wholeheartedly endorse Rejoice for the Arts Leadership Award from the Governor's Arts Award Committee. The leadership and commitment of this fine nonprofit organization are impacting Nashville's youth and art community like no other organization in this area. They deserve this recognition that could help their organization grow to serve more at-risk youth through the transformational power of fine arts instruction.

Peace and well being,


Monique Cox-Kohrlich

REJOICE SCHOOL OF BALLET:

Transforming the Landscape of Youth Ballet to Embrace African American Students

After 30 years dancing with and managing professional ballet organizations, Rejoice School of Ballet's founder, Patricia Cross, a classically trained ballerina and highly educated dance instructor, looked across the stage of the ballet world and saw only white dancers. She knew that young girls of color could be excellent classical ballet dancers. She recognized that these youth had the same talents and ambitions as their white counterparts, but because of finances and long-standing limiting cultural expectations from within the ballet world, they had little chance of seriously studying ballet. Ms. Cross, realized the cost of ballet classes was prohibitive to almost all students except for those from extremely affluent families. **She felt determined to change the classical dance landscape--one community at a time--and founded Rejoice School of Ballet to provide at-risk youth of all socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds with the joy and hope of high-quality classical ballet instruction.**

Rejoice School of Ballet started in 2000 with 14 dancers. Today Rejoice trains 135 students annually in four North and East Nashville locations. Rejoice is partnering with additional community organizations for the 2019-2020 school year; these organizations are requesting programming at their locations so that more diverse students have access to affordable, after-school mentoring, and classical ballet programs.

High Quality Arts Instruction

Rejoice School of Ballet's programs expose students to classical ballet and by default, music, technical training by professional artists, the history of the ballet, and choreography adapted for their abilities from historically important ballets. These students work with Kayla Rowser, Gerald Watson, and Imani Sailors--all African American professional dancers from Nashville Ballet. Ms. Rowser, Mr. Watson and Ms. Sailors are simultaneously breaking racial stereotypes in their field and inspiring a new generation of dancers of all backgrounds. Rejoice students receive training, coaching, and mentoring from these professional dancers which results in improved technical, artistic, and leadership abilities. When

Rejoice students participate in a ballet, they learn the history of the ballet which includes all the different versions, choreographers, dancers and companies that have performed the ballet. Additionally, they learn choreography adapted to their abilities and are instructed on the acting and performance skills needed for the end production. Students are also exposed to classical music through these endeavors. These opportunities are beneficial for students as they experience how professional dancers work. Students learn how to present the choreography with artistic expression and gain unprecedented experience in the art of performing.

Transforming the Landscape of Dance to Embrace All Dancers

One of Rejoice's ultimate long-term goals is to assist, in the organization's own small corner of the world, youth of color in the pursuit of classical ballet with the hope that one day professional ballet companies will reflect the rainbow of colors that comprise the US. **So many factors contribute to the lack of diversity seen in ballet today—economic inequality, a lack of role models, and the regrettable notion that ballet is only for the wealthy and privileged.** As Dorothy Gunther Pugh of Memphis Ballet explains, "I love the beauty and esthetic of ballet, but I think it's been awfully rigid" (*Pointe Magazine*, May 21, 2014). Ms. Pugh's goals have included partnering with her local Memphis community ballet programs in order to introduce more youth of color to the art. Rejoice's collaboration with Nashville Ballet mirrors this approach. Paul Vasterling, Nashville Ballet's CEO and Artistic Director, echoes these goals: "It's key for children of different ethnicities to see themselves onstage. I've seen it, like when two little girls of color were sitting in front of me at a performance. They were wiggling and talking, as children do, until Kayla Rowser came out. Then they stopped, mesmerized. They connected to her. They could see themselves." As Cassa Pancho, founder of Ballet Black, explained during a recent *USA Today* interview, "Children and teenagers need to see someone who looks like them on stage to keep them invested in ballet."

REJOICE STUDENTS: Strong, Diverse, Talented, and Focused

At Rejoice, no dancer is turned away for inability to pay. Low income parents pay \$17 per month for tuition, dancewear and costumes. **Rejoice's intentional diversity brings together students from varied cultural, racial, and economic backgrounds which leads to true understanding and authentic friendship.** The organization's demographic breakdown reflects its diversity: African American: 32%, Asian: 1%, Caucasian: 47%, Haitian: 8%, Hispanic: 1%, Multiple Races: 11%, West Indian, 1%. Over 5% of Rejoice students are ESL students; 11% have a documented special need such as ADD or dyslexia. Rejoice provides students with an exceptional dance education—a gift that is unusual in a city where research proves that at-risk children lack opportunities to pursue quality after-school and summer enrichment activities. If not for Rejoice, these youth would never have an opportunity to formally study dance or be exposed to the mentoring and encouragement of seasoned professional dancers.

Rejoice: Nashville Ballet's Mentor School

In the fall of 2015, Nashville Ballet invited Rejoice to be the organization's official mentor school because Rejoice was the only classical ballet school in Nashville with a diverse student base and Nashville Ballet wanted to open up opportunities for youth of color to study dance. Nashville Ballet offers master classes to Rejoice students, scholarships to their Summer Intensive and academy programs, and costumes and scenery for ballet productions. In exchange, Rejoice offers Nashville Ballet the diversity they are interested in fostering. The organization accepted three students on scholarship to their prestigious Summer Intensive for 2019. Two Rejoice students were accepted on full scholarship to their academy program.

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE® National Training Curriculum

Rejoice tracks both the personal growth and dance education growth of each participant using the AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE® National Training Curriculum (ABT), a nationally recognized dance education and training program. ABT's goal is to raise the quality of dance training nationwide by providing teachers with the information needed to more fully understand best practices in pedagogy, child

development, dance psychology, and anatomy. Rejoice is the only dance studio in Nashville to offer ABT testing for students. In 2017, all 23 Rejoice pre-professional students who took the American Ballet Theatre exam passed with distinction, meaning their scores were higher than necessary to pass; 5 received High Honors, 8 received Honors and 11 passed with Merit. Students will take the ABT exam again in May of 2019. Three Rejoice teachers have received scholarships for ABT training. In September 2013, American Ballet Theatre announced the formation of Project Plié, a **comprehensive initiative to increase racial and ethnic representation in ballet**, and Nashville Ballet is a member of this important initiative which positively impacts Rejoice as the ballet's official mentor school. Project Plié seeks to combine training and support of ballet students from communities previously underrepresented in American ballet companies with the creation of a nationwide network of professional ballet companies who are committed to diversity.

ORIGINAL BALLETS, IMPACTFUL COMMUNITY PERFORMANCES

Rejoice serves Nashville's community as well through excellent ballet performances at an affordable price, and the organization regularly invites organizations serving at-risk youth to rehearsal performances free of charge. Rejoice students receive valuable performing experience in a variety of venues which helps build self-esteem and confidence. Rejoice students are growing in social and leadership skills and in the ability to handle themselves in a variety of situations and cultures. Rejoice students have performed at the following venues: Nashville Ballet's 'Nutcracker,' Christ Church Cathedral's First Friday Service, Belmont University, Christ Church Music and Worship Conference, Nashville Public Libraries, Schermerhorn Concert Hall, Trevecca University, East Park Community Center, and countless other venues. Rejoice students have performed in the classical ballets 'Coppelia,' 'La Sylphide,' 'Les Sylphides,' 'Peter and the Wolf,' 'La Fille Mal Gardee,' 'Cinderella,' and 'Sleeping Beauty.' Unfortunately, it is incredibly rare for an African American dancer to perform a lead role in a classical ballet; however Rejoice's productions of 'Sleeping Beauty,' 'Cinderella,' 'La Fille Mal Garde,' and 'Coppelia' featured African American dancers in lead roles. Original Rejoice ballets include:

'Growing Up Black in America,' 'The Little Engine That Could' and the groundbreaking original performance 'Saam Psalms-Together Songs.'

During February of 2018, Rejoice first staged 'Saam Psalms - Together Songs,' a fresh, transformational ballet written as a memorial to the atrocities perpetrated upon African Americans, a celebration of African American accomplishments and a call to eradicate Racism. The ballet was written by Patricia Cross, Rejoice's Executive Director, and Gerald Watson, Company Dancer with Nashville Ballet, and one of a handful of African American male dancers in the US. **This impactful ballet interpreted the experiences of slave children in the 1860's and incorporated dance interpretations of African Americans who have contributed to American culture and become successful citizens despite ongoing oppression and lack of opportunities.** A cast of 22 of Rejoice's most serious dancers performed six productions for sold-out crowds of over 1,000 total. This opportunity exposed students to classical ballet, modern dance, African Dance, African Drums, technical training by professional artists, the history of slavery/oppression of African Americans, and the powerful, encouraging biographies of African Americans who, despite their poor circumstances, rose up to achieve their dreams. 'Saam Psalms - Together Songs' proved to be an amazing success. Trevecca University found the performance so powerful the university requested Rejoice perform for their students and faculty. After an overwhelming number of additional requests from the community, **Rejoice plans to re-stage this powerful production during the week of January 21, 2020 to commemorate the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Observance, if funding allows.**

For the past almost 20 years, Rejoice School of Ballet has welcomed, encouraged, and trained dancers of all colors—the majority youth of color from disenfranchised backgrounds. Rejoice has created learning opportunities for African American youth to explore an art form that so few ever have a chance to embrace. Rejoice has transformed the classical ballet landscape in Nashville through transformative programming, impactful community collaborations, and groundbreaking performances. Rejoice is a deserving nominee for this key award. **Thank you for considering Rejoice School of Ballet.**

Governor's Arts Award Nomination Form : Entry # 2704**Award Category**

- Arts Leadership Award

The nominee is being nominated by:**Name**

Paul Vasterling

Title

Artistic Director

Organization

Nashville Ballet

Address

3630 Redmon Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37209
United States
[Map It](#)

Phone

(615) 297-2966

Email

pvasterling@nashvilleballet.com

The nominee is:**Organization**

Rejoice School of Ballet

Address

700 Russell St.
Nashville, Tennessee 37206
United States
[Map It](#)

Phone

(615) 210-1147

Alternate Phone

(615) 484-5215

Email

pcross@rejoiceballet.com

If nominee is an organization, the chief authorizing official is:**Name**

Patricia Cross

Organization

Rejoice School of Ballet

Title

Founder & Executive Director

Phone

(615) 210-1147

Alternate Phone

(615) 484-5215

Email

pcross@rejoiceballet.com

File Uploads**Upload your narrative file**

- [REJOICE-SCHOOL-OF-BALLET-GOVERNORS-AWARD-NARRATIVE-5-23-19.docx](#)

Upload your letters of support

- [Rejoice-letter-of-rec-Paul-Vasterling.pdf](#)
- [Parent-Letter-of-Support-Rejoice-School-of-Ballet.jpg](#)
- [Rejoice_2019-TAC-Rec_Holloway-Family-Foundation_Signed.pdf](#)
- [Rejoice-School-of-Ballet-Letter-of-Support-2019-Jim-Cooper.pdf](#)
- [Gerald-Watson-Letter.pdf](#)



P.O. Box 989
Colleyville, Texas 76034
Phone 817.313.9379

May 9, 2019

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Committee,

It is an honor to recommend Rejoice School of Ballet for a 2019 Governor's Arts Leadership Award. For the past 19 years, Rejoice Ballet programs have provided young people with productive activities that build job and life skills and reinforce community-mindedness. Rejoice serves an urban area in Nashville where homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, and low education levels are paramount. Their students learn responsibility and rigor through the demands of classical ballet. Rejoice students bring their gifts back to the community through public ballet performances, fund raisers, and outreach activities.

Through an ongoing partnership with the Nashville Ballet, young dancers at Rejoice have an opportunity to be taught by and dance with professional dancers. Three African American dancers with the Nashville Ballet give their time to teach and mentor Rejoice students. The personal relationships forged between these dancers and their students help lead these young people to embrace a future of success in their chosen career—be it dance or some other pursuit. Rejoice dancers take what they have learned through their Nashville Ballet mentors and become mentors themselves to younger Rejoice dancers. They are responsible for making sure these younger dancers are encouraged and uplifted, organized and prepared.

Rejoice provides excellent quality classical ballet instruction for students while simultaneously prioritizing development of the whole child. The organization's Four Pillars Program reinforces this holistic approach through the exploration of topics such as health, diversity, life skills, and spiritual formation. Each month, community experts present to Rejoice dancers on topics such as healthy eating, racial reconciliation, dealing with individuals who have special needs, injury prevention, and preparing for post-high school success.

The Holloway Family Foundation has supported Rejoice for the past several years, and each year I have seen first-hand how the programs at Rejoice School of Ballet have taken young people who had little drive and hope, and nurtured them through high school and beyond. Even students who stopped dancing to pursue other interests credit Rejoice with helping them learn how to prioritize and plan. Every low-income community deserves a ballet school like Rejoice where young people with an interest in dance can learn and grow in an affordable, encouraging, accepting and challenging atmosphere.

Thank you for considering Rejoice School of Ballet for this prestigious award!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beth Heimburger".

Beth Heimburger

May 10, 2019

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Governor's Arts Committee,

I am writing to recommend Rejoice School of Ballet as a strong candidate to receive the Arts Leadership Award from the Governor's Arts Award Committee. As Artistic Director of Nashville Ballet, I am a strong believer in the transformative power of dance. For the professional dancer, daily ballet class nourishes, feeding the soul and disciplining the body. For the audience, attending a live performance transports, taking viewers out of their ordinary lives to visit an enchanted lakeside or a kingdom of sweets.

For the past 19 years, Rejoice has both nourished and transported students, providing a safe and encouraging outlet for at-risk African American and other disadvantaged youth to learn to dance - one of the few affordable after-school arts programs in our tough North and East Nashville neighborhoods. Through Rejoice, youth, for whom life may be a series of daily trials and upheavals, have an opportunity to study an art form that demands an open spirit as much as a trained body. Rejoice teaches youth to be self-motivated, focused, and dedicated - to persevere through discomfort in pursuit of continuing to perfect an art form. These skills can be applied to life as much as to dance. A dedicated group of teachers and mentors creates a supportive environment, setting an example that lives up to the Rejoice motto, "Teaching great dancers to be great people."

Please consider Rejoice School of Ballet for this award which would provide additional support for this deserving organization that works so diligently to ensure that Nashville's disadvantaged youth can pursue excellent arts instruction in an artistically challenging and emotionally nurturing environment.

Sincerely Yours,



Paul Vasterling
Artistic Director of Nashville Ballet

Rouse, Elizabeth



TENNESSEE ARTS COMMISSION | 2021 GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

It is with distinct pleasure that we nominate Elizabeth Rouse, President & CEO of ArtsMemphis, for the Tennessee Arts Commission 2021 Governor's Arts Awards in the Arts Leadership Award category.

ArtsMemphis' mission is to sustain Memphis' world-renowned cultural vitality and strengthen local communities through the arts. Elizabeth's mission is ArtsMemphis. Elizabeth's career is not a subset of her identity but rather an all-encompassing commitment that she spends every hour of her day representing, serving and advancing.

Elizabeth has served ArtsMemphis since 2006 in several critical roles, including Chief Development Officer and Chief Operating Officer, demonstrating complete organizational knowledge to prepare her for the President & CEO position, which she has held since 2015. Rouse's quick rise within the organization attests to her leadership internally and externally as an advocate and passionate supporter of the Memphis arts community.

During her tenure, Elizabeth has essentially shaped and guided every touchpoint and element of ArtsMemphis, which acts as the pulse for Memphis and Shelby County's arts experiences and helps foster rich, collaborative, impactful and accessible arts programming for all ages. Its role is to convene both sides of the equation, reinvesting and reassuring a powerful return. Elizabeth's presence is synonymous to the organization's, as she convenes and connects the missions of over 70 organizations and thousands of individual artists with the greater community of donors, attendees and supporters.

Rouse has successfully managed and overseen yearly fundraising budgets of around \$2.5 million, and she continues to carry the weight of development work on behalf of the organization. As COO, Rouse impacted local arts organizations by streamlining ArtsMemphis' grant making process and facilitating ten grant programs, representing 175 grants to over 60 organizations.

Under Elizabeth's leadership, ArtsMemphis increased its grant-making capacity for local organizational operating support from 22 organizations in 2017 to 48 organizations in 2021, 41% of which have a BIPOC leader. Changes in eligibility and decision-making practices, which Elizabeth established, have enabled ArtsMemphis to have a deeper and broader impact on the organizations and their audiences. ArtsMemphis' grantee organizations now serve 64% more citizens holistically, illustrating a 75% increase of youth served, a 16% increase of seniors served, a 78% increase of citizens with disabilities served, and a 75% increase of citizens of color served. These data points demonstrate a facet of Rouse's implementation of ArtsMemphis' "Be the Change" committee and plan, which she established with ArtsMemphis' board of directors to focus on issues of racial justice and inclusion to ensure priorities are considered in all areas of organizational operations.

ArtsMemphis[®]

From a financial standpoint, Elizabeth's fiduciary responsibility has enabled ArtsMemphis to establish a reserve fund, pay off its line of credit for the first time since 2001, and grow its endowment, which has successfully supported ArtsMemphis operations and maintained a corpus to ensure sustainability. ArtsMemphis has made significant steps toward a model in which the nonprofit can successfully raise funds one year in advance of grant distribution. The trusting relationship Elizabeth has nurtured with donors facilitated ArtsMemphis' ability to move to a new model of raising funds in one year and granting the following.

During a tumultuous year for the arts sector at large, Elizabeth's leadership enabled swift action at the beginning of the pandemic to develop the Artist Emergency Fund by April 1, 2020. Early data, which ArtsMemphis proactively solicited, indicated that the population most immediately and significantly affected by the closedown of the arts sector were artists. Partnering with Music Export Memphis and with initial funds of \$55,000, the fund ultimately provided \$487,000 in relief funds to 640 local artists across all disciplines. Elizabeth ensured that as many people as possible could benefit from the Artist Emergency Fund, including all employees of local arts organizations. Because of success of the Artist Emergency Fund, ArtsMemphis is now positioned to expand its successful ArtsAccelerator grant, which propels artists in a critical juncture in their careers and are intended to deepen and expand artistic work. The grant can now support artists beyond the visual arts discipline and on a more expedited timeline than originally planned. Since inception, the ArtsAccelerator grant has provided funding to 37 artists totaling \$165,000.

Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, under Elizabeth's leadership, ArtsMemphis has accelerated achievement timelines for many articulated goals. Elizabeth's tireless dedication to the arts sector could not be more deserving of this honor. Shelby County, the City of Memphis, and the State of Tennessee are stronger today because of Elizabeth Rouse.

The five attached letters of support from ArtsMemphis' full staff, ArtsMemphis' board chair Pat Danehy, and leaders of Hyde Family Foundation, Ballet Memphis, and Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne speak further to her admirable leadership.

Thank you for your consideration.



March 26, 2021

Tennessee Arts Commission
Attn: Governor's Arts Awards Committee
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

To the Members of the Awards Committee:

This letter is in support of the nomination of Elizabeth Rouse, President and CEO of ArtsMemphis for the Tennessee Arts Commission 2021 Governor's Arts Award in the Arts Leadership Award category. We, the staff of ArtsMemphis, work alongside Elizabeth each day witnessing her leadership and unwavering commitment to the overall sustainability of the arts and the integrity of ArtsMemphis.

We can think of no one better suited for this recognition.

Elizabeth Rouse, in her 5 years as President & CEO, has created an organizational culture guided by mission and vision. Her energy and enthusiasm for sustaining the arts sector is exceptional and motivating. Her work ethic propels us to work hard yet happily, with a firm belief that sustaining the arts sector truly impacts individual lives and creates a better community for us all.

Under her leadership, ArtsMemphis has redesigned our cornerstone programs for artists and arts organizations, expanding our service and support to more diverse artists and Black-and Brown-led organizations that prioritize people of color. Her vision has placed ArtsMemphis on a trajectory to support the full spectrum of our arts sector, increasing support in under-resourced communities, to ensure that every Shelby County resident experiences the impact of the arts in their lives.

Elizabeth empowers each of us to construct a work plan to reach organizational goals. Under her guidance, despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, we have accelerated rather than curtailed achievement timelines within the 2020-2023 strategic plan, with significant success in attaining internal financial goals.

During this time of adversity, Elizabeth's skills as an effective administrator, fearless leader, and trusting colleague have enabled the staff to work cohesively while operating from six separate locations.

She continues to motivate each of us every day.

Thank you,

Josie Ballin,
Dir. of Marketing and
Donor Engagement

Colleen Chandler
Grants & Initiatives Manager

Tracy Lauritzen Wright
Chief Operating Officer

Ellen Lester
Chief Financial Officer

Kelsea Lewis
Development and
Operations Coordinator

ArtsMemphis[®]



March 23, 2021

Tennessee Arts Commission
Attn: Governor's Arts Awards Committee
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

Dear Esteemed Members of the Awards Committee:

I enthusiastically submit this letter to support the nomination of my colleague, Elizabeth Rouse, President & CEO of ArtsMemphis, for a Governor's Arts Award.

Elizabeth is recognized as a national leader in the field of arts and culture. Through her leadership of ArtsMemphis over the last 15 years, Elizabeth has become highly regarded for utilizing arts and culture as a powerful tool for community engagement, dialogue, and unity. Elizabeth frequently shares her expertise and experiences with the leaders of other local arts agencies around the country. It is on this national stage where she proudly carries the banner of Memphis as a city in which arts and cultural nonprofits and independent artists contribute to a sense of belonging and renewal – especially during times of adversity.

It is often said that the best way to predict the future is to create it. As the pandemic ends, American cities that retain their quality of life and a unifying sense of cultural identity will be well positioned to rebuild their economies and their people. Under Elizabeth's watch, Memphis's vibrant arts and cultural scene is leading the way. ArtsMemphis stepped up over the last year – and indeed long before COVID-19 – to help nonprofits and artists stay strong so they can help build a brighter future.

Elizabeth exemplifies greater Memphis as an attractive, vibrant place where people are proud to build their lives and their livelihoods. She is an asset to the entire state of Tennessee.

You have the privilege of reviewing many worthwhile proposals. Thank you for considering Elizabeth for this award. She is most deserving of the honor.

Sincerely,

Susan Mendenhall
President

ADDRESS

**Arts United of
Greater Fort Wayne**
300 East Main Street
Fort Wayne, IN 46802

PHONE

260 424-0646 *office*
260 424-2783 *fax*

WWW

ArtsUnited.org



Dear Governor's Arts Awards Committee,

I am writing in support of my friend and colleague, Elizabeth Rouse, President and CEO of ArtsMemphis. Elizabeth and I have worked together now for over a decade in various capacities. I first met Elizabeth when I was the arts program officer at the Hyde Family Foundation and she was new to the ArtsMemphis team. I spent a decade at the foundation and during that time I was named to the ArtsMemphis board of directors where I served on the Executive Committee for many years, including during the leadership search process that led to the promotion of Elizabeth to President and CEO. Now we are in the third iteration of our professional relationship, as I recently became a grantee partner when I was named President and CEO of Ballet Memphis in August of 2020.

Both at the foundation and in my role as a board director, I grew to admire and respect Elizabeth's approach to leadership. Her measured yet active style of communication ensures that all stakeholders and partners feel seen and their contributions are valued. She understands the importance of outreach and engagement-especially with historically under-represented populations-and works diligently to ensure ArtsMemphis' grantee investment portfolio equitably represents *all* of our community.

Elizabeth is a tireless representative for the sector and I continue to be amazed by her dedication. She has stewarded ArtsMemphis through major organizational evolutions (including a strategic redesign of several core programs to make them more operationally efficient and responsive to partner and community need), and through it all she has maintained an optimistic and focused spirit. Her selfless energy and commitment to ensuring the sustainability to our city's arts ecosystem is admirable in its scale, scope, and significance.

I proudly recommend Elizabeth Rouse for the Tennessee Governor's Arts Leadership Award and look forward to formally honoring my friend and colleague with the rest of Tennessee later this year.

With Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gretchen Wollert McLennon".

Gretchen Wollert McLennon
President and CEO



HYDE FAMILY FOUNDATIONS

17 WEST PONTOTOC AVENUE, SUITE 200 MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38103
901.685.3400 FAX 901.683.7478

March 26, 2021

Dear Governor's Arts Awards Committee

It is my absolute pleasure to recommend Elizabeth Rouse for the Tennessee Arts Commissions Governor's Arts Awards. As president of ArtsMemphis, Elizabeth has served in a critical role for the cultural sector serving our community as one of the foremost cultural intermediaries.

Under Elizabeth's direction, ArtsMemphis has transformed from a pass-through organization to an active intermediary raising millions of dollars to support Memphis' cultural ecosystem. Over the past 58 years, ArtsMemphis has granted a total of \$85M to our cultural institutions. Currently, the organization contributes roughly \$2.5M to over 70 cultural nonprofits and dozens of individual artists. The impact and reach of ArtsMemphis have supported a flourishing artistic and cultural community in Memphis.

Moreover, Elizabeth has worked tirelessly to create more equitable grantmaking processes with an intense focus on supporting grassroots and Black and Brown-led organizations. While the country continues to grapple with issues on race and inequality, ArtsMemphis has made significant strides to equitably fund many organizations within our city, laying the groundwork for supporting a level of cultural density easily accessible by our citizens.

Finally, along with support from Memphis Music Initiative and Music Export Memphis, Elizabeth will lead the recovery and resilience effort to support a strong return of the cultural sector post-pandemic.

I hope you all will consider Elizabeth's nomination for this award. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Teresa Slovan, President

Hyde Family Foundation



NEWSOUTH CAPITAL MANAGEMENT, INC.

April 20, 2021

Tennessee Arts Commission
Attn: Governor's Arts Awards Committee
401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

To the Members of the Awards Committee:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of ArtsMemphis, this letter is in support of the nomination of Elizabeth Rouse, President and CEO of ArtsMemphis for the Tennessee Arts Commission 2021 Governor's Arts Award in the Arts Leadership Award category. We are honored to have her lead our organization and believe she is worthy of this award.

In 2015, Elizabeth was promoted to the CEO role after 10 years of service as both Chief Development Officer and Chief Operating Officer. Since taking over the organization, ArtsMemphis has experienced significant growth and improved operations. Additionally, we believe we have strengthened our position as the convener and connector for the arts community in West Tennessee.

As it specifically relates to her leadership of the organization, highlights since 2015 include:

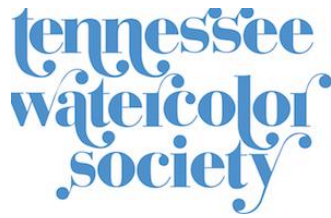
- A more diverse board of directors;
- A strategic focus on financial stability and accountability;
- A greater emphasis on active and effective committees;
- An increased number of annual operating support grant recipients (from 22 to 48) emphasizing smaller and more diverse organizations;
- A revamped and intentional community communications effort;
- An emphasis on effective hiring practices, staff chemistry and development;

Thank you for considering Elizabeth for this award. We can think of no person more worthy of this honor.

On behalf of our Board of Directors,

Patrick Danehy
Board Chair

Tennessee Watercolor Society



May 27, 2019

To the Members of the Committee for the 2019 Governor's Arts Award,

It is with great pride and admiration that I nominate the Tennessee Watercolor Society for the Arts Leadership Award. For forty-eight years, the Tennessee Watercolor Society (TnWS) has been impacting the lives of Artists statewide, as well as benefitting the Arts and Culture of Tennessee, by providing support through programming, outreach and educational opportunities.

Having been a board member and volunteer for almost 20 years, I have seen the lives of so many artists affected by this wonderful Arts Community. Personally, I now have artist friends, acquaintances and mentors across the state that never would have been possible. As with so many other artists, there is always an opportunity to learn something new when interacting. I would like to introduce you to this wonderful organization led by volunteers for almost a half of a century.

TnWS Purpose: The purpose of TnWS is to elevate the stature of watercolor and to educate the public to the significance of watercolor, and all watermedia on paper, as an important, creative and permanent painting medium. TnWS works to further the interest of watermedia painters with our programs, workshops, exhibits, both competitive and non-competitive, while supporting all of the visual arts.

Who we are: TnWS is a 501c3 non-profit, all volunteer, organization. TnWS offers 'open' membership to any watermedia artist that is a resident of Tennessee, age 18 and over. This translates to artists joining without going through a jurying process. TnWS embraces beginning artists, emerging artists and established artists equally. TnWS programs are all inclusive. TnWS works to support our members with both painting education and instruction in the business of Art education.

History: The TnWS membership has been represented by artists statewide from its very beginning. When first exploring the possibility of a statewide organization in 1969, Chattanooga Artist, Mary Britten Lynch (our founder and still an honored member), began the process by contacting Budd Bishop, Director of the Hunter Museum in Chattanooga, George Cress, Chairman of the University of Tennessee Chattanooga Art Department, and Kermit "Buck" Ewing, Head of the University of Tennessee Knoxville Art Department. All were very supportive of a state organization and provided lists of artists from across the state. The "Tennessee Watercolorists" became an organization in 1971. The name was later changed, along with the national trend, to become the "Tennessee Watercolor Society".

The first TnWS meeting was held in Nashville at the University Club at Vanderbilt. It was attended by an impressive list of influential artists, including Mary Britten Lynch, Chairman, Anton Weiss, Don Carmichael, Louise LeQuire, Mildred Cantrell, along with Gordon Holl and Norman Worrell of the Tennessee Arts Commission. A Chattanooga artist and architect, Jim Franklin, provided expertise in

organizing and writing the bylaws. Memphis artist, Jason Williamson accepted the challenge to become the first TnWS President with the support of 26 founding members.

Community: TnWS continues to be a true statewide organization having Board and Committee members that live in communities across the state. To best serve our expansive membership, averaging two hundred fifty members, the state is sectioned into Regions. The Regions are based on the major TN cities: Region I-Memphis, Region II-Nashville, Region III-Chattanooga, Region IV-Knoxville and Region V-Tri-Cities of Northeast TN. Within these Regions, smaller artist communities are formed along with partnerships with local businesses, galleries, other art organizations and Sponsors. TnWS leads many events to bring the statewide membership together. From our Juried Exhibitions, which are a center of activity, to local activities, as well as the new world of online, social networking, our members have many opportunities to be involved.

Exhibition History and Outreach: The first Annual Juried Exhibition was held in 1972 at the prestigious Hunter Museum in Chattanooga. Highly regarded Ohio Artist and Author, Robert Laessig, AWS, served as juror for the Exhibition. It was a great success. Artists and collectors from across Tennessee attended the opening.

Starting out as Annual Juried Exhibitions, they have been highly anticipated by artists, patrons and the general public alike. The Juried Exhibitions have been hosted around the state by rotation through each of the different Regional communities. With each Exhibition, there is a basic plan that has been established as a guide. But then, each Exhibition takes on the personality of the hosting community by involving local businesses, other art organizations, patrons and sponsors.

Jurors for Exhibitions: As with the first Juried Exhibition of 1972, we employ a non-Tennessee resident, nationally and/or internationally known, published, artist/instructor to serve as the Exhibition Juror. It is our standard of practice for an unbiased process, that they not be TN residents. That TnWS employs such highly regarded artists, sets a high profile for our Exhibitions and enhances the experience for our artists and the public.

The TnWS Juried Exhibitions are open for entry to all Tennessee watermedia artists, age 18 and over. In the early decades, **Annual** Juried Exhibitions rotated to a different Region each year followed by a *Traveling Exhibit*, comprised of a portion of the original exhibition, which then visited *each* region. Presenting **Annual** Juried Exhibitions ended with the 1997 Exhibition. After a 3-year hiatus, the 2000 Juried Exhibition, held at Belmont University in Nashville, was then the first **Biennial** Exhibition which continues today.

Catalog: The 2000 Juried Exhibition also added a new project for TnWS. We changed from providing booklets which accompanied the **Annual** Exhibitions, that featured the award-winning paintings, to producing an informative, inclusive, full color catalog for each **Biennial** Exhibition. One copy is given at no cost to each TnWS member, Exhibition selected Artists and our Sponsors. Extra catalogs are printed for sale to the public and for future marketing.

Exhibition Workshops: With each Juried Exhibition, the serving juror / artist also leads a much-anticipated workshop at the host venue. For artists to be able to learn from such highly regarded instructors, has had a tremendous impact on hundreds of artists over the decades. Many participants may be from remote areas where such opportunities are not otherwise available. Others are art teachers who then take new ideas and techniques back to the classroom for children and adults. Many are artists working to better their skills which can transform their career path. TnWS works to set our workshop fees in a reasonable manner allowing more artists to afford attending.

Prestige and Awards: TnWS Juried Exhibitions have always been considered an honor in which to be accepted and to then be eligible for one of our generous sponsor awards. Signature status, earned after three acceptances, has often helped to propel many of our members into the world of Regional, National and International Juried Exhibitions thus furthering their careers.

As of 2018, TnWS has hosted thirty-six Juried Exhibitions offering monetary Awards. To provide those Awards, TnWS has been the recipient of thousands of dollars in sponsorships. The Awards are given in the form of cash, purchase and/or artist merchandise. Every dollar of the donated funds/gifts goes directly to the juror-selected, award-winning, artists. The Purchase awards have placed many of our artists into private and public collections. Two of our longest running Purchase Award sponsors are First Tennessee Bank - Chattanooga and Jeffrey Shoham, owner of Jerry's Artarama located in Knoxville (and in other states). Each Juried Exhibition has offered a generous award structure with the last 10 exhibitions averaging approximately \$12,000.00, in cash, purchase and/or artist merchandise per Exhibition. That totals almost \$120,000.00 given to artists over the course of those 10 Exhibitions. Our Sponsors include local and statewide businesses, patrons and awards collected by groups of our members, and their families, for special accolades and memorials.

Traveling Exhibit Outreach: The Juried Exhibitions facilitate another huge outreach program, the TnWS Exhibition *Traveling Exhibits*. In the early Annual Exhibition days, forty paintings were chosen by the jurors to travel. They were packaged in custom wooden crates and traveled by a moving van to each Region. That process eventually proved to be too intensive for our volunteers. The program was then put on hold, in the mid-1990's.

In an effort to continue to provide an even greater outreach program, in 2004, the Board created our first professionally produced **Exhibition Video**. Along with various other filmed elements, the serving Juror / Artist was filmed giving critiques of a selection of the Exhibition paintings. Critiques are a very important educational tool for artists, students and viewers. The videos added a new depth to the program as they were shared with many other organizations, high school art programs and were played across the state by various PBS stations. The Knoxville PBS station produced the 2008 video. We continued the video program for the 2006, 2008 and the 2010 Biennial Juried Exhibitions. TnWS had the assistance of TAC Arts Project Grants for two of those videos to make them possible.

The program enjoyed great success but became too expensive to continue. The 2010 Juried Biennial Exhibition in Cleveland, TN produced the last **Exhibition Video** and reinstated a *Traveling Exhibit*. With the availability of new, stream-lined, individual, padded, protective traveling covers for the paintings, the process of transfer is easier and manageable. The Biennial Traveling Exhibits now contain thirty juror-chosen paintings, from the main exhibits' sixty plus paintings. In 2014, TnWS was awarded grant support for the *Juried Biennial Traveling Exhibits* from the Chattanooga based, Lyndhurst Foundation. With the support of the Lyndhurst Foundation grants, the *Traveling Exhibits* are driven from three to five venues, by our volunteers, in rented vehicles across the state. Venues have included rural locations such as the Pryor Gallery at Columbia State Community College in Columbia, the West Tennessee Regional Art Center (WTRAC) in Humboldt, a private gallery in Cookeville, the Sycamore Shoals State Park Visitor's Center in Elizabethton and in larger communities such as the Customs House Museum in Clarksville, the Arts Alliance in Knoxville and the Association for Visual Arts (AVA) in Chattanooga.

Student Outreach and Awards: From the early Exhibitions, there were programs to honor an Art Student and their artwork who received a monetary Award at the Exhibition Events. At the 2014 Biennial Juried Exhibition held in Franklin, on the campus of the O'More College of Design, a new program was started to enhance the art-student outreach. TnWS created a \$1000 College Scholarship Program to be given to a graduating high school art student. The student is chosen in partnership with Tennessee Art Educators Association (TAEA) through their high school annual exhibitions. We have now awarded scholarships to

three high school art students. Each lived in the Region that hosted those Exhibitions: 2014-Franklin, 2016-Knoxville and 2018-Clarksville. The Scholarship recipients are included in our Opening Day Activities and Awards Program with their families. It is a wonderful moment to present these aspiring young Artists with recognition and help to further their college art education. We included the 2014 and the 2016 recipients in the 2016 Catalog and the 2018 winner in the 2018 Catalog.

Everyday Outreach and Community Building: While the Juried Exhibitions have been a center and focus for supporting our Purpose and our Outreach Programs, TnWS also works regularly on a local level in each Region to provide artist activities and opportunities for membership participation. To facilitate that process, we have at least one member that serves as a Contact / Coordinator in each Region. Each Region coordinates events according to the needs and opportunities in their communities. For example, the Regional Contact for the Nashville Region, our largest with 100 plus members, coordinates non-juried exhibits around the middle TN area, field trips to exhibits, socials and communicates through e-news providing fellow artists' news, activities and opportunities. The Regional Contacts serve also as a resource for TnWS questions, connections and artist support.

Communications and keeping up with technology: In 2002, before electronics became accessible to most of our members, we branded and developed more in-depth **newsletters**, the *ArtBeat* (Spring and Fall complete with "Member accolades") and the *Medium* (interim board and opportunity news). At that time, they were printed in black and white and were mailed to all members.

With the increase of member accessibility to electronic communication and email, so much more communication and involvement has been accomplished. That includes changing to electronic newsletters. Still created by our volunteers with a well-planned format, the newsletters are now delivered to each member's "In Box" in full color and with more articles and features. The few members without emails, are not forgotten and are sent hard copies. Regional Contacts also form a chain of communication to share immediate news through emails whether it is statewide or community centered.

Website: TnWS evolved to also provide a beautiful, professional website, www.tnws.org, for which we employ an East Tennessee webhost. Not having a brick-and-mortar home, it serves in that sense, for our members and the public, world-wide, to research more about us, conduct business with programs and see beautiful examples of watermedia artwork.

Online Juried Exhibitions: The improved TnWS website, along with improved electronic processes, soon provided the opportunity for yet another new TnWS outreach program. In 2013, TnWS created an Online Juried Exhibition. They are offered only on the odd-numbered years, between the Biennial Juried Exhibitions. This project is able to be performed by fewer volunteers and at less expense. The process is an online entry, selections are made by the Artist Juror electronically and it is then exhibited only on www.tnws.org. The award offerings are smaller as the budget is self-sustained through the entry fees. TnWS is also using this new program as an opportunity to respond to a request from some of our members that want to be able to exhibit paintings that are executed on non-paper substrates. Now our Online Exhibitions allow the entered images to be painted on non-paper / experimental surfaces vs the eligibility-requirement of paper surfaces only for the Biennial Juried Exhibitions. As with the Biennial Juried Exhibitions, TnWS employs a non-Tennessee resident, nationally known Juror for the Online Exhibitions.

Interactive Community: It has been the latest program addition of a **TnWS Facebook group**, that has brought our dream of more timely and instant social networking into fruition. We have a TnWS FB community that is run by two volunteers. It is an easier and effective way for Artists to connect. It is exciting to follow the questions artists ask and answer, suggestions that are given and the inspirations that are shared (safely without politics or judgment). Our volunteers keep it lively and invite themed opportunities for posting images. With membership, in the closed FB group, limited to people living in

TN, the hope is that proximity may translate virtual relationships into actual TnWS memberships. Our TnWS FB group has expanded to more than three hundred participants, of whom fewer than half are TnWS members.

While we are limited only by what our volunteers and finances can support, TnWS has grown to new heights staying current in activity, opportunities, community and outreach across Tennessee. In serving our purpose, and our many missions, TnWS has had a long history of demonstrating significant contributions which have impacted and advanced the value of the Arts and Cultural life of Tennessee.

Sincerely,

Wendy L. Latimer
Immediate Past President
Tennessee Watercolor Society

PS: Included with this nomination of the Tennessee Watercolor Society, please find letters of support from four of our sponsors/partners of many years and a testimonial from one of our current Board members:

- 1) The Lyndhurst Foundation of Chattanooga that has provided grant support for our last three Biennial Traveling Exhibitions.
- 2) The West Tennessee Regional Art Center's (WTRAC) Director, Bill Hickerson, who provides Gallery space and programs as part of our Biennial Traveling Exhibit venues. WTRAC will serve as the main Exhibition venue for our Biennial Juried 2020 Exhibition.
- 3) Jerry's Artarama of Knoxville's General Manager, Scott Manning, who travels across the state biennially, along with various Artist Materials Reps, to provide demonstrations at no cost to the artists and audience along with providing samples of new products.
- 4) Customs House Museum, Clarksville, Terri Jordan, Curator, has been a venue for Biennial Juried Traveling Exhibits multiple times and hosted both our 2006 and 2018 Biennial Juried Exhibitions, along with the associated festivities.
- 5) A testimonial from a TnWS Board Member. Tuva Stephens started with TnWS after retiring from teaching in 2014. TnWS has been a great support to her successful and award-winning career as well as being a stepping stone for her to become a leader in many other arts organizations.

JERRY'S ARTARAMA

KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

5220 Homberg Drive Knoxville Tn. 37919 865-588-0738

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

May 20 2019

Dear Governor's Arts Awards Committee Members,

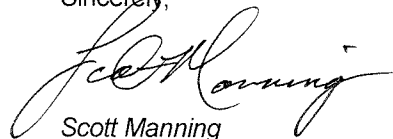
I am writing on behalf of Jerry's Artarama of Knoxville to support the nomination and consideration of the Tennessee Watercolor Society for the Arts Leadership Award.

Our company has been working with this organization for the past 20 years and more including past participation with Rechenbach's Arts in Knoxville going back to the inception of the Society. I have personally have been honored to work with these fine people for the last 15 years. The Level of work that is produced by the Society is beyond belief until you actually attend the exhibitions. Many of the members are charter and signature members of some of the most exclusive Watercolor Societies nationally and internationally.

However, I contend that the Educational benefits that the group provides to the communities at large is immeasurable as the show travels to many parts of our state many times in some of the more rural parts of Tennessee. The workshops and educational aspects given to the General public is great and serves as an inspiration to younger artist that truly need to see what is possible with talent and hard work.

Once again I hope you will consider the longstanding and dedicated work of this highly regarded group of educators and unquestionably talented artist in consideration of the Arts Leadership Award.

Sincerely,



Scott Manning
General Manager



LYNDHURST FOUNDATION

KATHLEEN NOLTE, PROGRAM OFFICER

kathleen@lyndhurstfoundation.org

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

April 24, 2019

Dear Governor's Arts Awards Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Lyndhurst Foundation to express our support for the nomination and consideration of the Tennessee Watercolor Society for the Arts Leadership Award.

I first began working with Ms. Wendy Latimer, Immediate Past President, nearly five years ago upon joining the Lyndhurst Foundation staff. During this time, I have been struck with the tremendous dedication to the education and promotion of watercolor as a medium by this all-volunteer organization. Lyndhurst has helped to support the Biennial Exhibition, and through our partnership with this facet of the organization I am aware of the herculean effort required to put on this traveling show statewide. This effort has paid off in spades through the respect garnered from artists and the general public due to quality of the exhibitions and of the artworks and artists represented.

In short, over their nearly fifty-year history of showcasing talented Tennessee artists, elevating the medium of watercolor, holding workshops and other educational events, the Tennessee Watercolor Society has both impacted and advanced the value of the arts. Even more impressive is that they have done this over such a long history with no paid staff.

I hope you will consider recognizing this organization's efforts and dedication to the arts in Tennessee through the Arts Leadership Award.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Nolte

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780

May 22, 2019

To Members of the Committee:

RE: Testimonial for the support of
Tennessee Watercolor Society

My name is Tuva Stephens and the Tennessee Watercolor Society has given me the incentive, motivation and inspiration to become a national / international award-winning artist.

TnWS was my first link or step in becoming more than “just a high school art teacher” in regards to my artistic professional career. I became a TnWS member in 2005 when my teacher friends encouraged me to get involved with TnWS. These teacher friends had seen the 2004 TnWS “fabulous” Exhibition at The Ned in Jackson. I received my copy of their 2004 exhibition catalog and was convinced I should become involved. I have since had my work accepted into the following TnWS Biennial Exhibitions: 2006, 2008*, 2010, 2012*, 2014, 2016*, and 2018.*(*Denotes awards) Currently I am the TnWS 2020 37th Exhibition Chairperson. The 37th TnWS Exhibition will be held in the fall of 2020 at the West Tennessee Regional Art Center in Humboldt. I am also the founder of the TnWS \$1000 Scholarship given to high school students through a partnership with Tennessee Art Educators Association (TAEA) through their high school annual exhibitions.

It was an honor to serve as the TnWS Secretary (2008-10) and President (2010-12). It was through participating in their statewide exhibitions and involvement in leadership roles I have been propelled into the national / international exhibitions and art organizations. TnWS's workshops were of great benefit to me. The TnWS sponsored workshop by international artist, Cheng-Khee Chee changed my life from an amateur artist to become a professional artist. Another important international TnWS workshop teacher/juror was George James who influenced me greatly. *My involvement and artistic success with TnWS led directly to my accomplishments with other national organizations.* I am a Signature Member of the prestigious National Watercolor Society International (NWS) San Pedro, CA; Transparent Watercolor Society International (TWSA) Kenosha, WI; and Watercolor West International (WW) Brea, CA). I am also a Signature Member of Watercolor Society of Alabama,* Kentucky Watercolor Society,* Mississippi Watercolor Society,* Missouri Watercolor Society International,* Southern Watercolor*(18 states) and last but not least Tennessee Watercolor Society.* Signature Membership is a status attained by having artwork accepted into three exhibitions. NWS is the exception in that I was juried into that organization upon my first acceptance through the body of my work. My watercolor paintings have been featured in the Best of Watercolor - *Splash 15: Creative Solutions* and *Art Journey: Animals, A Collection of Inspiring Contemporary Masterworks*.

My TnWS leadership as the President and Exhibition chairperson (2015, 2016, 2020) gave me the experience to accept an invitation onto the Board of Southern Watercolor Society (18 states). *I was fortunate to help bring Southern Watercolor Exhibitions to the state of Tennessee such as Clarksville's Customs House 2015/2020 and Columbia (TN) Community College (2016). Due to that fact many more TnWS members have become part of Southern Watercolor Society (18 states) artists. The SW exhibition venues change to different states each year. This is an example of Tennessee Artists having exposure in other states.*

For the past three years I have been invited to exhibit my art works in the Fabriano Italy's World Watercolor Exhibition. It has been exciting that this also connects back to TnWS. Architect and world renowned artist from Memphis, Laurin McCracken, TnWS, offered this invitation to share and participate in this world exhibition. Back in 2004 McCracken was the artist whose work had won Best of Show in the TnWS Juried Biennial Exhibition held at The Ned in Jackson, Tennessee. He also founded our TnWS Totally Transparent Watercolor Award that still continues in TnWS exhibitions.

Where does it end? I only know that without Tennessee Watercolor Society, I may very well have been "an amateur Tennessee Sunday painter." Kudos to the art organization, Tennessee Watercolor Society, who has done and continues in the pursuit of enriching the lives of rural and city artists and their communities across the whole state Tennessee! They are so deserving of special recognition by the Tennessee Arts Commission.

Tuva Stephens, NWS-TWSA-WW-SW (WSA/KWS/MoWS/MSWS/TnWS)
190 David Court McKenzie, TN 38201
(731-352-5852 / 731-418-1293)
tuvar@charter.net
TuvaStephens.com

May 15, 2019

Governor's Arts Awards Committee
Tennessee Arts Commission
401 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243-0780



To Members of the Committee:

It is with pleasure that I provide this letter supporting the nomination of the Tennessee Watercolor Society (TnWS) for a Governor's Arts Award in the Arts Leadership category. I've been affiliated with TnWS for most of the twenty years I've served as executive director of the West Tennessee Regional Art Center (WTRAC) in Humboldt, Tennessee.

In 2002, when I was also serving as president of the Jackson Art Association (JAA), I was honored to join the local arrangements committee for the Watercolor Society's biennial juried exhibition, presented at the Ned McWherter West Tennessee Cultural Arts Center in Jackson. The officers of TnWS graciously accepted my offer to prepare a TAC grant application, with JAA partnering with TnWS to request funding for a professionally-produced video documenting the exhibition. Wendy Latimer, then TnWS president, and I worked together on the financials and close out.

I was told that TnWS, a statewide arts organization, hadn't previously "been on TAC's radar." Since then, Ms. Latimer has consistently, and successfully, served as grant writer for the Society. The next TnWS president, Mary Spellings of rural West Tennessee, persuaded the organization to revive its traveling exhibition program, which allows approximately thirty paintings (including many of the top award winners) to be presented in both urban and rural arts venues across the state.

It's been a privilege for the West Tennessee Regional Art Center to serve as one of the traveling show venues. The exhibition is always well-attended and garners praise from WTRAC's visitors. In 2016, a drone video, filmed to promote the exhibition in Humboldt, received an Award of Excellence from the Tennessee Association of Museums.

WTRAC's proposal to host the full exhibition's opening in 2020, a watercolor workshop, business meeting and members' luncheon in Humboldt was accepted by the TnWS executive committee. The board and staff of WTRAC look forward with great anticipation to the exhibition and related events. It's certain to provide an outstanding example of a program furthering our mission of, "Appreciation of, and Education through, the Arts!"

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Hickerson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Hickerson
Executive Director
West Tennessee Regional Art Center
1200 Main Street
Humboldt, TN 38343
731.784.1787

THE CLARKSVILLE-MONTGOMERY COUNTY MUSEUM

May 28, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the Tennessee Watercolor Society as nominee for the *Arts Leadership Award*.

I have worked with this group of outstanding watercolorist since 2006, when we first hosted their Biennial Juried Exhibition. The members of the organization not only represent great painting talents, but are also a very professional and organized group.

They are passionate about sharing their talents and techniques with the general public, as evident through their conscious rotations of host cities and the touring of the traveling shows. With each exhibition at the Customs House Museum, The TWS members have done free programming and demonstrations for museum patrons. They have volunteered to be on hand for museum events that have fallen within the timeframe of their shows and several members have over the years graciously donated works to museum fundraisers.

While the actual members may have come and gone over time, the Tennessee Watercolor Society has continued to maintain its place as one of the state's leading art groups. They are highly deserving of the *Arts Leadership Award*.

Terri Jordan

Terri Jordan
Exhibits Curator
Customs House Museum & Cultural Center

Zenni, Liza



Governor's Arts Award Nomination
Liza Zenni, Executive Director, Arts & Culture Alliance of Greater Knoxville

Nominated by L. Duane Grieve, FAIA
Executive Director, East Tennessee Community Design Center

The Governor's Arts Awards lend a high level of visibility to the arts and culture as a public endeavor, an economic asset, and a point of state pride. One person whose life's mission is to do just that – "bring a high level of visibility to the arts and culture in East Tennessee" is Liza Zenni! It is my honor to nominate Liza for the 2021 Governor's Arts Award for "Arts Leadership."

If anyone talks "art" in any shape or form in the Knoxville area, Liza Zenni's name is sure to be in the conversation! Liza's career in nonprofit administration has spanned nearly 20 years. Since 2002 she has served as Executive Director of the Arts & Culture Alliance of Greater Knoxville, a membership-based organization of artists, arts and culture organizations, historic homes, and arts supporters in 11 East Tennessee counties. The Alliance's mission is to serve and support a diverse community of artists, arts organizations, and cultural institutions, and operates as one voice to the government, businesses, media, and the general public.

Because of Liza's leadership and track record for success, the Alliance membership has grown from fewer than 40 individual artists and 15 company members to 350 individuals and more than 100 organizations. The membership was also expanded from theater, dance, and visual arts organizations to museums and historic homes.

Liza led the creation of The Emporium Center, Knoxville's first authentic arts center. Reopening following renovations in 2004, the 28,000 square feet of flexible-use space houses multiple art galleries showcasing local and regional artists, the Arts & Culture Alliance's administrative offices, and offices for five other arts and cultural organizations. Additionally, the building houses a studio for fifteen individual artists.

In 2007 Liza oversaw the Emporium Center's expansion which encompasses an Annex for use by a broad range of community organizations. Today she is leading yet another expansion as the Alliance leases over 10,000 additional square feet. This will become a place where art emersion experiences will take place. One example is envisioning a place to show independent films continuously. The East Tennessee Community Design Center, with a volunteer, has worked closely with Liza on the programming for the concept of this space.

With Liza at the helm, the Alliance provides many services and tools to help artists and organizations become more successful, including administrative assistance, planning tools, grant preparation, and access to information services. The Alliance, in cooperation with the local arts community, proudly created Penny4Arts, a program developed in 2010 to meet the local arts community's long-term goal of serving and educating East Tennessee's children. Penny4Arts provides children an opportunity to attend local arts and culture events/activities at the maximum cost of ONE PENNY when accompanied by an adult.

The Arts & Culture Alliance is the area's premier united arts fund, distributing \$550,000 annually to local artists and arts and culture organizations. There are four components to the Alliance's Arts & Heritage Fund: Knox County Tourism Consortium Grants, Bailey Opportunity Grants, General Operating Support Grants, and Arts Build Communities (ABC) Grants in partnership with the Tennessee Arts Commission. The Arts & Heritage Fund grants provide stable financial support sources for the arts and the heritage community, broaden access to high-quality arts and heritage experiences, and foster excellence in the local arts and heritage field and its administration. In addition to these grants, Greater Knoxville's GRACE Fund was created by the Alliance as a confidential resource for local arts and culture workers facing financial emergencies who are in critical need of assistance to stay in their homes. Grace is an acronym for "Giving Relief to Arts and Culture in Emergencies." This fund will grant up to \$2,000 in emergency money for a financially struggling artist to pay for rent, utilities, medication, car repairs, or other expenses. Liza has said,

"The fund represents the arts community pulling together to make sure that those who have been a part of the field don't slip into homelessness – as long as we can help it."

Liza works tirelessly to bring quality art shows to the Knoxville area. Following is a list of exhibitions sponsored by the Alliance under Liza's direction: **The Alliance Members Show** is the largest annual exhibition of local artists in the greater Knoxville area. The show is open to individual members of the Arts & Culture Alliance, and there is no fee to participate for current individual members. The Alliance and the Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority (McGhee Tyson Airport) present a semi-annual exhibition entitled **Arts in the Airport**. This juried exhibition was developed to allow regional artists to compete and display work in the area's most visited site. The Mayor's Offices Exhibition displays the **Individual Members Artwork** on the sixth floor of the City-County Building in downtown Knoxville. The Alliance's annual **National Juried Exhibition** was developed in 2006 to provide a forum for artists to compete on a national scale and display their work. Approximately 40-50 fine artworks encompassing all styles and genres from both emerging and established artists are selected by a juror for exhibition in the beautifully-restored Emporium Center gallery. The Arts & Culture Alliance hosts the **No Bigger Than a Breadbox** biennial small works show. This national, juried exhibition is designed to celebrate the innovation of artists who create work on a small scale and in a broad range of media and styles.

Liza is a member and chair of the City of Knoxville's Public Arts Committee which was designed to "enhance the reputation of the community, contribute to the civic environment, and enrich the lives of citizens and visitors through the involvement of professional artists to integrate public artwork throughout the city." As Liza has said, "Public art gives our community a sense of place. The collection in any place should express the people's point of view on life, their sense of humor, their sorrows, the things they're most proud of. That's a beautiful thing. It builds community; it reinforces that this is who we are." Since its inception in 2008, multiple murals have been placed in the city, along with several sculptures that have enhanced the city's landscape.

Liza is also involved in hosting nominations for the Poet Laureate for the City of Knoxville. Created in 2016, the Poet Laureate serves as a public voice of Knoxville, creating city-specific works and participating in literary outreach and educational programs.

Liza brings energy and determination to everything she is doing. She is an experienced public speaker and consensus builder among diverse communities, makes public presentations, leads roundtables, committee meetings, symposia, and panel discussions. In her time at the Alliance, she has gained a reputation as a dynamic leader who can listen, build trust, and inspire cooperation among the community's divergent members. Liza has earned appointments on the City of Knoxville Mayor's Public Arts Committee, the statewide Tennesseans for the Arts Board, Maryville's College's Civic Arts Center Board, and the Executive Women's Association Executive Committee. Liza holds a BA in Theater from Brigham Young University and an MFA in Arts Administration from Yale University School of Drama. She is a graduate of the University of Tennessee's Nonprofit Executive Leadership Program and the Harvard Law School Negotiation Program. From 1990 to 1995, she was Executive Director of Theatre Bay Area, San Francisco, the largest regional theater service organization in North America.

Through the Best Behavior Creative Club Podcast, Liza talked with host and Creative Director Chris McAdoo about the motivations that led to her being a strong advocate for the arts. She was a 3rd grade student in Oak Ridge who had trouble reading and was in the lowest reading group. That year she auditioned and won a small role in *The Music Man* and felt this was the first moment she was recognized for something positive – it gave her confidence. As her social capital built, everything changed in her life, and by the end of that year, she was in the highest reading group. The arts lifted her, her spirit, and her view of herself. She went on to receive her undergraduate degree in theater and a graduate degree in Arts Administration. With all of her talents and training, Liza realized she could contribute significantly to the arts by working in a management/administrative

capacity. According to Liza, "it is a wonderful career, a wonderful journey, and I am having a great time!"

It is a special honor to recommend Liza Zenni for the Governor's Arts Award for "Arts Leadership." I have had the privilege of knowing and working with Liza for the last fifteen years. Not only did we work together for the City of Knoxville's Public Arts Committee, but we also continue to work together on the Arts & Cultural Alliance Board. The enclosed letters of support all express Liza's dedication, enthusiasm, and 24-hour, day-to-day commitment to the East Tennessee region's arts community. She is the voice for the arts, from individual artists to art-related organizations. She constantly works on potential projects to support and promote artists such as the Grace Fund and the Bailey Opportunity Fund. Evidence to this is her numerous successes with projects, grants, and visibility within The Emporium headquarters for the Alliance. Her outreach to the public includes *The Insider*, a weekly calendar of events about the arts. Her contagious enthusiasm for the arts is never-ending, and I can think of no one who deserves this honor more than Liza. I highly recommend her and I know that she will continue to be a voice for the arts, not only in our region, but also for the State of Tennessee.

Thank you for providing the opportunity for me to nominate Liza Zenni for the 2021 Governor's Arts Award for "Arts Leadership."

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "L. Duane Grieve". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "L" and "D".

L. Duane Grieve, FAIA
Executive Director, East Tennessee Community Design Center

Cristen G Haslam

March 22, 2021

Dear Governor's Arts Award Selection Committee,

I am writing to recommend Liza Zenni for the Arts Leadership Award within The Governor's Arts Awards this year. I served on the Board of the Arts and Cultural Alliance for many years before moving to Nashville and was able to see Liza in action. I kept up with her during the last ten years to follow her success.

Liza Zenni has been an outstanding Executive Director of the Arts and Cultural Alliance in Knoxville since 2002. She leads the board with enthusiasm and skill. She advocates for emerging artists and established artists with great passion. She works on behalf of the arts and culture industry in Knoxville as well as state and national levels.

Liza developed and administers Knoxville's only united arts fund, the Arts and Heritage Fund. She leads the city's Public Arts Committee and leads the grant panels for the city's Arts Build Communities fund. Her bio will give you many details of her accomplishments.

Liza lives and breaths the arts in Knoxville. She has accomplished much for this community. I wholeheartedly recommend her for this prestigious award.

Sincerely,



Crissy Haslam

L. CAESAR STAIR III

5617 Lyons View Pike

Knoxville, TN 37919

865-310-1150

lstair@bsmlaw.com

Dear Governor's Arts Award Committee:

As a former Board member and Chair of the Arts and Culture Alliance Board of Directors, I strongly urge you to award Liza Zenni the Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

Liza Zenni and arts leadership are synonymous. When Liza took over as the Executive Director of the Arts and Cultural Alliance in 2002, all of the major and minor arts organizations competed with one another for funding, including from our two local governments, Knoxville and Knox County. Needless to say this did not create the kind of cooperation and collaboration that was so badly needed between Knoxville's arts organizations.

Under Liza's leadership, the arts organizations agreed to pool their efforts and jointly apply for funding from the City and County. Liza in turn persuaded the City and County Mayors and officials of the merits of funding the arts organizations with one payment to the Arts and Cultural Alliance that it then distributed without charge to its member organizations. This took a gargantuan effort by Lisa that marked a seminal occasion for the arts community of Knoxville.

It resulted in a dramatic change in the entire culture of the arts in Knoxville. Suddenly, the mantra amongst the arts organization became a "rising tide lifts all the boats". It produced a new spirit of unity, cooperation, collaboration, and a realization that the arts as one, with one voice/face (Liza's), was much more powerful, persuasive, and effective than many individual entities speaking with many different voices, each trying desperately to be heard over the others, their competitors.

Liza did not stop there. Having unified the arts organizations under the umbrella of the Arts and Cultural Alliance and having secured funding from the City and County, she then set about to increase that funding. After accomplishing that goal of increased funding, she has fiercely protected her gains for the arts organizations with a relentless, fearless effort against all those who have sought to reduce that funding, particularly in these difficult times.

While bringing the arts organizations together to speak with one unified voice, Liza also made sure that the Arts and Cultural Alliance did not itself compete with those same organizations for their donors, as had been the case and the downfall of the previous arts umbrella organization, the Arts Council. Over the years she has negotiated leases with the City and the owners of the Emporium, the office location of the Arts and Culture Alliance, that are extremely favorable to the Alliance. Those leasing arrangements have in turn allowed the Arts and Culture Alliance to be self-sufficient. She has thus managed the staff

and business operations of the Arts and Culture Alliance to operate in the black without holding fundraisers, soliciting donors, and otherwise competing with her member arts organizations for their limited arts donor's dollars. All of the fundraising events she has initiated and conducted have been for the benefit of the Alliance's member organizations, and no fees have been charged by the Arts and Culture Alliance to the organizations for the money raised and distributed to them through the Arts & Heritage Fund.

Liza is direct and forceful, yet tactful and cautious when necessary. She is a fountain of ideas, but when she comes up with a plan or vision, she first runs it by her Board and/or Executive Committee and obtains their counsel before proceeding. Because she is so forthright, her integrity is beyond reproach. Local leaders, as well as the members of the Arts and Culture Alliance, know that Liza will not mislead them and that her word is her bond – she will do what she says. She is and has been a fearless advocate for the arts, her arts organizations and her artists. They trust her and know her to be impartial and fair to all. She is as concerned about the young struggling artist as she is the major arts organizations and devotes equal worry and time to both.

Over the past 20 years there is no one person who has had a more positive impact on the arts in Knoxville than Liza. No other person can come close to laying claim to what Liza has achieved for the arts in Knoxville through her leadership of the Arts and Culture Alliance. Her leadership has been extraordinary; her advocacy for the arts and her member organizations and artists relentless; her pursuit of the Arts and Culture Alliance's goals and objectives determined, forceful, and successful; her willingness to listen and help her artists and arts organizations, as well as her board members and others, exemplary; her passion and love for the arts unparalleled; her business acumen and efficiency admirable and noteworthy; and her humor, smile, frankness, insight, vision and ability to "herd cats" and just "get things done " refreshing and enviable.

Knoxville and the entire State of Tennessee have been extremely fortunate to have Liza Zenni as the Executive Director of the Arts and Culture Alliance for almost 20 years. She has been instrumental in and critical to the success and survival of the arts in Knoxville. Her indomitable spirit, leadership, and accomplishments are absolutely worthy of our profound admiration, gratitude, and recognition.

It is thus with great pride, joy, and pleasure that I submit this letter in support of Liza Zenni being awarded the Governor's Arts Leadership Award.

Thank you for serving on the Governor's Arts Awards Committee and taking the time to review this recommendation for Liza Zenni, who is so especially deserving and well qualified to be the recipient of this year's Arts Leadership Award.

If you have any questions or I can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,



L. Caesar Stair III

Madeline A. Rogero

418 Woodlawn Pike - Knoxville, TN 37920
rogero@comcast.net - 865-207-2098 mobile

March 18, 2021

Dear Governor's Arts Award Committee:

It is my pleasure to support the nomination of **Liza Zenni** for the **Arts Leadership Award**. I have known Liza for many years and heavily depended on her expertise during my time as Mayor of Knoxville.

As the executive director of the Arts and Culture Alliance of Greater Knoxville since 2002, Liza has greatly elevated the stature of the Arts in our community and increased the cooperation and collaboration among our many diverse arts organizations. Through the Arts & Heritage Fund, she has significantly increased the funding available to these groups.

As Mayor, I called upon Liza often to advise my administration on arts policy and funding and on special events related to promoting the Arts and on increasing Public Art in our City.

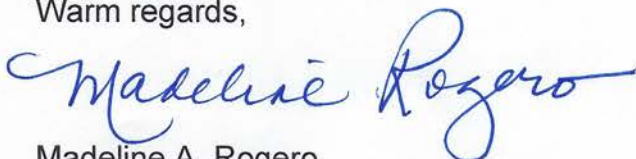
Liza expertly staffed our Public Arts Committee composed of broadly representative individuals appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council with the goal to "enhance the reputation of the community, contribute to the civic environment, and enrich the lives of citizens and visitors through the involvement of professional artists to integrate public artwork throughout the City."

She also staffed and moderated an annual Arts Grants Panel that reviewed grant requests and interviewed applicants and then made recommendations to me for city funding for the Arts.

To really appreciate Liza's passion and love for the Arts you have to watch her speak to City Council or to any assembled crowd. Her enthusiasm is contagious. Her sense of humor, ready smile, and won't-take-no-for-an-answer indefatigable spirit has been the secret sauce that has made her successful and, in turn, has impacted and elevated the way we value the Arts in Knoxville. You should also hear her sing – she is quite talented with a beautiful voice.

I submit this recommendation without hesitation and encourage you to select Liza Zenni for the Arts Leadership Award. Please let me know if you need more information.

Warm regards,



Madeline A. Rogero
Mayor, City of Knoxville (2011 - 2019)

JEFFERSON CHAPMAN
2229 DUNCAN ROAD
KNOXVILLE, TN 37919

17 MARCH 2021

TO THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD COMMITTEE

I am writing in support of the nomination of Liza Zenni for the Arts Leadership Award. As her former board chair, board member, and friend, I have worked closely with Liza since she was hired in 2002. I know of no one more passionate and supportive of both the arts industry and the individual artists, both established and beginners, than Liza. Her energy and enthusiasm are contagious; she is caring and focused on the well being of the Knoxville arts and culture community; and she is ever planning and looking ahead to promote and protect the arts.

As one can clearly see from reading Liza's bio, she is an accomplished administrator and arts advocate. Knoxville and East Tennessee have been blessed to have Liza's leadership. It is truly fitting that her accomplishments and stewardship be recognized with the Arts Leadership Award. I strongly encourage the Committee to honor this amazing woman.

Thank you for your consideration,



Jefferson Chapman
Director Emeritus, McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

KNOXVILLE
MUSEUM OF ART

March 23, 2021

Governor's Arts Award Committee
Arts Leadership Award

To whom it may concern:

I am honored to write in support of Liza Zenni's nomination for the Governor's Arts Award in the category of Arts Leadership. I can think of no one who has done more on a regional and statewide basis to advance the arts in Tennessee.

As executive director of the Arts & Culture Alliance of Greater Knoxville, Liza has been a catalyst for positive change in our region. Through hard work, patience, dedication, and sheer willpower, she has gotten diverse arts groups working together and moving in the same direction. Because of Liza's visionary leadership, the East Tennessee arts community has found its voice, and it is being heard loud and clear. Among Liza's many talents, she can (and will) belt out a Broadway tune at the drop of a hat. She has taught the greater Knoxville arts community to sing with one powerful voice, which has been instrumental in securing and growing vital local government support for the arts.

At the state level, as an active member of Tennesseans for the Arts, Liza has helped organize more than one Arts Advocacy Day in Nashville, an event that demonstrates vividly the strength of the arts all over our state. She is tireless and fearless in her advocacy for the Tennessee Arts Commission and state funding for the arts.

Liza gets up every morning ready to fight for "her" organizations. Her day job is to work on behalf of those of us in East Tennessee, but she feels an equally strong commitment to arts groups throughout the state. She cares deeply and passionately about all of us in the arts, and the arts in Tennessee are stronger for it.

She is our Mama Bear.



David Butler
Executive Director
dbutler@knoxart.org
865-617-2117