

City of La Crosse Arts Board

2. Creative Development Grants

Erickson, Luke
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La Crosse, WI 54601, US
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Submitted: Oct 19 2025 11:20PM



Evaluations

Overall Rating

83.71

Rating Method: Cumulative
Range: 0 - 125

93

Zachary Stensen
Oct 19 2025 11:52PM

Public Access: 23, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 24, Community Importance: 22, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit: 24, Do you support moving this application forward?: Yes

"This is a strong and professionally planned project that builds on Grey Area Productions' established record of producing bold, high-quality theater in La Crosse (I went to one of their most recent plays, and it was fantastic).

One thing to note is that the group received Arts Board funding for their November 2024 production of Small Mouth Sounds, and this proposal doesn't clearly address how the new project will build on or evolve from that previous grant-supported work."

85

Mary Cate Wesling
Oct 23 2025 5:39PM

Public Access: 20, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 25, Community Importance: 20, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit: 20, Do you support moving this application forward?: Yes

"Since we at the Arts Board have awarded this company a grant before, I am confident that the money will be of good use. Making theatre accessible is so important, it would be cool to have more pay-what-you-can performances than just 2."

Maureen Freedland

Public Access: 21, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 21, Community Importance: 21, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational

84

Oct 24 2025 12:48PM

Merit: 21

"Quality and proven production successes, excellent logistics such as advertising and Pump House support to reduce costs. Multi-performances will help the budget. My reservation is that although each play done by Grey Area Productions is unique with different cast members, etc., we are being asked for funding that we have provided before and that might preclude funding new artistic endeavors. I look forward to talking this out together."

88

Paige Shafrath

Oct 26 2025 12:43PM

Public Access: 20, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 24, Community Importance: 21, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit: 23, Do you support moving this application forward?: Yes

"VISION, ARTISTIC GOALS, & EDUCATIONAL MERIT

5, 5, 4, 3, 5 = 23 -

I would like to know more about what they play is about. The write-up uses vulgar language. Is this sensitive to audiences or triggering in any way?

DEMONSTRATED PROJECT PLANNING & FEASIBILITY

5, 5, 4, 5, 5 = 24

COMMUNITY IMPORTANCE

5 (specific to addictive community), 4, 5 (value that actors are being paid), 4, 3 (a little hesitant on the concept contributing to community vibrancy and cultural impact) = 21

PUBLIC ACCESS

3, 5, 4, 5, 3 = 20"

80

Christine Kahlow

Oct 26 2025 2:45PM

Public Access: 12, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 24, Community Importance: 20, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit: 24, Do you support moving this application forward?: Yes

85

Eva Black

Oct 27 2025 11:55AM

Public Access: 25, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 25, Community Importance: 15, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit: 20

"Well thought and planned out project. Biggest concerns for me are community impact: what's the play about in more detail? Is it educational? Is it family friendly? Happy to see that the grant would provide a Pay-What-You-Can show, however, the budget doesn't include an estimate for ticket sales that day."

71

Jennifer Morris

Oct 27 2025 1:44PM

Public Access: 10, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 23, Community Importance: 15, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit: 23, Do you support moving this application forward?: No

"Again, we received a number of interesting projects and strong proposals this round. I do feel that having supported this group last year, we should lend our support elsewhere this year."

Section 1 (CDG) - Contact & Project Information

1. Name(s)/Organization

Grey Area Productions

2. Mailing address

Grey Area Productions
C/O The Pump House Regional Arts Center
119 King Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

3. Email address

greyareatheater@gmail.com

4. Phone number

(608) 386-0884

5. Website (optional)

<https://www.facebook.com/greyareatheatreproductions>

6. Biography

Grey Area Productions' mission is to bring our audiences stories that ignite emotion, challenge conception, and inspire growth. We work to offer a wide range of artistic and cultural enrichment by presenting published and original works founded on the principle of accessible theater for all.

Our productions include a Pay-What-You-Can night. We have produced 9 plays; 5 by men and 3 by women playwrights. Including "Pool (No Water)" we will have staged 3 Wisconsin premiers. Overall, we have provided paid work for 30 local performers.

7. 1-2 Page Resume or CV



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68.9 KB

8. Project Title

Pool (No Water) by Mark Ravenhill

9. Brief Project Description

Grey Area Productions is excited to expand our approach to theatrical storytelling by staging "Pool (No Water)" by Mark Ravenhill.

10. Project Start and End Dates

Performances of "Pool (No Water)" by Mark Ravenhill will run from March 19th - 22nd and March 26th - 29th, 2026.

11. Requested Funding Amount

2500

12. List of Participants

Colin Thelen, Chelsea McManimon-Moe, Taylor Goodine, Luke Erickson, Joe Anderson, and Mary Leonard.

Additional performers and production staff to be determined.

13. Conflicts of Interest

Not applicable.

14. Previous Funded Projects

Yes. We received a Creative Development Grant for our 2024 production of "Small Mouth Sounds" by Beth Wohl.

15. Are you a non-profit that is registered in the City of La Crosse?

No

16. Federal Tax-Exempt Status

Section 2 (CDG) - Project Description

1. Project Location

Dayton Theatre
The Pump House Regional Arts Center
119 King Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

2. Project Description

Grey Area Productions will be producing our fifth season, including this Spring production of "Pool (No Water)". This play will expand our interdisciplinary approach to theatre by employing the Meisner Technique, Viewpoints

training, and movement work playing off of an abstract poetic style of language in rehearsal and performance. We consider the productions to be one of our biggest artistic leaps to date and we embrace the opportunity to share a daring, complex, and a truly original story.

"Pool (No Water)" revolves around a famous artist who invites her old friends to her luxurious new home. For one night only, the group is back together. But celebrations come to an abrupt end when the host suffers a horrific accident. As the victim lies in a coma, an almost unthinkable plan starts to take shape: could her suffering be their next work of art? "Pool (No Water)" is a visceral and poetically abrasive play about the fragility of friendship and the jealousy and resentment inspired by success.

"Pool (No Water)" will be a fully staged production. Our needs will include a set, lighting, live music, and choreography as well as costuming and props. A significant time commitment is required from the production team, as well as our actors, to create the quality performances we seek to bring to the community.

While Grey Area Productions provides accessibility to community members through Pay-What-You-Can; donation-based preview performances, Grey Area also provides accessibility to performers, designers, and technicians. La Crosse is a small community when compared to Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, the home of "working actors", designers, and technicians. There are very few opportunities to receive payment for their craft in our community. Oftentimes, these artists sacrifice hours that could be spent earning a living to be part of a local production.

Since its very first production, Grey Area Productions has paid its practitioners. While payment rates are modest, they are growing with the company. Grant funds would primarily be used to help us pay our actors and production teams for their work, as well as aid in covering licensing rights and additional production-related elements. Small Mouth Sounds will cost \$880 to license (\$110 per performance x 8 performances). The publishing house requires scripts to be purchased for the cast, director, and stage manager. This approximately comes to \$130 for this production.

Overall, our goal for the La Crosse Arts Board Grant is to further build our sustainability and access. Grey Area Productions seeks to offer work that promotes artistic growth and provides bold script selections that enrich the theatre programming in La Crosse.

3. Project Execution & Timeline

"Pool (No Water)" by Mark Ravenhill.
Production Time/Rehearsal Process: October - March.
Performance dates: March 19th - 29th, 2026.

4. Required Materials

Scripts, licensing fees, production materials, marketing fees, payment of actors, and production team.

5. Durability & Maintenance Plan

While every individual production is temporary, Grey Area seeks to remain a permanent part of our region's artistic landscape. We're committed to providing a sustainable environment for our projects.

6. Plans for Removal

Not applicable.

7. Target Audience

First, we are fortunate in that The Pump House Regional Arts Center has agreed to help with a portion of our promotion for each production, as per our venue contract. We are included in their mailers, electronic newsletters, and have access to their contact lists.

Additional audience engagement comes from our own grassroots outreach via social media, radio and TV promotion, word of mouth, and poster canvassing.

"Pool (No Water)" provides our audience with an immersive theater experience. The layout of the jewel box theater at the Pump House invites attendees to literally walk through a door into another world. The intimacy of

the space places the audience feet from the actors.

After the performance, we offer Talkbacks with the cast and/or crew to get feedback from the audience and discuss the show they just experienced. This provides a platform for individuals to share with us how successful the desired effect of the production was from a technical standpoint and, more importantly, how the storytelling affected them personally. Our company members have always held the belief that a show is only as good as how much discussion it generates in the car on the way home. This sharing among audience members deepens the experience by illuminating new, varying perspectives.

8. Under-Served Audience (optional)

The foundation of our company is providing accessible theater for all. We are committed to the principle that individuals and families should be able to experience all forms of art regardless of their financial situation.

In keeping with these beliefs, The Arts Board Grant would allow us to further expand our accessibility to audiences by offering a second, "Pay-What-You-Can" donation-based performance. Funding would also help us maintain our lower-than-market ticket price (General Public: \$25.00, Student/Military: \$15).

9. Artistic Goals

This grant will help support our mission to bring local audiences stories that ignite emotion, challenge conception, and inspire growth. Because of our commitment to exploring complex subject matter, our company is seeking this type of funding rather than corporate sponsorship which shies away from difficult-to-categorize artistic pursuits. Themes that we have previously explored include humanism, isolation, multi-generational trauma, political morality, love, death, existentialism, and mental health. We believe La Crosse residents deserve an arena where those who want to can explore these types of themes and ideas without being given concrete answers.

The performing arts get people into a positive controlled setting, where they can feel adventurous, open-minded, and safe. Research supports that in-person group engagement improves mood and decreases depression. As we opened our first show, *The Few*, in August of 2021 we felt the need to plant the seeds of creative thinking and imaginative problem-solving more than ever. That continues to be true today.

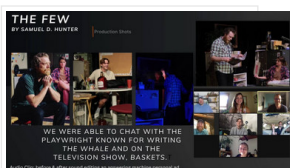
To date, Grey Area Productions has operated under a core company of 5 people. While each production allowed us to invite additional artists, our budget has limited the number of people we can enlist to work on a show. Additional resources and funding would allow us to include more artists and technicians in larger-scale productions that meet our standard of quality.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Media



"SLIDE 1"



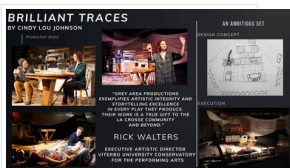
"SLIDE 2"



"SLIDE 3"



"SLIDE 4"



"SLIDE 5"



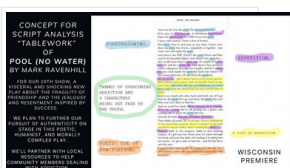
"SLIDE 6"



"SLIDE 7"



"SLIDE 8"



"SLIDE 9"



"SLIDE 10"

Attachments

Project Budget

52 KB

Provided by Applicant



"SLIDE 1"

THE FEW

BY SAMUEL D. HUNTER

Production Shots



WE WERE ABLE TO CHAT WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT KNOWN FOR WRITING THE WHALE AND ON THE TELEVISION SHOW, BASKETS.

Audio Clip: before & after sound editing an answering machine personal ad.

"SLIDE 2"

MITZI'S ABORTION: A SAINT'S GUIDE TO LATE-TERM POLITICS AND MEDICINE IN AMERICA

BY ELIZABETH HEFFRON

WISCONSIN
PREMIERE DURING
THE OVERTURNING OF
ROE V. WADE.



"SLIDE 3"

THE THIN PLACE

BY LUCAS HNATH

Production shots

WISCONSIN PREMIERE



CREATING AN ILLUSION

This spooky script required an additional rights package to secure the rights to perform a "disappearing illusion" and a "mentalist trick". Additional funding was donated to us by a Pump House patron in order to perform the "mentalist trick" that left our audience wondering, "But how?".



"SLIDE 4"

BRILLIANT TRACES

BY CINDY LOU JOHNSON

Production shots



"GREY AREA PRODUCTIONS
EXEMPLIFIES ARTISTIC INTEGRITY AND
STORYTELLING EXCELLENCE
IN EVERY PLAY THEY PRODUCE.
THEIR WORK IS A TRUE GIFT TO THE
LA CROSSE COMMUNITY
AND BEYOND."

RICK WALTERS

EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
VITERBO UNIVERSITY CONSERVATORY
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



AN AMBITIOUS SET

DESIGN CONCEPT



EXECUTION



"SLIDE 5"

SMALL MOUTH SOUNDS
BY BESS WOHL

This 7 actor cast performs 90 minutes almost entirely without spoken dialogue, relying instead on body language and internal dialogue with others and with themselves to illuminate the characters.

COSTUME RENDERINGS BY JOE ANDERSON.

SUPPORTED BY THE 2024 CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT GRANT

"SLIDE 6"

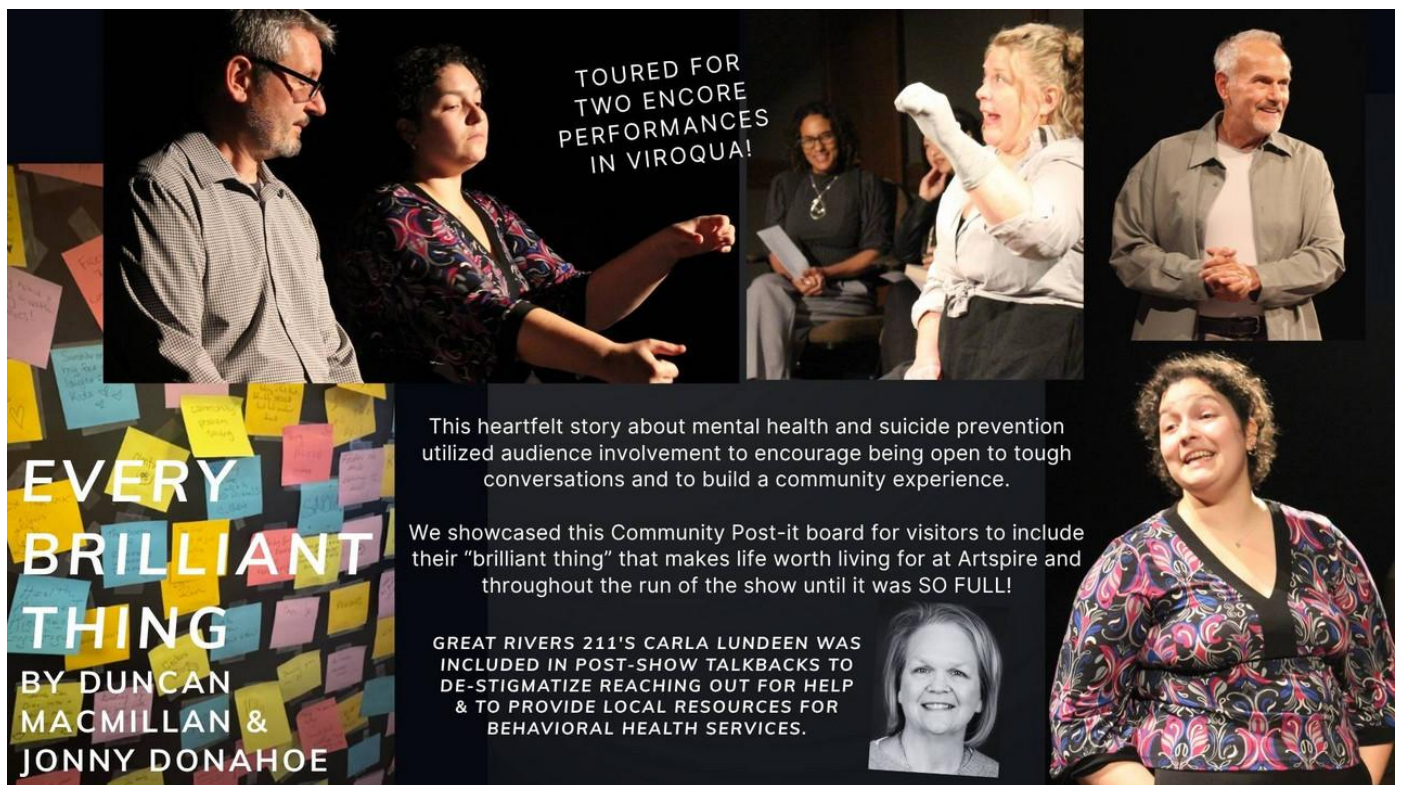
GRUESOME PLAYGROUND INJURIES
BY RAJIV JOSEPH

TOURED FOR
TWO ENCORE
PERFORMANCES
IN VIROQUA!

This show's shelving style set was constructed of repurposed lumber and windows sourced from the original La Crosse US Post Office, built in 1889. It was donated to the Pump House Regional Arts Center when the Post Office was torn down in 1977. They now showcase artwork in the galleries.



"SLIDE 7"



TOURED FOR TWO ENCORE PERFORMANCES IN VIROQUA!

EVERY BRILLIANT THING
BY DUNCAN MACMILLAN & JONNY DONAHOE

This heartfelt story about mental health and suicide prevention utilized audience involvement to encourage being open to tough conversations and to build a community experience.

We showcased this Community Post-it board for visitors to include their "brilliant thing" that makes life worth living for at Artspire and throughout the run of the show until it was SO FULL!

GREAT RIVERS 211'S CARLA LUNDEEN WAS INCLUDED IN POST-SHOW TALKBACKS TO DE-STIGMATIZE REACHING OUT FOR HELP & TO PROVIDE LOCAL RESOURCES FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES.

"SLIDE 8"

CONCEPT FOR SCRIPT ANALYSIS "TABLEWORK" OF POOL (NO WATER) BY MARK RAVENHILL

FOR OUR 10TH SHOW, A VISCERAL AND SHOCKING NEW PLAY ABOUT THE FRAGILITY OF FRIENDSHIP AND THE JEALOUSY AND RESENTMENT INSPIRED BY SUCCESS.

WE PLAN TO FURTHER OUR PURSUIT OF AUTHENTICITY ON STAGE IN THIS POETIC, HUMANIST, AND MORALLY COMPLEX PLAY.

WE'LL PARTNER WITH LOCAL RESOURCES TO HELP COMMUNITY MEMBERS DEALING WITH ADDICTION.

FORESHADOWING.

THEMES OF OVERCOMING
ADDICTION AND
4 CHARACTERS
BEING SET FREE BY
THE TRUTH.

POETIC USE OF
PUNCTUATION.

POOL (NO WATER)

And now she has the pool. The pooooooooooooool.
First seen in attachments. A Christmas attachment.
Open the attachment for a PDF of my new pool.
I open with caution. I have a fear of viruses.

Her pool. 'You're welcome at any time. Come over, share the pool. Any of you – singularly or together – just come over and enjoy the pool.'

And there's the PDF. There's the pool. Clean and blue and lit by beautiful lights. And there's the pool boy – who could have been a porn star. Or maybe is a porn star. Or will be a porn star. And there's her personal trainer taking her through her lengths. And he's a porn star too. And maybe the pool boy fucks the trainer. Or the trainer fucks her. Or she fucks the pool boy.

No no no no – she's always been a very moral person. She's always had a strict code of morals. Even in the hovel days. She never did the half-half-heroin for more than a day. And she always kept her door strictly shut at night.

And so we email each other back and forth: yes, let's go and see the pool, let's go and share the pool, why not? Why not? Let's share it with her.

And we email her back. We're coming, we're coming, we're all coming. We're all getting on a plane and coming over to share the pool with you.

And she Es back: Fantastic. Fantastic. Fantastic.

Time drifts, of course. We're all busy – there's exhibitions in the bohemian quarter, there's a project to provide murals for heroin babies, there's fundraising there's –

There's Sally in the hospice. Sally in that fucking hospice. It's got into her bones now, it's eaten through her body and now that little evil cunning C is eating into her bones – it's got a taste of marrow – and she lies there and she says:

I want to die I want to die all I want is to die why can't they just let I won't take the medication when all I want is to die?

REPETITION.

A LIST OF EXPOSITION.

WISCONSIN
PREMIERE

"SLIDE 9"

THANK YOU!

FROM GREY AREA PRODUCTIONS

KATIE
BAKALARS

TAYLOR GOODINE

COLIN THELEN

LUKE ERICKSON

CHELSEA
MC MANIMON-MOS

"SLIDE 10"