

Brabson Library And Educational Foundation

Proposal Pre-Application Form

Thank you for your interest in the Brabson Library And Educational Foundation. In order to save prospective applicants the time and effort involved with the preparation of a Full Proposal, we ask you to complete this Pre-Application Form before sending us any materials. Please submit completed forms to: gatekeeper@brabsonfamilyfoundation.org

After the staff and Trustees of the Foundation review your completed questionnaire, all requests are acknowledged. If there is Trustee interest, additional information will be requested. Thank you.

0. DATE: February 17, 29015

1. INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Year established: 2009, Incorporated in 2010

Name of Organization: WAM Theatre, Inc.

Mailing Address: 440 Spring Street

City/State/Zip: Lee, MA, 01238

Contact Person: Kristen van Ginhoven

Telephone: 518-243-9627

Email: Kristen@wamtheatre.com

501(C)3 Organization: Yes (X) (The Foundation makes grants only to 501(C)3s.)

Name of your project: The WAM Theatre Education Program

2. WHAT IS THE BASIC PURPOSE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION (One Paragraph)

“Creating Professional Theatre for Everyone that Benefits Women and Girls.”

Based in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, WAM Theatre was co-founded in 2010 by Canadian director, actor, educator, and producer Kristen van Ginhoven to create professional theatrical events for everyone, with a focus on women theatre artists and/or stories of women and girls. WAM Theatre also has a philanthropic mission, inspired by the book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, and donates a portion of the proceeds from its theatrical events to organizations that benefit women and girls. Over the past five years, WAM Theatre has donated more than \$15,000 to seven nonprofit organizations and provided paid work to more than 100 theatre artists. In addition to the main stage productions and special events, WAM Theatre’s activities include a comprehensive educational outreach program and the Fresh Takes Play Reading Series. For more information, visit www.WAMTheatre.com

3. WHAT IS THE AMOUNT OF YOUR REQUEST (\$): 15,000

4. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT FOR WHICH YOU ARE SEEKING SUPPORT (Need, Expected Outcomes):

WAM Theatre aims to serve all of Berkshire County, including the growing number of underserved women and girls. We envision a world in which young women aspire to become confident leaders in their communities. This year, towards those aims, we are launching our official comprehensive Education Program, which consists of three strands of outreach: Community, After School and Production.

Locally, the deteriorating economy and cuts in government spending have taken their toll on girls in Western Massachusetts who are living at or below the poverty level. Executive Director of the Population Institute Robert Walker points to an incontrovertible truth: the key to a community's socio-economic success lies in elevating girls and women. Educated girls have lower birth rates, are less dependent on government subsidies and services, and contribute to their communities in meaningful ways. It is also true that girls in low-income households have fewer opportunities to access programming that specifically enhances their self-esteem and gives them an opportunity for self-exploration. Pittsfield has the 12th highest teen pregnancy rate in Massachusetts; 27% of our Girls Inc. participants, part of our Community Outreach Program, live in a home with an annual income of less than \$27,000, 32% of them live in single-parent households.

There is an urgent need in our community for more programs that provide a safe and supportive way to develop girls' aspirations through focused and imaginative empowerment activities. Our work with our community partners such as Girls Inc. are currently the only opportunities targeted specifically at girls that these participants have locally to use the arts to explore issues of importance in their lives and raise their mindset from "survival" mode to that of "dreaming" about what they will become.

In response to this need, in 2015/2016 we are launching our official comprehensive WAM Theatre Education program, which consists of three strands, two which we have already incorporated into our work in the last five years; Community and Production, and one new strand which we will implement in fall 2015; the After School WAM Theatre Girls Ensemble.

1) Community: Creative Collaborations

We work in collaboration with other local artistic groups or service organizations to provide a specific theatre program to groups of women and girls. Our current Girls Inc. program runs during the school term, for 18 weeks during the Fall and Spring school terms, and involves two contact hours with the students per week. The participants are from 8 to 13 years of age, and are drawn from a population underserved by arts programs, even in the culturally rich Berkshires. Under the leadership of a WAM Theatre teaching artist, participants work together to produce original material that explores issues of importance in their lives and serves the larger purpose of the community partner. In 2015 we will also work with a new community partner, The Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center.

The participants in our community outreach programs learn important skills such as cooperation and collaboration, confidence in speaking, and group creativity. These programs culminate in the sharing of a short (typically 30-45 minutes) original devised theatrical piece, based on a topic of the girls choosing, presented to an invited audience. The emphasis for this program is on the skills acquired by the girls during the process. Anecdotally, words used by our current Girls Inc. participants to describe what they would take away from the program include "kindness", "confidence", "respectfulness", "helping", and "brave".

2) After school: WAM Theatre Girls Ensemble

The WAM Theatre Girls Ensemble will be a new educational offering. The Girls Ensemble will be a selective program, drawing from schools and groups across the Berkshire region. The selection process will be by audition. A WAM Theatre teaching artist will visit eight committed pilot schools in April 2015 to provide a mini-workshop to potential participants. The eight pilot schools are: Bart Charter School, Hoosac Valley High School, Lenox High School, Monument Mountain High School, Mount Everett High School, Pittsfield High School, Taconic High School and Waconah Regional High School.

The program will help to raise girls' consciousness about issues they deal with every day and empower them to make sound decisions and informed choices about their lives. Participants will be able to safely take part in the program and regain the trust that many have lost through abuse,

isolation and marginalization. The larger community benefits from their experience, as the young women become role models for their peers, inspire their families and become confident leaders in their cities and towns.

We plan to build a program that runs every semester, serving between 10-20 young women between the ages of 14-19. Our pilot cohort will run in September 2015, with the program to formally launch in January 2016. The participants will form an ensemble and use a devised theatre process to create their own original piece of theatre. The goal will be to create a complete show, with high production values, that shares the perspectives and stories of the participants.

3) Production: Engagement programming around our main stage productions

WAM Theatre generally produces one main stage production per year. To heighten the cultural enrichment and impact of the overall experience of coming to a WAM Theatre production, we want to provide access to underserved audiences in two ways: a subsidized ticket program and an educational engagement program. Prior experience shows that providing subsidized tickets to local organizations in conjunction with an educational engagement program results in deeper, more impactful links with our production, our community and the underserved women and girls who live in our community. To date, thanks to funding from our sponsors, we have provided subsidized performances to over 100 underserved audience members.

This entire three-stranded Education program is already funded at the 75% level by multiple community, government, corporate and foundation sponsors. Our Brabson request for \$15,000 would fulfill our needs for the second half of 2015 and the first half of 2016. Thank you very much for your past support, which has been instrumental in the successful growth of our educational programming. Thank you for considering this request.

5. ARE YOU A PAST GRANTEE OF THE FOUNDATION?

When: 2012, 2013, 2014

Amount: \$6000, \$5600, \$3600 (total of \$7600 granted- \$4000 to ACT NOW / \$3600 to WAM)

6. You may enclose an information brochure, if you have one. Enclosed (X) 2014 Annual Report

Please visit our website (www.wamtheatre.com) for more information on WAM Theatre. We also have a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/WAMTheatre), a Twitter Feed (www.twitter.com/WAMTheatre) and a YouTube Channel (www.youtube.com/WAMTheatre).