



New York City Council Hearing - The Reopening of Culture in New York: The Return of Indoor Programs, Open Culture, and COVID-19

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
Tuesday, September 14, 12:00pm

Testimony Presented by NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Deputy Commissioner Sheelah Feinberg

Good afternoon, Chair Van Bramer and Members of the Committee. I am Sheelah Feinberg, Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on today's topic, "The Reopening of Culture in New York: The Return of Indoor Programs, Open Culture, and COVID-19."

Cultural activity is at the foundation of our healthy communities and our strong economy. The slow but steady return of culture to our outdoor spaces and, increasingly, to indoor venues has been a tremendously powerful signal that New Yorkers are ready to reclaim the city we all love.

We at the agency have said this many times in the last 18 months but it bears repeating – New Yorkers in every corner of our city, in every walk of life have suffered from COVID-19. The cultural community was especially hard hit. Culture thrives on the exact type of in-person interactions that overnight became a threat to public health.

We have conducted two major surveys of DCLA cultural constituents since the start of the pandemic. Together, they paint a devastating portrait of loss in our cultural community. Financial losses are approaching \$1 billion, while layoffs and furloughs mean that the cultural community is, at least for now, smaller. By Center for an Urban Future's estimate, the city lost roughly half of its arts and culture jobs in the first year of the pandemic.

The damage experienced by the most marginalized groups is even worse. Layoffs and furloughs at organizations primarily serving low-income communities of color have persisted at much higher rates. Organizations in low income zip codes also lost access to their programming spaces at rates more than double those located in wealthier areas. Smaller organizations saw their operating income plummet nearly 40%, compared to just over 21% for larger groups.

We've been living through a dual pandemic: both a public health crisis and a crisis from decades of systemic racism and disinvestment. We've listened to our constituents, advocated on their behalf, and have made it a priority to drive home that not everyone experienced the same pandemic. We've also set aside funding specifically to address these disproportionate impacts.

Last year, we invested in a relief fund for arts educators - a job category that was particularly devastated by layoffs - and increased funding for organizations working in zip codes most affected by COVID-19. With a record-high budget for the agency of \$230 million in the current fiscal year - thanks to the continued partnership between the Council, this Committee, and the Mayor - we will continue to support the cultural community where it's needed most.

Without losing sight of the profound damage caused to our communities and cultural groups, we've been overjoyed to see the return of creative programming to New York City. It's been important both as a powerful symbol of recovery, and a very real return of the immense value that culture brings to our communities. The cultural community's commitment to supporting one another throughout this challenging time has been inspiring and has made reopening efforts safe and successful. The Culture at 3 call, the NYC Museum Reopening Task Force, and other collective efforts are, we hope, here to stay.

We've been proud of the City's work to support the reopening of culture and revival of New York. Since the start of the pandemic, DCLA has been working closely with cultural groups and our City partners - particularly in the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, NYC and Company, and Department of Small Business Services - to understand and support the needs of our constituents. Early on, we partnered with these offices on VirtualNYC, to highlight and connect audiences with the amazing variety of digital programming that helped sustain us through those difficult months. Later, our partners in the Mayor's Office created programs like Curtains Up NYC to help groups navigate the federal and state relief funds available to them. And at DCLA, our staff worked tirelessly to process changes to grant applications to make sure that city dollars could continue to flow to the cultural community.

What a year makes. Starting in March of this year, Open Culture NYC, created through legislation sponsored by Chair Van Bramer, has been a major success. Over 450 events have been permitted since the program began. Alongside other programs that have brought city streets to life with dining and performances, Open Culture gave New Yorkers the chance to engage with arts programming in their neighborhoods. It also gave artists and arts groups the opportunity to earn much needed revenue. You'll hear more about this program from my colleagues in the Street Activity Permit Office shortly. Regarding the proposed bill Int. 2398, which would make Open Culture permanent, we share your goals of expanding the role of culture in the life of our city and we look forward to working through details with you as the legislation progresses.

Another major source of support for artists and cultural connection for New Yorkers this year has been the City Artist Corps. Announced by Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Casals in May, the program has provided support to more than 3,000 artists to date. In addition to investing in this hard-hit community, City Artist Corps is bringing performances, workshops, and more to every corner of New York City. There are over 100 public programs planned just through the end of September by artists who received City Artist Corps Grants, administered with New York Foundation for the Arts and local partners around the city. City Artist Corps has also been partnering hundreds of artists with DOE students to create murals and performances; with

NYCHA residents to design and install murals on public housing sites; and with artists in hard-hit neighborhoods citywide through Carnegie Hall's BeautifyNYC program.

The full return of live, indoor performance will be another important milestone on our city's recovery. Indoor cultural activity resumed – cautiously – last summer. And outdoor performances, through hallmark summer events like The Public Theater's Free Shakespeare in the Park, Open Culture programs, and the city's Homecoming Week concerts last month have heralded a new phase of recovery as vaccines give us a major new tool to fight COVID-19. Earlier this year, Mayor de Blasio, the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, and Actor's Fund set up a vaccination site in Times Square for members of the performing arts community. The City clearly recognizes the importance and value of this community.

NYC and Company has launched a historic campaign to attract visitors back, safely. And the Key to NYC Vaccine mandate, for which full enforcement began yesterday, is the next major effort we need to spur our recovery. To clarify, we're not seeking a return to the previous status quo. The pandemic shed a harsh light on too many aspects of our society that are in dire need of major, systemic repair. We have lots of work ahead. And while culture never really closed in NYC, a return to the sort of live, social connections that we've all missed these last 18 months are a welcome sign that our work together is paying off.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

Lucy Sexton

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts

City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs final hearing on
budget May 25, 2021

Thank you Chair Van Bramer and Council Member Diaz. My name is Lucy Sexton and I lead the cultural advocacy coalition New Yorkers for Culture & Arts. While it is personally exciting to be in person with you all, I want to register the complaint that eliminating the virtual option to meetings means limiting and often excluding working artists and culture workers from outer boroughs and smaller organizations with less capacity to take a day off to come and testify.

I have testified at Council Hearings since the shutdown, reminding you that the most fragile parts of our sector are having the hardest time and I have repeatedly said: We cannot emerge from this crisis with a more centralized and more white cultural ecosystem. And yet, that is what has happened. I am submitting a copy of the recent report by the DCLA, in partnership with Americans for the Arts and Howard Gilman

Foundation. Its stark findings: we are a more inequitable cultural ecosystem than ever.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/14iewm3mb7EROWf1LHjOmlKvbD554oNNmS2sMiwGFHxo/edit?usp=sharing>

As you know, arts and culture were one of the—and by many measures THE---hardest hit sector; we were first to shut, and will be the last to fully reopen. The Key to NYC has delivered another economic setback, with again those cultural organizations in the least vaccinated, often least white neighborhoods are the most impacted. Many will not survive; I implore you in thinking of reopening to think about finding federal emergency relief monies to support cultural organizations in most impacted zip codes. Funds to not only get them through but to partner with them to increase vaccination outreach and education to the communities that trust them.

Finally, I would like to address the Open Culture program. One of its biggest innovations is allowing groups accessing the permits to charge and collect money for the publicly performed work---a first for the city. But as we know, ticket fees often

cover only a small portion of the cost of the work---particularly if you keep prices affordable and the work accessible to all. Additional support in the form of grants and production assistance would be an enormous improvement. While permitting programs don't come with grants, this program does come with a web site, as required by its partner legislation. That site could be used to list grants, subsidized production help, and a whole host of information and resources that would make this program more accessible to the artists and groups that most need it. I refer you to the Green Arts Live program as a model program providing mini grants and production support for work done in parks and plazas.

https://cityparksfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/GREEN-_-ARTS-LIVE-NYC-Press-Release-.pdf

one final point, a major problem with Open Culture has been resistance from residents of Open Culture blocks. In discussing this with the community, Sophia Harrison of Arts House Schools suggested that the city send post cards to each resident on affected blocks---similar to the recent cards the city sent

about composting. These communications should make clear the benefits of the program in bringing traffic to local businesses and safe activities to local families, and perhaps most importantly make it clear how the residents themselves might use this program to put on performances, dance recitals, fundraisers for the PTA, or a chance for locals to share their own cultural talents. We need clear communication and buy in from residents if this program is to succeed.

Thank you for your time and attention and for your legendary and groundbreaking work for arts and culture, Chair Van Bramer. We are in your debt.



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**Ballet Hispánico
City Council Testimony
The Reopening of Culture in New York: The Return of Indoor Programs, Open
Culture, and COVID-19
September 14, 2021**

On behalf of the Ballet Hispánico (BH) *familia*, I would like to thank the members of the New York City Council and Department of Cultural Affairs for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. At this critical juncture, support for cultural organizations like Ballet Hispánico as they undertake the immense challenge of reopening is more crucial than ever. As the nation's largest Latinx cultural organization and one of America's Cultural Treasures, Ballet Hispánico depends on the City Council's continued support to keep its doors open. We appreciate this opportunity to advocate for the permanency of the Open Culture Program and for continued City funding to support the return of indoor programming in 2022.

Ballet Hispánico brings communities together to celebrate and explore Latino cultures through innovative dance productions, transformative dance training, and enduring community engagement experiences. From its inception Ballet Hispánico focused on providing a haven for Black and Brown Latinx youth and families seeking artistic place and cultural sanctuary. By providing the space for Latinx dance and dancers to flourish, Ballet Hispánico uplifted marginalized emerging and working artists, which combined with the training, authenticity of voice, and power of representation, fueled the organization's roots and trajectory. Today, Ballet Hispánico's New York City headquarters house a School of Dance and state-of-the-art dance studios for its programs and the arts community. While we have successfully transitioned all programming online in the wake of the pandemic, as dancers, dance educators, and community leaders we rely on the inclusive, yearround environment only indoor gatherings can ensure. From its grassroots origins as a dance school and community-based performing arts troupe, for fifty years Ballet Hispánico has stood as a catalyst for social change.

Ballet Hispánico provides the physical home and cultural heart for Latinx dance in the United States. Like every arts organization, Ballet Hispánico suffered the crushing financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across all aspects of its operations. As we look now to our recovery and full reopening in 2022, we depend on the City of New York's steadfast commitment to its cultural institutions.

With thanks for your continued support,

Emily Mathis Corona

Emily Mathis Corona
Assistant Director of Institutional Relations



COVID-19: Impact & Recovery

The current crisis has had a negative impact on all creative and educational initiatives, and the full impact of the pandemic on Ballet Hispánico continues to develop. The full financial ramifications continue to threaten the survival of all arts institutions, particularly BIPOC-led organizations like Ballet Hispánico. Yet throughout the pandemic, the digital doors of Ballet Hispánico remained open to the public and welcomed new audiences through our virtual educational and community programming in the expansive #BUnidos campaign, featuring classes, performances, behind-the-scenes artist takeovers, inspirational messages, and more. Thanks to the resolute support of the City of New York, and enforcement of local health mandates along with the rollout of vaccines, Ballet Hispánico began welcoming dancers back in-person in spring 2021. By summer 2021, the full Company and artistic staff were engaged in an intensive rehearsal period in anticipation of upcoming summer 2021 performances at city and regional outdoor, socially distanced engagements. In July 2021 the Ballet Hispánico Company performed for live, outdoor audiences for the first time since the onset of the pandemic at Jacob's Pillow. As a part of broader efforts to engage with other prominent dance organizations in New York City in a strategic initiative to strengthen the entire citywide arts ecosystem, the Company joined with the American Ballet Theatre, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, New York City Ballet, and Dance Theatre of Harlem for the BAAND Together Dance Festival at Lincoln Center in August 2021. The Company also performed select Instituto Coreográfico works by Latina choreographers at the new Little Island @Pier55, and at the Picnic Performances at Bryant Park in August.

Ballet Hispánico Reopening 2021

After Company in-person activities were suspended with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, Ballet Hispánico faced the critical question of when and how to resume in-person artistic operations. With the encouragement of City initiatives like the Open Culture Program, as well as the rollout of vaccines and increasingly lower infection rates, BH began executing its Return to Work reopening plan in March 2021. The Ballet Hispánico Return to Work initiative for Company dancers plan, from preparation to execution, was administered over the course of seven months from December 2020 to June 2021. The direct effect of this reopening is evident in the in-person outdoor programming which the BH Company was able to bring to public audiences across the city, from Lincoln Center to Little Island to Bryant Park, in summer 2021.

Additional cleaning crew were brought in prior to the beginning of the rehearsal period in spring 2021, and all BH spaces were thoroughly cleaned with a daily cleaning protocol established upon reopening. Ballet Hispánico upgraded its filtration system throughout its 167 W 89th Street space to MERV 13 grade filters and increased air handling to 100% fresh air. All public spaces were strictly limited, and mandatory distancing, face coverings, vaccinations, health screenings, and testing were enforced. Over the course of the Return to Work intensive planning and execution period in spring 2021, BH administration led with patience, empathy, and trust. Leadership strove to confront difficult decisions with humility and empathy, understanding that not all answers would be immediately apparent, and was sensitive to the diverse needs of its communities. Reciprocal trust between staff, leadership, dancers, and partners was central to this endeavor: frequent conversations and



transparent communication were essential. City support ensured BH was able to execute a successful reopening, and enabled a culture of optimism and enthusiasm as BH leadership tackled the many unknowns of reopening. Such an environment will be imperative to future growth as BH and other city cultural organizations continue to confront the challenges ahead.

The most important outcome of the BH Return to Work effort is that not a single positive case occurred among any of the participants during the period of reopening and program execution. The reopening plan and its execution required a great deal of detailed planning, collaboration, and trust among all participants. With the encouragement of a citywide effort to bolster artists and the return of in-person cultural programming, the BH Return to Work effort yielded the second most important outcome: The successful return to in-person dancing, and the ability of the BH Company to share its artistry once again with its community. Thanks to the reopening and successful implementation of all safety protocol, the BH Company was able to perform live for thousands of New Yorkers during summer 2021. The spirit of community which grounded the BH Return to Work effort led to a corollary increase in communication and collaboration between Ballet Hispánico and other leading New York City dance companies. As BH began planning and executing its reopening, other large dance organizations looked to BH for guidance, and BH likewise measured its approach with its fellow dance leaders. What began as a necessary space to communicate with other city dance leaders, grew to a place of collaboration and joint strategic coordination. This partnership culminated in August 2021 with the BAAND Together Dance Festival at Lincoln Center. City efforts like the Open Culture Program will make future partnerships such as BAAND an integral part of the New York City arts ecosystem, ensuring a spirit of solidarity rather than competition among New York's leading cultural institutions.

Open Culture Program

As Ballet Hispánico joins its fellow arts leaders in recovery, it looks to New York City leaders for guidance and support. **The sustainability of the successful Open Culture Program is imperative to this recovery.** The economic impact of a thriving arts ecology to New York City cannot be overstated: Nonprofit cultural groups generate over \$8 billion annually in citywide annual economic impact and employ more than 120,000. The city's booming tourism industry, neighborhood vitality, and commercial vibrancy are dependent on the contributions of the cultural sector. And in an era of stark division the voices of BIPOC-led cultural organizations like Ballet Hispánico, founded on the principles of bringing people together through art, are more important than ever. From its inception, Ballet Hispánico has been centered in its mission to increase access to dance through community outreach, engagement, and education. BH community programs reach thousands of New Yorkers of every walk of life, uplifting young people of Hispanic heritage and inspiring all to learn about Latinx culture through the lens of dance. The pillars of the Open Culture Program – open space, affordability and accessibility, sustainability, and solidarity between cultural organizations – will ensure critical Ballet Hispánico programs can continue to thrive in a post-pandemic economy.



Looking Forward

Through efforts like the Open Culture Program, the City has indicated that it deeply values a thriving arts ecosystem. Furthermore, programs like this have allowed Ballet Hispánico to successfully manage the complex operational and fiscal undertaking of Return to Work. The Ballet Hispánico School plans to fully reopen in fall 2021, pending CDC guidance. At full capacity the School expects to offer 90 in-person classes per week for 35 weeks per year, serving nearly 1,000 students of all ages and abilities. In addition the Community Arts Partnerships program will continue to expand the virtual programs it has developed over the past year through digital workshops, *Diálogos*, and online residency programs and after-school activities. With the return to in-person activities, the Community Arts Partnerships will resume in-school residencies led by Ballet Hispánico teaching artists, performances for student and community groups, and Performances for Young People (PYP). PYP features a series of 50-minute narrated performances that celebrate Latinx dance, and is expected to reach some 10,000 NYC children and adults in 2021-2022. The continuing safety of our communities is foremost to these endeavors.

Our ability to successfully Return to Work will be dependent on continued city support: **More than ever, organizations like Ballet Hispánico will need robust public support in order to continue championing and amplifying underrepresented voices in the field.** The proposed permanency of the Open Culture Program ensures our survival as we enter this next phase of reopening. As a community of dancers, artists, and human beings, we have adapted to incredible challenges and look forward to coming together as a *familia* once again. Ballet Hispánico was founded upon and has always believed in the importance of reaching and servicing our community through dance and culture. Our continued reopening over the next year provides us with an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come, continuing to raise our voices and serve our communities. We thank the City of New York for making that possible.



Credit: Ballet Hispánico in 18+1 at the BAAND Together Dance Festival at Lincoln Center (August 2021) | Photo by Erin Baiano



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**New 42 Testimony to Committee on Cultural Affairs hearing on
The Reopening of Culture in New York:
The Return of Indoor Programs, Open Culture, and COVID-19
Tuesday, September 14, 2021**

As the 2021-22 season commences, New 42 is working to meet the current moment by providing access to the arts for underserved classrooms and communities; serving artists who identify as Black, Indigenous and/or People of Color (BIPOC) in even greater ways; dedicating our organization to equitable, inclusive and anti-racist practices; enacting extensive COVID-19 safety protocols; approaching all programs and performances with flexible in-person and digital options; and, of course, through the much-anticipated return to live theater.

NEW 42 AND NEW VICTORY 2020-21 SEASON

The 2021-22 New Victory season will act as a bridge between the digital 2020-21 season and future seasons, which will hopefully offer live programming that is unencumbered by extensive and essential pandemic-related safety procedures. Until then, New 42 is building back stronger, safer and more inclusively with a blended season of live and digital programming. In 2021-22, New 42's artistic, education and youth development programs will help meet the needs of families, students, and artists in NYC and beyond in this unique moment in time.

New Victory Theater LIVE Artistic Season

The New Victory Theater's 2021-22 artistic season will include six live presentations from November 2021 – June 2022. New Victory projects 33,000 kids and adults will attend 105 public performances, and 5,700 students and teachers will attend 19 week-day education matinees. The 2021-22 presentations include the following:

- *Generation Rise*, by Ping Chong and Company and Urban Word NYC, is an interview-based production featuring BIPOC NYC teens who share stories from their lived experiences during this historic moment (ages 11+).
- *Jim Henson's Emmet Otter's Jug Band Christmas*, by iTheatrics in association with the Jim Henson Company, is a stage adaptation of Jim Henson's popular classic holiday special in which Emmet Otter and his Ma enter a Christmas Eve talent contest (ages 5+).
- *Air Play*, by Acrobuffos, is a circus-style adventure in which two siblings go on a journey through a surreal land of air (ages 5+).
- *Jabari Dreams of Freedom*, by First Woman Productions, uses rap, freedom songs and hip-hop dance to tell the story of a young Black boy who escapes the recurring trauma of a violent encounter with the police through his imaginative paintings, where he meets children from the Civil Rights Era who teach him how to be brave (ages 9+).
- *STONO*, by Step Afrika!, is a high-energy exploration of the body as a drum, as well as a chronicling and celebration of the African American experience (ages 7+).

- *Leonardo and Sam: The Terrible Monster and the Most Scaredy-Cat Kid in the Whole World, Respectively*, by Manual Cinema, is a multimedia adaptation of Mo Willems' children's book, which tells the story of a monster who longs to be scary (ages 5+).

To help kids and families engage on a deeper level with the works on our stages, live pre-show family engagement activities led by New Victory Teacher Artists will return at the Theater and may serve as many as 15,400 audience members from January – June 2022.

New Victory Labworks

To help address the dearth of performing arts for young audiences created by BIPOC artists, New Victory LabWorks—the Theater's artist development program—will serve a cohort of NYC artists who identify as BIPOC, and who desire to create new work for family audiences. The 2021-22 LabWorks Artists include Nehprie Amenii (Puppetry / Multimedia), Indygo Afi Ngozi (Khoreopoet), Ty Defoe (Theater / Multimedia / Immersive), and Marcus Yi (Musical Theater). To support them in their processes, New Victory will provide each artist a stipend of \$15,000, free rehearsal space, and dramaturgical and artistic support from expert staff. In 2021-22, New Victory is also piloting LabWorks Launch, which supports a previous LabWorks artist as they further develop a project, with the aim of presenting on the New Victory stage in a future season. The inaugural LabWorks Launch artist is Christopher Rudd, who is developing his work *Witness* and will receive dramaturgical input, industry relationship connections, rehearsal space and a fee of \$5,000.

New Victory Education

During the 2021-22 season, New Victory Education will partner with 100-125 schools to engage 25,000+ students in all grades in a range of live and virtual performing arts activities. Approximately 70% of New Victory Education's partners identify as public schools, with 50% of partner schools identifying as Title I, in which at least 40% of student families identify as low-income. The program provides NYC students with unparalleled access to the arts, with public and charter school partners only paying a \$100 annual administrative fee to gain access to live and digital classroom workshops; field trips to the New Victory Theater (starting in January 2022); digital versions of all six New Victory presentations; and a wealth of digital resources. New Victory will share 70+ modular activities and instructional videos with 1,450+ educators that provide asynchronous, culturally responsive learning opportunities for students grades Pre-K – 12. New Victory Education will also provide 875 live and virtual workshops, which will turn classrooms into artistic spaces in which 18,000+ students can ignite their creativity.

CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSION

The greatest challenge that lies ahead in the 2021-22 season is the programmatic and financial flexibility required in order to address pandemic-related safety procedures. At this time, New 42 is planning on reducing the number of tickets to each New Victory performance by half to accommodate social distancing, and requiring vaccination proof for all audience members who

qualify and masks for all who are old enough to wear them. These guidelines, as well as continued hesitancy by some patrons to return to theaters, will reduce ticket sale revenue. Other programs returning to in-person activities will likely experience delays or setbacks due to surges in virus positivity.

New 42 is grateful for support from the City Council, and looks forward to working closely with the City to ensure our patrons, staff, artists, and the students and teachers we serve will stay safe and healthy. Thank you.



<https://www.nyiva.org/>

NYC Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Hearing on the Open Culture Program and Reopening of Culture in NY

September 14, 2021

The New York Independent Venue Association (NYIVA) is a nonprofit membership group in New York State representing over 200 independent for-profit and nonprofit venues, promoters, and festivals, approximately half of which are located throughout the five boroughs. NYIVA aims to secure the long-term future of New York's priceless live performance culture and the critical role that independents play in New York City's economic engine and cultural fabric that make NYC unique.

Formed in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic to address the deep impact of the crisis and its mandatory closures on the shuttered industry, NYIVA's members were the first to be closed and among the last to reopen. Today, audience confidence remains low with ticket sales down an average of 30% nationwide. The new unfunded vaccine mandates are straining institutional staff capacity and revenue as members are beginning to reopen. For our members, this will easily be a three-year pandemic, negatively impacting artists, staff, and venues alike.

The challenge has been particularly acute in NYC partly due to the length of the shutdown, steep commercial rents, and other high costs of doing business indicative of NYC. While some of our membership benefited from the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (formerly Save our Stages), not all were eligible. Restricted barriers to entry were experienced with state-run relief programs as well resulting in limited access by our members. We acknowledge and appreciate the Council's efforts to support the cultural sector including the requests for independent venues in the FY22 budget, and through programs such as Open Culture.

Independent venues, promoters, and festivals are just that, independently operated. Our members are not multinational corporations with access to billions of dollars in

capital, but are cultural anchors in their local communities throughout the five boroughs often operating on razor thin margins given the structure of the industry and the dense competition from multinational, publicly traded companies. While large players own dozens of venues in NYC that are well capitalized, and able to further capitalize on available cash to outbid independents for key artists, our members continue to risk closure and potentially extinction.

The LIVE independent, performance sector and its ecosystem are facing an existential crisis from which it will not recover without targeted assistance. City and State relief programs did not capture many in the independent performing arts sector, leaving numerous community-based cultural organizations and businesses at risk of falling through the policy cracks.

Targeted assistance will accelerate the industry's ability to open safely and begin the multi-months long ramp-up process required to book tours, market live events, and get audiences comfortable sitting together again.

Live performance venues are economic multipliers, community anchors, and critical threads in the cultural fabric of the state. For every \$1 spent on a ticket at an independent venue, a total of \$12 in additional economic activity is generated in the community.ⁱ Without our City's live performance ecosystem, bars, restaurants, hotels, retail shops, parking facilities, and other businesses that depend on our venues to attract audiences will continue to be grossly affected.

Live performance has been placed at the epicenter of New York City's recovery, but without any financial support while over 30 states and localities have created arts and culture specific relief funds in the past year. A recent HUD study documenting the most COVID-19 impacted sectors states that arts & culture is the second most impacted industry nationwide with unemployment rates at 1.5 times the national rate and 1.5 times more economic damage relative to other industries.ⁱⁱ

While we are appreciative of the efforts made to support our sector thus far, without additional significant investment, New York's independent venues will not survive. As a result, we are asking the City of New York to include the following in the FY22 November Financial Plan:

- Funding to support 3 months of expenses for Independent Venues located in the five boroughs including rent or mortgage, payroll, utilities, insurance, etc.
- Grants of \$25k or \$50k (based on size of the entity) to support the slowdown of business operations at independent venues as a result of recent vaccine

mandates and the staff expenses of enforcing The Key to NYC vaccine mandate.

- Dedicate a meaningful portion of the \$30M allocated to NYC & Co towards independent venues to support marketing shows, including promoting the City's vaccine mandates.

In addition, we would request that NYC engage with our members more actively in planning, marketing, reopening, and programming initiatives to truly live its stated values of investing in neighborhoods and people over big corporate interests. A robust partnership with local government is critical to the success of our sector, especially as reopening requirements continue to evolve and it becomes increasingly clear that the sector will take years to fully recover.

Thank you to the Committee on Cultural Affairs for convening the hearing. We hope to continue the conversation regarding our requests in advance of the release of the FY22 November financial plan.

NYIVA Board of Directors

NYC NYIVA Member Venues Located in All 5 Boroughs

3 Dollar Bill	Blue Note Jazz Club	City Parks Foundation SummerStage Festival
Afropunk Festival	Bossa Nova Civic Club	City Winery
Alpine Cinemas	BRIC Celebrate Brooklyn Festival	Dance NYC
Arlene's Grocery	C'mon Everybody	Drom
Art's House Schools	Carnegie Hall	EL Grupo SN
Avant Gardner	Carolines on Broadway	Elsewhere
Baby's All Right	Caveat	Eris Evolution
Barbès	Central Lounge	Film Forum NYC
Berlin Under A	Chelsea Music Hall	Friends and Lovers
Birdland Jazz Club	Cinema Village	Gemini and Scorpio
Blackthorn 51	Cinemart Cinemas	Gold Sounds

Good Judy	Nublu 151	The Bowery Ballroom
Good Room	Nublu Classic	The Bowery Electric
H0L0	Nuyorican Poets Cafe	The Broadway
House of Yes	NY Comedy Club	The Cutting Room
IRIDIUM	Our Wicked Lady	The DL
ISSUE Project Room	Pangea	The Footlight Bar
Joe's Pub	Parklife	The Graham
Kings Theatre	Pete's Candy Store	The Muse Brooklyn
Knitting Factory Brooklyn	Pine Box Rock Shop	The Paper Box
Knockdown Center	Pioneer Works	The Royal Palms Shuffleboard Club
Le Poisson Rouge	Players Theatre	The Stand NYC
Lehman College Center for the Performing Arts	Public Records	The Sultan Room
littlefield	QED Astoria	The Turk's Inn
Lola	Rockwood Music Hall	TheaterLab
Lucky 13 Saloon	Saint Vitus	Town Stages
Market Hotel	ShapeShifter Lab	Trans-Pecos Triskelion Arts
Max Fish Bar	SOBs	TV Eye
Mercury Lounge	St. George Theatre Restoration	Union Hall
Murmrr	Starr Bar	Union Pool
National Sawdust	SubCulture NY	United Palace
Niagara	The Bell House	Village Vanguard Jazz Club
Nowadays	The Bitter End	

ⁱ *Arts in the Loop Study*: <https://loopchicago.com/assets/f4fdbbc1e00/Arts-in-the-Loop-Study.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Methodology for CDBG-CV3 (Part A) allocation – September 11, 2020

NYC Council Hearing - September 14, 2021 – 12PM

Stefan Grybauskas

Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination and the Street Activity Permitting Office

Good morning, Chair Van Bramer, members of the committee, and the public. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Int. 2398.

My name is Stefan Grybauskas, and I am the Director of Street Activity Permitting Office (SAPO) and Deputy Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination (CECM).

CECM serves as the broad umbrella overseeing and coordinating events and other temporary use of streets, plazas, sidewalks, and parks. We are the one-stop-shop for guidelines and permissions from agencies who ensure events are safe and positive for all New Yorkers – from NYPD, FDNY, DSNY to DOB and DEP. SAPO grants permits for streets, sidewalks, and plazas – including signature events like the NYC Marathon to the smallest neighborhood block party.

In early 2021, following the passage of Chair Van Bramer's Open Culture legislation, SAPO implemented this program on New York City streets. Open Culture has allowed eligible arts and cultural institutions, along with cultural venues, to apply for expedited and low-cost permits to host events on City streets. Our office implemented a simplified application process for these permits to enable wider accessibility. As of September 13th, SAPO has permitted 459 Open Culture events.

The program has been a success for many organizations; however, it has not been without its challenges. New York City's streetscape is shared by a wide variety of users and this has posed some problems for our applicants in executing their events. Our office works tirelessly to help our applicants and ensure their events go off as seamlessly as possible.

Regarding Int. 2398, the administration supports this bill and the permanent implementation of the Open Culture program. We do have some concerns about the best way to increase the number of locations available to Open Culture permits. We look forward to working with the City Council during the aging process to address these issues and ensure Open Culture remains a vibrant and effective program for all New Yorkers.

In closing, I look forward to working with the Council and our sister agencies in continuing to support cultural organizations in utilizing public space throughout our city.