

# City of La Crosse Arts Board

## Public Art Application/Proposal

Application for August Funding Cycle (with October disbursement)

Title of proposed: **Arts for Young America Program Renaissance**

Name(s)/Organization: Viterbo University

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2022-2023 Season Brochure:

[https://webforms.exchange.viterbo.edu/publications/2022\\_AYA\\_Brochure/?\\_ga=2.210560469.1560338637.1654520339-798057658.1633363449#page=1](https://webforms.exchange.viterbo.edu/publications/2022_AYA_Brochure/?_ga=2.210560469.1560338637.1654520339-798057658.1633363449#page=1)

Participants: (Applicant) Rachel Frisby, Programming Coordinator | Fine Arts Center,  
rafrisby@viterbo.edu

Conflict of interest: None

Google Address: Viterbo Fine Arts Center, Main Theatre

929 Jackson St, La Crosse, WI 54601

Indicate whether the artwork is: Permanent or Temporary

### **Temporary:**

The Viterbo University Fine Arts Center *Arts for Young America* School Series is temporary if its content and performances change with each new season (Fall to Spring) in alignment with the public-school calendar. Though, this program is ongoing and has celebrated more the 25 years bringing performing arts to La Crosse students and our surrounding communities. Our 2022-23 Season has scheduled performances from October 11, 2022–March 24, 2023. These dates reflect the specific performances related to this season and will change each season with new offerings.







## PROPOSAL:

### 1. Concept

Viterbo University Fine Arts Center is requesting grant funding to support our existing *Arts for Young America (AYA)* program, which targets local schools and school-aged children in grades Pre-K through high school. This program is longstanding and has been serving thousands of youths in the La Crosse community for over 25 years. Please view upcoming offerings: [2022-2023 Season Brochure](#)

We are requesting \$10,000 to help support this necessary and beloved program. We will use 40% of the award to help cover administrative expenses for this season such as: artist/performance fees, equipment rentals, marketing, printing/postage, and, most importantly, 60% the monies will be used to create a much-needed scholarship fund for educators who wish to attend an *Arts for Young America* performance at the Viterbo University Fine Arts Center but have difficulties financing the field trip(s) and/or ticket prices. Low-income families should not have to go without opportunities for their children that expand cultural horizons, expose them to diversity, and curriculum-based performances.

By giving students the opportunity to experience the arts at Viterbo, local youth will be exposed to the world of arts education. Years of research show that exposure to the arts is closely linked to almost everything that we, as a nation, say we want for our children and from our schools: academic achievement, social and emotional development, civic engagement, and equitable opportunity. Involvement in the arts is associated with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skills. Arts learning can also improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork. We strongly believe that Viterbo's live performance series allows for deep memory making and positive learning that directly ties to state(s) curriculum standards. We offer free study guides, suggest curriculum connections, and bring diverse and educational programming to La Crosse's youth.

Since 2003, educators have applied for *and relied on* our financial aid to attend our Viterbo Fine Arts Center shows year after year. However, this sponsorship source is no longer in partnership with Viterbo University, leaving teachers unexpectedly without funding. The result is a cultural desert. We do not accept this outcome and will work towards a renaissance of this program.

Our objectives include:

- To rebuild our school patron base and increase new educator participation to help sustain our program
- Educate La Crosse's youth through curriculum-based entertainment in the form of performing arts
- Continue to serve our La Crosse community by bringing high-quality, national tours/artists/performances BACK to our students
- And most critically, to create greater accessibility to those programs by eliminating financial barriers, focusing on economically disadvantaged schools and students

Each of these goals is measurable and achievable with funding from the La Crosse Arts Board. Through our ticket sales and past records, we can determine if we have attracted new audiences, schools, and patrons. Through school surveys, we can determine the types of performances educators are most

interested in and would best complement their core curriculum standards. We also offer free study guides for educators with pre-and-post-performance activities to further enhance their lessons, list curriculum connections for each offering to help them make the best choice for their students and age group. We can also determine artistic impressions by patron reactions to the show. In our most recent survey, conducted November 2021, educators told us overwhelmingly that they missed our program, but the majority could not participate due financial hardships. Many stressed the need for financial aid to attend.

In our AYA 2018-2019 Season we served 43,645 students/educators who attended our programming. That season was the last unaffected season since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been unable to have a “normal” season since, though we hope to realize that this year with the La Crosse Arts Boards help. To give educators a much-needed supplement to their in-class lessons, and to offer culturally engaging experience for students who have gone without for far too long, we brought back our AYA program last year. However, we were only able to offer half of a season in spring of 2022. Nevertheless, we were able to bring six different performances to the community with minimal time and advertising. We saw a stark reduction in our ticket sales with just 4,091 in attendance in total, that is down by 90.6% from our last unaffected season in 2018-2019.

Therefore, it is clear that not only have our schools suffered, but also our local non-profits and programming providers have also felt the negative ramifications brought about by COVID-19. The title of our grant request, “Arts for Young America Program Renaissance,” expresses this unique moment in time, and alludes to the need for rebuilding. Much of our country will never be the same, and we do not believe that should be our aim, but rather to rejuvenate our existing program that will help ensure its continuation while responding to the current financial crisis of our school systems. A grant award from the La Crosse Arts Board would accomplish both urgent needs, as they are dependent upon each other. We cannot sustain the level of excellence of our programming without the support and patronage of local schools. Our absence from the community over the last two years has made it difficult to recover and to start with the same offerings and caliber of touring companies, as we had in the past.

## **2. Aesthetic Vision**

The performances for the 2022-23 Season were selected for a multitude of reasons including their artistic merit, diversity, age appropriateness, curriculum connections, their “freshness” in our area (considering competitor’s recent repertoires), how well it represents Viterbo University’s mission, identity, values, and vision, and we also weigh how well-received the production may be (what would the teachers and students like to see?). We take all those factors into consideration to create our well-rounded season, with offerings for all ages (Pre-K through high school), with shows featuring modern dance, fables and morality tales, American literature, classic ballet, informative presentations, contemporary stories featuring social issues and activism, Black History Month offerings as well as Holocaust oral histories, and children’s stories of self-acceptance.

**Title for the Upcoming 2022-2023 Season include (10 Performances/Presentations and 1 Residency):**

*Call of the Wild: Illustrated Edition, The Emperor's New Clothes, Nutcracker Ballet* presented by La Crosse Dance Centre, *MLK Day Presentation* presented by Viterbo University's D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership, *Warriors Don't Cry, Pilobolus, Finding North* with David Gonzalez and Daniel Carlton, *It's Okay to Be Different—Stories by Todd Parr, Peter Feigl, Holocaust Survivor* Presented by Viterbo University's D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership. We are also offering an outreach program for local children (including homeschoolers) and a week-long residency with a performance of *Hansel and Gretel* with the Missoula Children's Theatre. Educators may also book outreach programs directly at their schools during the residency.

**Past Titles for the Spring 2022 Season included (6 Performances/Presentations):**

*Freedom Riders, The Henry Ford's Innovation Nation LIVE, The Elephant Speaks Jazz, The Adventures of Tortoise and Hare: The Next Gen, Author Alexandra Zapruder* presented by Viterbo University's D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership, and *The Mayhem Poets*

**3. Artist involvement**

Our selected performances come from a host of professional touring companies throughout the United States and from exceptional local sources. All our listed performers have signed contracts for this upcoming season, though they will not be involved with ticketing or administrative aspects for our AYA program.

**4. Materials**

Our proposed project addresses administrative costs and is also a scholarship program in the form of "Mini Grants" for educators. There is no brick-and-mortar cost nor supplies needed that are not already part of our operational expenses. Our administrative expenses and materials are listed in our budget for clarity. The Mini Grant application is available online on our AYA website. There will be no paper applications.

**5. Durability**

Viterbo University Fine Arts Center aims to enhance the performing arts sphere for the La Crosse community and extend that reach to our neighboring communities as well. We will continue to bring these programs to our area, though our last season's ticket sales indicate that we did not reach as many students as we would have wished. Any school who wants to attend one of our sterling programs has the opportunity to apply for and receive discounted tickets to school performances at the Viterbo Fine Arts Center. In the past, our funding process was based on the following principle: If a school has 40% of its students on the free or reduced lunch program, then that school can be awarded up to 40% off their ticket price.

However, considering the turmoil caused by the pandemic to all aspects of the education system, we will no longer require this data to receive funding. Most schools employed some version of a meal assistance program to not only their needy students, but most, if not all of them. Therefore, the number reported to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction in the past years would not reflect any accurate measure. We will not penalize schools for this, and will simply ask them to explain their need, any additional funding challenges they would like us to consider, and *if* they want to submit their percentage of "Free or Reduced Meals" for their school population, we will also consider it.

To obtain funding, teachers must submit an application explaining how they plan to connect their classroom curriculum to the performance they attend. Applications are reviewed representatives from Viterbo's Fine Arts Center staff.

Though our 2021-2022 season begins late with the impediments of COVID-19, we were able to serve our La Crosse Community students, and beyond, in a meaningful way. Our Spring 2022 season was the first time, since the pandemic's beginning, that we were able to bring live, in-person performances back to our young constituents. We learned through surveying our local educators that they were ready, and desperately needed cultural opportunities and field trip experience to enhance their lesson plans, and that *Arts for Young America* program was greatly missed.

As the largest city within a two-hour radius, La Crosse serves as the cultural center for western Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota, and northeastern Iowa. This means that Viterbo's programs reach far beyond the City of La Crosse. This series is marketed through an initial season brochure sent to approximately 2,500 teachers within a 70-mile radius of La Crosse. Ticket prices for most school matinees are \$7.00.

## **LOGISTICAL STATEMENT:**

### **1. Clear timeframe for installation**

Our 2022-2023 Arts for Young America School Series season is October to March and funding would go to its general support (40%) and mini-grants program (60%) for educators and would be utilized *immediately* to help make this season a reality for local educators. A successful season will involve fully-funding all completed applications to ensure as many students have access. Without a LAB grant, we may not be able to offer reduced tickets, fully-fund a school, and teachers may cancel a reservation due to financial constraints. The funds will additionally go to help us offset the high cost of producing these shows. We will need these administrative funds beginning in October to ensure we meet our contractual obligations for each performer/touring company, and to make sure we support our programming effectively with marketing to educators in printing costs, mailing, and social media marketing.

### **2. Budget**

\*See attached PDF

### **3. Funding sources** (include grant or in-kind donations in addition to Arts Board funding request)

We have been awarded grant funds from the WI Arts Board for general operational support, this does not directly impact our *Arts for Young America* School Series, which is outside of the *Bright Star* Season, our professional touring performances for the public.

- State Government: WI Arts Board "Creative Communities" Grant \$5,960
- State Government: WI Arts Board "Wisconsin Arts Rescue" Grant \$10,000

The Fine Arts Center is expected to generate its own revenue for each season through its programs. It is our desire to maintain our sustainability annually by meeting our budgetary goals while still providing exceptional value to our students, schools, and educators. We strive to keep our ticket prices low at just \$7 per ticket for all our Arts for Young America performances.

### **Naming Opportunity:**

As we are asking for a \$10,000 award, this level of gift would qualify the La Crosse Arts Board as a “Diamond Level” program sponsor and as such entitles the La Crosse Arts Board to:

- Logo included on digital signage within the Fine Arts Center and Viterbo campus.
- Company name/logo included on the *Arts for Young America* website and linked to company page.
- Logo included in email and social media advertising.
- Company name mentioned in news release.
- Prominent logo placement, above any other show sponsors.

### **4. Maintenance plan** (if proposing a permanent project) OR Plans for removal (if proposing a temporary project)

This is a temporary project with the scope being the 2022-2023 Season, however, our *Arts for Young America* program is long-standing in the La Crosse Community and is at the heart of Viterbo’s Fine Arts Center outreach programming and is therefore not likely to dissolve, and with your assistance, we can grow, flourish, and recover from the pandemic. We will continue to prioritize finding a long-term sponsor to replace our past generous funding source for the scholarship program. Ultimately, when our ticket sales recover and new educator/patrons participate in our offerings, we can self-fund much of our scholarships program with healthy tickets sales. This growth may take years and we would like to re-apply for La Crosse Arts Board funding next year to further our growth and to ensure programming continuing to our educators. Our ask in future years may be less than our current request of \$10,000, depending on the success of each season and ticket sales, but will never exceed this amount. We feel confident that this number will serve our community adequately and will allow us to cover reasonable administrative costs to maintain and afford our high level of artistic excellence.

### **Artist Bio/Resume:**

While all our offerings for the *Arts for Young America* Series for 2022-2023 season are stellar, we offer a wide variety of shows that appeal to various age groups and hit on curriculum standards for the State of Wisconsin and we would like to highlight a few of our standout performances as they align with Viterbo University’s mission and target “diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice.” These relevant issues are woven into several of our performances and were selected with great care to teach these important societal values in a different way than is typical from parents, schools, or news formats. We believe we can make positive change within our La Crosse community through the powerful vehicle of performing arts that have a lasting effect on the development of our youth.

- I. *Warriors Don’t Cry* presented by TheaterWorksUSA a New York City based professional theatre company.

Curriculum Connections: Communication, language arts, music, technology, social studies, civil discourse, social justice, activism, social media



## **About TheatreWorksUSA and their commitment to outstanding youth programming:**

*As creators of theater for young and family audiences throughout the country, we acknowledge and honor the moral responsibility that comes with this platform and privilege. If we are to create a better world for young people to become inclusive, anti-racist, empathetic members of society, then we must do better now.*

*TheaterWorksUSA stands in solidarity with communities of color and against the racial inequities they have endured for centuries. To the Black artists, staff, students, children, parents, educators, and audiences in our community: We see you. We hear you. We are with you in the fight for justice. Without a doubt, black lives matter.*

*We renew our commitment to reject and denounce racism of any kind and to use our voices to demand – and shape – a more equitable and just society. We know we have work to do within our organization to reinforce our guiding principles, practices, and policies around diversity and inclusion. We know we have work to do in supporting more artists of color and providing meaningful connection with our audiences. We know we have work to do in producing more stories that challenge us all to create a better world. We know we have work to do, and we are committed to doing it. We want our actions to speak louder than words alone. We will hold ourselves accountable and, if we fall short, we will listen and keep striving to improve.*

*As we continue to educate ourselves, we implore our non-Black community members to seek out resources that support their own anti-racist learning as well. Examples of organizations who are providing essential education for parents and teachers around implicit racial bias include WeStories and Teaching Tolerance. The National Museum of African American History and Culture also offers guidance and tools to inspire and facilitate conversation about race. We hope you will join us in taking action to create a more just society.*

<https://twusa.org/about/about-us/>

- II. *It's Okay to Be Different–Stories by Todd Parr* presented by Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia, is a professional touring Canadian theatre company who specialize in the art of puppetry and have been creating award winning programming with the acclaimed Institute of Puppetry Arts of Canada.

Curriculum Connections: Early literacy, language arts, emotional development, multiculturalism, character growth

*Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia's mandate is: To introduce to family audiences, at home and abroad the excitement of innovative performing and visual arts; To promote the art of puppetry through live performance, digital programming, and instruction; To serve as cultural ambassadors for Windsor, Nova Scotia, and Canada; To provide a touring and digital showcase for Atlantic Canada's artists; To encourage literacy, storytelling, and the love of reading.*

*Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia will mark its 50th season with the FIRST staged adaptation of three favorite contemporary storybooks, directed to very young audiences. Todd Parr is the author and illustrator of more than 71 books for children, including the New York Times bestsellers:*

*The I Love You Book, The Earth Book, and The Thankful Book. His books are available in over forty countries throughout the world. He was the cocreator of the 3X EMMY-Nominated children's television show ToddWorld™, and he has created several short films for Sesame Street. His work is published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, a division of Hachette Book Group.*

*It's okay to need some help.*

*It's okay to be a different color.*

*It's okay to talk about your feelings.*

*From the bestselling author Todd Parr, comes a reassuring story about being who you are.*

*"The book unites the concept of tolerance of differences with simple images for easy understanding and comprehension. It's Okay to be Different encourages readers to accept themselves and others."—Children's Literature*

*"[Parr] wisely doesn't zero in on specifics, which would force him to establish what's 'normal.' Instead, he focuses on acceptance and individuality and encourages readers to do the same."—Publisher's Weekly*

<https://mermaidtheatre.ca/mission-and-mandate>

### **Examples of past exhibits or similar projects:**

\*See PDF of past 2019-2020 *Arts for Young America* season brochure with our offerings for reference, although it must be noted, that all 2020 performances were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

\*See PDF of Educator Survey Comments from November 2021







Thank you for helping pay for  
our first grade classes to go  
see The Nutcracker. In the  
ballet we liked Mother Ginger  
the dancing, the soldiers, and  
the battle. None of us had  
been to a ballet before.  
Thank you for helping  
us go.  
Kashon first grade  
West Elementary Waukon Iowa

















