

April 1, 2020

To: State Senator Derek Slap
State Representative Tammy Exum
State Representative Jillian Gilchrest
State Representative Joseph Verrengia

We'd like to thank you for your leadership during these difficult times and your hard work in helping to keep us all safe as we navigate through the challenges of the current health crisis.

West Hartford is a community rich in culture and arts. But in order to protect audiences, supporters, artists, and staff members from the spread of COVID-19 West Hartford's arts & culture organizations have had no choice but to abruptly postpone and/or cancel many upcoming performances; place a halt on education including training classes, in-school/after-school programming, and community outreach; and delay season announcements, subscription renewals and critical fundraising events.

The old adage states: "The show must go on", but for the first time in many of our lifetimes it is just not possible, not right now. To ensure that the show will go on again once this is over, West Hartford's arts & culture organizations are asking for support from the State of Connecticut.

With operations and income coming to a standstill these vibrant organizations are facing a cash challenge as day-to-day expenses such as rent and other operational expenses still must be paid.

Most non-profit arts and culture organizations have minimal endowments and reserve to weather challenges like the current health crisis and some of our small to midsize organizations do not qualify for a majority of the SBA loans, DEDC bridge loans, and other State programs.

We are hopeful that these groups may be able to obtain some relief through the new CARES Act. If so, it will certainly help, but it may not be enough. There will be many competing for limited funds and smaller organizations may get lost in the process.

They have no collateral since they rent their facilities; and they do not have large benefactors who can serve as personal guarantors. The payback of a major unexpected loan in future budgets will create additional strains.

As our community continues to navigate the current situation, it should not go unnoticed that it is our artists and cultural institutions who are giving to all of us so generously. The outpouring of actors reading stories, museums opening virtual tours, dance classes, drawing classes, concerts online - everything for free. In our most isolated times, it is the arts and culture community that we are turning to for comfort.

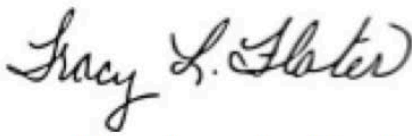
We are asking you, our elected officials, to fight for our small community arts and culture organizations as the State works to help small businesses during this crisis. Grants to small community arts and culture organizations will help ensure that these cherished institutions will be able to continue to add the vitality of their communities once this crisis passes.

Connecticut's nonprofit arts and culture industry generates \$797.3 million in economic activity in state, supports more than 23,000 jobs annually and returns \$72.3 million in revenue to local and state coffers.

Please help us make sure that these valued small community arts organizations are still in business when we get through this unprecedented time.

Again, thank you for your leadership during these difficult times. We, West Hartford's arts and culture organizations, stand by eager to work with you and look forward to hearing from you on what can be done to help.

With deepest gratitude,



Tracy Flater, Executive Director
Playhouse on Park
tflater@playhousetheatre.org



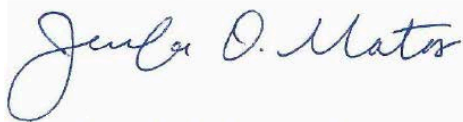
Stephanie Dattellas, Artistic Director
Ballet Theatre Company
stephanie@dancebtc.org



Thomas Caraher, President
West Hartford Symphony Orchestra
president@whso.org



Roxanne Stachelek, Executive Director
The West Hartford Art League
director@whal.org



Jennifer DiCola Matos, Executive Director
Noah Webster House & West Hartford
Historical Society
matosj@noahwebsterhouse.org



Theresa Szymanski, President
West Hartford Community Theater
t.szymanski@comcast.net



Beth Meehan, President
West Hartford Women's Chorale
info@whwchorale.org



Lori Solak, Artistic Director
Connecticut Family Theater
connecticutfamilytheatre@yahoo.com