



Ryan Bynum

Arts Impact for Individuals Sample Grant Application

Individual's Purpose

Educated at Washington D.C.'s Duke Ellington School for the Arts, I followed my passion to Saint Paul's former McNally Smith College of Music, and by 2011 I was working as a full-time musician here in Minnesota.

My vision has always been about developing my own talent in collaboration with other artists. I am proud to be called the most sought-after and genre-versatile pianist/keyboardist in the Cities by artists like R&B vocalist Ashley DuBose, neo-soul saxophonist Adrian Crutchfield, and members of the Prince family like old-school soul vocalist Kathleen Johnson, drummer/guitarist Jellybean Johnson, drummer Michael Bland, bass player Sonny T, and more.

Embracing the excellence of that depth and scope of genres, sounds, and styles is at the core of my artistic practice, and it defines my vision for this Sounds of the Cities project.

I have performed with Morris Day and the Time, Buddy Guy, the Steeles, Ginger Commodore, Sanford Moore, and Sounds of Blackness, and I have served as Music Director and keyboardist for gospel greats Robert Robinson and Gwen Matthews in sell-out performances at Crooners and Chanhassen Dinner Theater.

I recently composed and produced the full-length theater score for Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts' production, "Zoomtopia." I tour nationally with Élan Artists' Northstar Band. And I served as a 2021 selection panelist for MN Music Coalition's Caravan du Nord, an MSAB-funded project that tours musicians in Greater MN.

Grant Number & Project Name

All22-1-112 Sounds of the Cities

Project/Program Description

Funding to compose original music and produce an album featuring seven multi-genre Black musicians, deepening my own creative capacity while promoting the diversity of the MN music community.

Project or Program

MN has long been home to powerhouse Black musicians, from jazz saxophonist Irv Williams who recorded with Ella Fitzgerald and Dinah Washington; to "Louis Armstrong cool" Cornbread Harris who played piano on MN's first rock and roll hit; to today's Sounds of Blackness, The Steeles, and the Prince family.

These and many others are the heartbeat of a scene that is woven into the fabric of our communities, and my overarching goal for this project is to amp-up broader recognition for the scope and diversity of this music community.

To go back to where I started - I came to MN to study music production and composition. But supporting my family came first, and performing other people's work was how I did that. Those experiences stretched my talent across genres and musical eras. They connected me to artists and audiences, and deepened my passion to circle back to where I started - now with the maturity of experience and community encouragement.

My plan is to create an album of seven tracks, each featuring a different vocalist or instrumentalist, performing across genres and across generations from today's "elder masters" to new talent exploding on the scene. With MRAC support, I will compose new work for each artist according to their own musical styles. Recognizing that jazz, funk, and neo-soul is what is trending with these artists today, I will also bring in my own heritage of gospel, R&B, and other influences. As well as composing all new music, I will produce the entire album.

This request to MRAC will give me time to compose, produce, and release an album of work with artists who would not typically be heard in one collection, and to feature that unexpected diversity to promote MN as a place to hear great music, a place where promoters can hire groundbreaking talent, and a place where neighbors can celebrate this musical heritage together.

I will use my long history of music industry connections to promote the album here and beyond MN, along with the promotion muscle of Élan Artists' Northstar band, with whom I tour nationally. While local audiences can hear these artists in clubs, the album will be released digitally, broadening community access.

Featured artists will represent a mix of styles from among talent such as Ashley Dubose, Jellybean Johnson, Sonny T, Michael Bland, Kathleen Johnson, Gwen Matthews, Robert Robinson, and more. These and other artists have already expressed interest in being part of this unique presentation.

An album release event at a venue like Icehouse will welcome the community. Artists will perform, talk about their work, and mingle with audiences to create a relaxed atmosphere of inclusion.

Composing and producing this entire album will be my most significant career milestone to date. But more than that, it has the potential to expand opportunities for this community of artists — highlighting the true diversity and spectrum of talent that are one of MN's natural treasures.

Community

Sounds of the Cities is conceived to benefit the Metro/7 County Area's vibrant community of Black musicians, who are my collaborators and artistic peers. The project also benefits Metro/7 County Area communities who want to learn more about the scope and diversity of music being created and performed throughout the area, accessible to everyone, in the present moment, right here at home.

Sounds of the Cities will feature Black artists who are pushing boundaries of “popular” forms and broadening possibilities for the next generation through their creativity, drive, and restlessness to experiment and excel.

In the spirit of the Great Minnesota (Musical) Get Together, this album is not about one artist or one musical genre. Rather, it celebrates diversity within Black culture, and gives listeners the opportunity to broaden understanding of the many voices, artistic viewpoints, and life experiences that make up our communities. It will also be an access point for booking agents and music promoters to learn more about the musical diversity of this community, and it can create opportunities for economic advancement for the artists involved.

In my (Ryan Bynum's) capacity as Project Director, Composer, and Producer, Sounds of the Cities will be my first opportunity to compose an entire body of work that stretches my own creative muscle across genres and the personal artistic approaches of each of the seven featured artists. Two of the seven tracks will feature a live band, and I will act as Music Director in engaging and leading the band. For the remaining five tracks, I will personally mix (create an electronic sound score) and master the work (blend and balance the electronic instrumental “voices”).

Potential artists include some of the collaborators outlined above, and will be selected through a process of collaboration, conversation, and a sense of cohesiveness within diversity in creating a final album.

Chadwick “Niles” Phillips will act as Emcee for the album launch concert. An experienced Spoken Word artist in his own right, Niles brings polish to the event as a music producer known for events such as Hennepin Theater Trust concerts, Ted Mann presentations, and as Artistic Director of The Avant Garde.

Proposal Budget

Project Budget Expenses

Artists' Fees, Creative Process:

Ryan Bynum - compose 7 songs, mix and master 5 songs, produce album, project director - \$5,000

7 featured artists - \$300 each to learn and record original music composer expressly for them: $7 \times \$300 = \$2,100$

3 live musicians for 2 songs - \$300 each, per song, to learn and record 2 songs: $3 \times 2 \times \$300 = \$1,800$

Artists' Fees, Album Launch Concert:

Chadwick "Niles" Phillips, Emcee - \$600

7 featured artists - \$120 each to perform their song = \$840

3 musicians to perform 2 songs - \$220 total = \$660

Total Project Cash Expenses

\$11,000.00

Amount Requested

\$5,000.00

Project Budget Income

MRAC Impact Award (this request) - \$5,000

MSAB Creative Support for Individuals (pending) - \$6,000

Total Project Cash Income

\$11,000.00

***(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.