March 9, 2020

Submission to Economic and Community Development Committee meeting – March 10, 202

RE: EC12.12 City-Owned Spaces for DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Music Organizations

Arraymusic has been a leader in Toronto and Canada's experimental music scene since our first concert in March of 1972. Our mission is to ignite and sustain a passion for contemporary Canadian musical art within an international, interdisciplinary context. We were recognized in the City's February 2016 Music Strategy as a leading not-for-profit music presenter/producer and would like to offer our thoughts on the City's proposed DIY Strategy.

Firstly, we applaud the City's focus on DIY groups and spaces to address this pressing need. Without cultural spaces we will have no culture even in a digital era. Further we support the City's initiative to make use of surplus City space as a strategy to support DIY groups which critically lack well equipped, affordable spaces.

However, we also believe that there is a need for an additional strategy to address DIY groups through enhanced support of existing non-commercial spaces. This could both complement the proposed use of City space and be implemented more rapidly and economically, as it would leverage existing capabilities and resources. Support for existing DIY spaces would also serve to shore up spaces that the Toronto performance community musicians has come to rely on.

The Array Space provides DIY space at below market rates (as low as $25 per hour) supporting more than 345 groups and 2,650 diverse artists and their communities annually. We are centrally located at 155 Walnut Ave south of Trinity Bellwoods Park. Array developed its current space with $250,000+ 4-year facility improvement funding from Heritage Canada, Trillium, the City of Toronto, ArtsBuild Ontario installing: a new ramp/elevator for accessibility; new HVAC; stage lighting; video recording/projection capabilities. We continue to develop our Array Space as a creative hub for all types of events — a crucial resource we offer to bolster Toronto's DIY performing arts scene

https://www.arraymusic.ca/array-space/about-array-space/

Although we receive generous support from all 3 Arts Councils, our space itself operates at a loss and our fundraising and grant writing efforts are in a significant part devoted to supporting a low-cost DIY space. With direct Array Space revenues of $76,000 and attributable expenses of $130,000 the space requires $54,000 in additional annual funding.

We provide space and services, including video recording, at no cost to Resident Artist Groups as an incubator to support arts creation. For example: Turntablister SlowPitchSound workshopped and presented multi-media performance work Alternate Forest with the support of this program. In our 2018-19 season we provided more than 506 hours of free studio time and services at a value of over $19,000 to a wide range of music and performance artists.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnNDxOf00mc

new music. new world.

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Array is not alone as an operator of an existing DIY space. Other spaces include Tea Base (Spadina Chinatown), Unit 2 (Sterling Road near MOCCA), Small World Music (Queen and Shaw) and Electric Perfume (Danforth and Jones). The Margin of Eras Gallery (Parkdale) will be closing in the coming months which demonstrates that these spaces would benefit from additional City program support.

We request that in addition to exploring provision of City owned spaces, the City also explore and report back on opportunities to provide additional support to existing DIY spaces as part of a broader strategy to address the needs of DIY presenter/producers.

For example, funding to existing DIY space operators to directly support the City's priorities for ‘delivering equitable and diverse programming and activities’ is likely a quicker and more economical path to DIY support than renovating existing City spaces and developing new agreements with DIY collectives.

The City could also consider leveraging the skills and resources of these existing venues when it considers the operating model for the City owned space. Existing DIY space operators may be interested in relocating to a City space or extending their operations to cover an additional space.

Let’s not overlook this opportunity to adequately support organizations that have boots on the ground already providing well developed space, with a track record of success, history of public investment, well developed networks, and the trust of artists and Toronto audiences. Toronto should support what we have in addition to creating new programs to address this pressing need.

Mark Wilson
Chair Arraymusic