



FY21 Flexible Support Program

Monkeybear's Harmolodic Workshop

3836 Pillsbury Ave S
Minneapolis, MN 55409

Organization Fiscal Year End: 06/30/2020
Organization Annual Income: \$85,118.00
Organization Annual Expense: \$71,662.00

FS21-1-109 Development in Puppetry for our community and connection to our community during Covid.

Funding to support the continued development in puppetry for our community through mentorship and staying connected to our community through online (due to Covid) open studio sessions.

Amount Requested: \$15,000.00
Project Start Date: 01/04/2021
Project End Date: 11/30/2021
Total Project Expenses: \$15,750.00

Group's Purpose & Background

Monkeybear's Harmolodic Workshop, supports Native, Black, POC (People of Color) in developing creative and technical skills in contemporary puppetry.

Puppetry has been practiced around the world since ancient times, yet here in Minnesota (and nationally), the contemporary field is largely white, reflected in puppet theaters and companies: staff, board, performers and audience. We address this barrier by creating accessible opportunities for Native, Black, POC to gain skills and experience in this artform so they can take part in the Twin Cities puppetry community and beyond. Founded in 2016, we've received awards for our innovative

work: Arts Achievement Award from MRAC in 2018, a Sally Award in 2019, and Innovation funds from McKnight Foundation. Our main programming:

Contemporary Puppetry Workshops 1-2 day trainings on a specific style, 3-4 hour sessions, and informal monthly Open Studio Work Sessions and our Summer Puppet Performance Intensive: weeklong fundamentals labs that cover a wide range of styles, meals provided.

New Puppetworks six month program for artists who took Intensive, to create 5 minute puppet theatre pieces. Participants receive a stipend, 24-hour access to our studio, 22 hours of mentorship, culminating show at Pillsbury House Theater and photo/video documentation.

Community

1. Monkeybear's community is Native, Black, POC adults interested in exploring puppetry - a mix of practicing artists and people who might not have considered themselves artists:

Race: Asian 38.37%, Black 30.23%, Latinx 11.63%, Native 6.98%, Multi racial 6.98%, Arab American/SWANA 3.48%, Indigenous/Latinx 2.33%

Gender: Female/femme 66.28%, Male 11.63%, Non-binary/gender non-conforming 19.76%,

Trans 2.33% of participants identified as trans

Sexual orientation: Straight/heterosexual 53.49%, LGBTQ 43.02%, Questioning 2.33%, Decline to answer 1.16%

Income: Low income 41.86%, Poverty level 29.07%, Middle income 27.91%, Upper income 1.16%

Disability: 11.63% identify as having a disability

Age range: 21 to past 75

2. We are best positioned to engage with and support the community we describe because we are our community! We are constituent led (100% of staff and board are from within the communities we serve) and artist led (the ED is a puppeteer herself). The project itself will be shaped by the participants, with the ED coordinating/facilitating to help make their vision happen.

3. Because of the dearth of Native, Black, POC professional puppeteers in the Twin Cities before Monkeybear, many members of our community expressed an intrinsic barrier to participation - it's hard to have a point of entry when you don't see yourself reflected. Monkeybear is designed to be an artist's first engagement with puppetry, and provides support to continue to develop further. By nurturing participants as they create puppet performances and participate in workshops, we help them acquire the skills and confidence necessary to develop their artistic voice in this form.

“I love Monkeybear because they do the real work to getting more POCI people into puppetry. They provided me with training, mentorship, and a community, without this I would've never been able to complete a puppet show.”-Oanh Vu (2019 Cohort)

4. Our regular programming which requires in-person contact, is postponed to 2022, due to Covid-19. Monkeybear's priority this fiscal year is to stay connected to and support the community we've already created, via zoom, in a way that's relevant to their needs during this tough time. Through conversations, we've gained insight into the needs of the artists who make up our community. Based on conversations with our community about their needs, our goal is to provide access to development opportunities for artists who have been through our New Puppetworks program, as well as regular opportunities for our entire community to communicate and stay connected without gathering in-person.

Proposed Project

1. We need to change programming for fiscal 2021 to keep our community safe from Covid-19 but ensure access to development opportunities. We especially don't want artists pursuing puppetry after being in New Puppetworks, to feel abandoned or lose confidence and/or connection to the community we created, while Covid-19 continues to be a huge threat. Our opportunity is the strong supportive community we have built over the past four years -who want to provide one another with artistic and human connection during such a scary time.

2. Our artistic goal is to support the artistic development of our community via Zoom. After conversations this August with past participants, two main themes/needs emerged:

1. Artists want mentorship, skill development, feedback and benchmarks to motivate and support them as they continue to create puppetry during this time. 2. Artists need/want to stay connected as a community of Native, Black, POC puppet artists in this time of Covid-19 isolation.

3. To support our community, Monkeybear will work with 12 artists to develop individualized work plans over 10 months, ensuring that artists have the mentorship, expertise and structure that they need to continue developing their puppetry skills and creative projects throughout the pandemic. Monkeybear will also facilitate monthly virtual opportunities for the many members of our community to connect.

Monkeybear will use the funds to 1. support individualized development for 12 artists over zoom (hiring master puppet artists to give advice on development of work and/or techniques, feedback from ED and peers, etc). Participants will receive a stipend for supplies and materials. 2. Maintain monthly Open Studio Sessions via zoom that the ED will host, open to anyone that's been in any of our programming. Folks can make things in the safety of their own home, yet be connected to the community-creating a

space for conversation, feedback and a safe space to try out new ideas. Participants can log on for the whole session or for just a part of it.

The 12 artists who expressed desire to commit time to development support: Ty Chapman, Andrew Young, Kallie Melvin, Malia Burkhart, Oanh Vu, Denise Hanh Huynh, Freida Martin, Michele Spaise, Liping Vong, Antoine Martinneau, Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra and Luis Lopez.

Timeline

January-shaping individualized plan with conversations with ED: on what they want to develop in, goals, who they might want advice from

February-October- zoom meetings with mentors, (total of 10 hours each artist)
Monthly open studio work sessions on Zoom. Bi-monthly check-ins with artists by ED via email, phone, or zoom-(format chosen by participant)

November-evaluate

Our primary goals are to come out of this Covid year maintaining a strong understanding of our community's needs, progress, triumphs and challenges, and to continue supporting the development of our community of artists.

At the beginning of the program, ED will work with each participant to set individual goals and benchmarks (like improved technical skills or creation of new puppetry pieces). Success will be the achievement of these individual goals.

This program continues our work in fostering a culture of support/connection amongst our community - ensuring that our artists can continue developing and learn new puppetry skills despite the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic. Maintaining ongoing connection with our community will help us continue to provide responsive support, and will help us be prepared to support our community's next steps when we can resume meeting in person.

4. Our whole mission is to provide access to puppetry for Native, Black, POC. This project ensures our ability to support the value of creating art through this tough time, and the desire to make sure the Monkeybear community has the time, resources and connection necessary to help each other through this tough time with folks experiencing loss of performance/artistic opportunities.

Impact

1. We chose this project because our community told us through a series of conversations that this would be the most beneficial to them during this year, It aligns

perfectly with how we want to support our community while staying safe from Covid-19: a project that is low-stress and gently nurtures, accounting for the different headspaces that folks are in during these times.

2. This project will be a huge impact because it will allow us to continue fulfilling our mission of supporting Native, Black, POC in puppetry by staying connected to members of our community, to continue to learn what they need and how we can step up to support them in an ongoing, organic fashion.

3. Participants shape how they want to develop their craft. They will meet (10 times over zoom Feb-Oct.) individually with a puppetry mentor and decide what they want to do during the Open Studio zoom hours. They will also receive a stipend to help them with cost of materials and supplies. With the many anxieties and challenges that are impacting our communities as a result of Covid-19, the artists in our community have expressed that it can be challenging to maintain a healthy artistic practice during this time - despite the profound value they have found in making and sharing their artwork. With so many urgent demands competing for artists' attention, time and resources, we believe we must do everything we can to ensure the distinct and powerful voices of our community are able to withstand this time, and continue their artistic practice.

This program will provide the structure, support, encouragement and accountability needed to make sure the artists in our community continue to evolve in the form. Our vision is that at the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, these artists will be able to continue presenting the vital work that only they can share, and the Monkeybear community will be stronger and more connected than ever.

Our previous development programs have already been a huge benefit to our community:

Past participants have gone on to: perform/create work locally and in Chicago, NYC and Detroit. three received the national Henson Foundation grants, seven got the local Puppet Lab Grant, created work for public arts events such as Northern Sparks, Greenway Glow, and Our Space is Spoken For, worked as full time artistic staff for Mayday and Barebones and Regional Director for Puppeteers of America, taught workshops at MIA, the M and schools. None of the artists receiving these opportunities had experience with puppetry until Monkeybear!

“Puppetry is a tradition that exists in so many of our ancestral cultures. For me, having a space to explore that with other BIPOC has given me a sense of community and safety to take risks. It’s been a rare and vital space that’s been crucial to my development as an artist these past few years, and I’m incredibly grateful. I’ve gained so much knowledge, friendship, and community from Monkeybear.”

-Andrew Young (2017 Cohort)

Board of Directors / Advisory Committee

BOARD

Pramila Vasudevan, Director of Aniccha Arts and of Naked Stages program at Pillsbury House Theatre.

Sally Nixon, musician and community organizer. Sally is a past participant of the Monkeybear Intensive and New Puppetworks.

Magdalena Kaluza is a writer/performer, community organizer, youth worker, and emerging puppeteer. They are a past participant of the Monkeybear Intensive and New Puppetworks.

Amount Requested

\$15,000.00

Project Budget Expense

Expenses

\$3600-Master puppet artists at \$30 an hour for mentoring, 120 hours altogether

\$1550-ED flat fee-communications with artists, coordinating mentoring, hosting virtual open studio sessions, evaluating

\$9,300-stipends to 12 artists at \$775 each, for materials, supplies, and part of their time

\$550-internet \$50 per month X 11 months

\$750-accessibility (captioning, ASL)-while the artists in the development aspect have stated they don't need special accommodations, we anticipate the need for it in some of our Open Studio Works Sessions over Zoom, which is open to anyone who has participated in any Monkeybear programming.

Total Project Cash Expenses

\$15,750.00

Project Income Budget

Income

\$15,000 MRAC

\$750 from Monkeybear's reserve for accessibility needs

Total Project Cash Income

\$15,750.00

***(Important!)* Additional Fields Required**

Please note that in the full application there are additional fields that will need to be completed and are not shown to panelists:

- Type of group
- Legislative MN House District
- Legal Status
- Type of institution
- Organization's arts discipline
- ADA Plan status
- Individuals in leadership (for help filling out this section, please download the [FS21 Organizational Leadership Worksheet](https://mrac.org/grants/flexible-support) on the [Flexible Support grant program page](https://mrac.org/grants/flexible-support) [https://mrac.org/grants/flexible-support])
- Annual participants in the organization's activities
- Project's arts discipline
- Populations benefiting from the project

Depending on your organization and/or project, you may also need to upload:

- Fiscal sponsor letter
- Property owner permission letter