

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive

Tara Arts Group Ltd

Adv: Sandra Davidson

Amount requested: £40,000

Base: Wandsworth

Benefit: Wandsworth

Amount recommended: £40,000

Purpose of grant request: To make our theatre and its work more accessible to disabled people by installing an accessible platform lift as part of our renovation project

Background

Tara Arts was founded in 1977 and provides a rich and diverse programme of activities and art forms. Its prime focus is to promote theatre with an Asian sensibility and to encourage members of the Asian community to feel pro-active in relation to theatre rather than merely being passive spectators. Tara Arts works in schools and runs a studio, developing new writing, emerging artists, participatory arts and new audiences. The company's touring repertoire consists of the best of 'world theatre': the classics of Indian and Greek Theatre, Shakespeare and Moliere, as well as new work from Britain and abroad.

During 2012-13 the company attracted audiences of 16,690, worked with 55 UK and international theatre companies, and with 947 artists. The company toured nationally the Moliere's classic comedy Kanjoos (Hindu for "miser") and Dick Whittington Goes to Bollywood, both sold out productions.

Funding History

None

Current Application

Tara Arts embarked on a capital campaign almost two years ago to raise funding required to undertake much-needed renovation of its existing dilapidated premises in Earlsfield, south west London. The renovation scheme is designed to create a landmark new UK centre of excellence for small-scale, cross cultural theatre. The Company commissioned an independent access audit undertaken by Shape in 2009 and reviewed in September 2011. (A copy of this report has been submitted). The company wishes to improve the accessibility of its building and seeks your support for the provision and installation of platform lift to provide access to all floors.

The proposed scheme includes:

- An enlarged auditorium with audience capacity increased by 60%
- A new multi-purpose rehearsal/workshop space for artist development, educational workshops, informal work-in-progress presentations for use of visiting artists
- An improved seating system in the auditorium
- Enhanced physical access for all users throughout the building with the provision of a lift to all floors and improves accessible toilet facilities.

A key aim of the renovation is to enable to the Company to meet its commitment to diverse cultural activities and to fully engage a wider pool of disabled and non-disabled people in their work, as staff, volunteers, artists, audiences, and participants.

Financial Observations

Audited accounts for the year ended 31st March 2013 show total income of £613,731 and a surplus of £57,669 (9.4% of turnover), comprising a surplus of £139,792, on restricted funds partially offset by a deficit £82,123 on unrestricted funds. At 31st March 2013 free unrestricted funds stood at a negative £132,382.

The forecast for the year ended 31st March 2014 shows income of £731,369 and a surplus of £94,144 (12.9% of turnover), comprising a surplus of £99,484 on unrestricted funds partially offset by a deficit of £5,340 on restricted funds. The forecast includes capital project income of £151,711 and expenditure of £157,051.

The budget for the current year to 31st March 2015 predicts a surplus of £17,669 (0.7% of turnover), comprising £12,881 on unrestricted funds and £4,787 on restricted funds. This budget includes predicted capital project income of £2,243,566 and expenditure of £2,238,226. Total income is predicted to be £2,660,759, of which £2,383,860 (89.6%) had been confirmed as at 19th May 2014. The balance of £276,899 (10.4%) is made up of trading income (£192k) and capital fundraising income (£85k).

At 31st March 2015 free unrestricted reserves are expected to be at a negative £25,357. The organisation advises that it expects the renovated theatre premises to generate increased income which will allow free unrestricted funds to be built up to a target of £105,764 by 2016/17 (equivalent to 2.6 months' worth of current year operating expenditure).

Officer's Appraisal

The total cost of the capital redevelopment is £2,395,277. Tara Arts is well on its way to securing the funds required for this major development. The Arts Council England has awarded a grant of £1,820,000 showing a strong commitment to the Company to create a dedicated sustained theatre facility. The total raised specifically for the capital costs is £2,309,801 leaving a shortfall of £85,476. This application of £40,000 is towards this shortfall and will be used to provide disabled access. Tara Arts is considered an important company in London's theatrical landscape, particularly for their extensive work supporting emerging Black and Minority writers, directors and designers.

Recommendation

£40,000 for the provision of a platform passenger lift to improve access for all users of the theatre.