



**DATE:** February 11, 2014

**CATEGORY:** Consent

**DEPT.:** Community Services

**TITLE:** **Call for Applications for  
SecondStage Home Companies  
Status at Mountain View Center for  
the Performing Arts**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Direct staff to implement an open call for applications for SecondStage Home Companies.

### **BACKGROUND**

In April 2013, City Council instructed the Performing Arts Committee (PAC) to review the Home Company Program to see if it could be improved. In the same meeting, Council instructed staff to concentrate on improving usage of SecondStage.

Staff presented analysis and developed recommendations to the PAC at their meetings in September, October, and November 2013. The preliminary recommendation was to concentrate on adapting the Home Company Program as a tool to improve SecondStage usage. The Committee agreed with this concept, and staff developed a program plan. The PAC discussed the plan at the November meeting and approved this recommendation to City Council on January 15.

### **ANALYSIS**

The Home Company Program was created in 1991 to ensure that there would be enough performances and revenue for the Center for the Performing Arts (CPA) to remain viable. A detailed analysis of the program was provided to Council in October 2012 as background for a request for Home Company status (Attachment 1).

Since 2009, most SecondStage performances have been produced by Peninsula Youth Theatre in their "Stories On Stage" series, or by TheatreWorks in their "Young Playwrights Project" series. Together, these account for over 65 percent of all SecondStage bookings over the last five years. The financial and administrative advantages of Home Company status, including reduced fees and streamlined booking

procedures, have contributed to the long-term success of these series. Similarly, staff believes that the long-term success of MainStage scheduling has been due to the existence of the Home Company program, especially the key feature that Home Companies agree to produce or present a minimum number of performances within a year. Our current Home Companies work under this agreement with the understanding that they will have priority in both MainStage and SecondStage.

### **Proposal for a SecondStage Home Company Program**

Staff proposes that new agreements could be made with other organizations that would give priority only for use of SecondStage. An expanded definition of the minimum performance requirements would give staff and SecondStage Home Companies additional flexibility to book dates. Minimum requirements would be six performances in a Season format (such as the current "Stories On Stage" series), in a Festival format (with a large number of individual performances in a one- or two-week period), or in a recurring monthly or biweekly format (such as the current "PlazaPalooza" series on the Civic Center plaza). These performance minimums are described in more detail in the "Draft Call for Applications" (Attachment 2). Staff also believes that some operating policies can be altered to reduce the nonfee costs of using SecondStage for Home Companies.

Benefits for SecondStage Home Companies would include:

- Booking Priority (on SecondStage only).
- Approximately 50 percent discount on performance and rehearsal fees.
- Possible additional reduction of nonfee costs.

Benefits for the City would include:

- Multiple, predictable SecondStage bookings.
- Reduced staff time for client orientation, safety training, and supervision.

Benefits for both the City and the Home Companies would include:

- Streamlined booking process (adding performances by e-mail).
- Cooperative promotional and marketing benefits.

Staff would publish an open call for applications for SecondStage Home Company status. The call would be published through area arts organizations such as Theatre Bay Area, Bay Area Spaces, and SV Live. It would also be posted on the City website and sent directly to everyone who has booked performances in SecondStage in the last 10 years.

Applications for status will include organizational background information, financial reports, proposed genre types, and a proposal for a typical “season” of performances.

Applications would be reviewed by PAC and undergo a staff analysis for financial and scheduling viability. The application process also would include an interview between the organization’s officers and PAC. Successful applicants would be recommended to City Council by PAC to be given SecondStage Home Company status for five years, including a one-year probationary status.

The number of recommended organizations would depend on the number of performances each company would provide, as well as on the quality of the applications.

### **Time Line**

If the concept is approved by the City Council, the call for booking will be published in late February 2014 with applications due in early April. Scoring and PAC interviews will be conducted in late spring and summer, with recommendations delivered to Council in September or October 2014. The goal is to execute contracts prior to the Primary Booking process in January 2015.

New companies that apply will be encouraged to begin performances through the secondary booking process rather than wait for those Primary Bookings.

This program is not meant to replace the Nonprofit and Commercial booking processes in SecondStage, which would still contract performances on an individual basis.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Only minor marketing expenses of less than \$1,000 are required to implement the call for applications. This money is already allocated through the limited-term project to increase SecondStage usage. Administrative staff impact will depend on the number of

responses but will be for a limited period. Ongoing additional event staff expenses due to new bookings will be charged back to the clients.

This program will not begin to generate revenue until 2014-15 at the earliest. Depending on the number and nature of the applications, revenue potential is between \$10,000 and \$100,000 annually.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Direct staff and PAC to amend the Call for SecondStage Home Company Applications, the SecondStage Home Company Criteria, or any other part of the proposal.
2. Take no action (continue to book SecondStage on the current basis).
3. Take a different action.

### **PUBLIC NOTICING** – Agenda posting.

Prepared by:

W. Scott Whisler  
Performing Arts Manager

Approved by:

J.P. de la Montaigne  
Community Services Director

Daniel H. Rich  
City Manager

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- Attachments: 1. [Council Report from October 9, 2012 Entitled “Nova Vista Symphony Request for Home Company Status”](#)  
2. Draft Call for Applications