

The Connecticut General Assembly



For IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 1, 2020

Contact: Danielle Faipler
860-240-8790

MANCHESTER LAWMAKERS APPLAUD FUNDING FOR LOCAL THEATERS

MANCHESTER, Conn. — Members of the Manchester legislative delegation are pleased to see two local theaters are among the 154 nonprofit arts organizations across Connecticut to receive \$9 million in funding through the state's COVID Relief Fund for the Arts, which seeks to aid arts nonprofits amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The recipients include the Little Theatre of Manchester which will receive a \$30,800 grant, and CAST Children's Theater which will receive a \$15,700 grant.

"The Little Theatre of Manchester is beyond thankful for this extraordinary grant provided by Connecticut's COVID Relief Fund for the Arts. This funding is not only a lifeline, but also gives much-needed hope to so many organizations like ours. This support will allow us to sustain our operations during a time when in-person performances--our livelihood--is simply not possible; it will allow us to pivot to more innovative ways of delivering content to our audiences; and it will allow us to maintain our facility, the historic Cheney Hall," said Dwayne Harris, Executive Director of the Little Theatre of Manchester. "Our sincere gratitude goes to the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Office of the Arts, and especially Governor Lamont for his advocacy for the arts."

"CAST children's theatre is so very grateful to be a recipient of Connecticut's COVID Relief Fund for the Arts. We in the arts community have struggled since mid-March to remain afloat in a sea of uncertainty. This grant will assist us in offering on-line programming to our students, maintain our facility, and support our staff. We are all looking forward to the day when we can perform in front of a live audience again, raising our voices in song, and bask in the applause. Until then, we are encouraged by the support of our state government and leaders and express our deepest appreciation to Governor Lamont and the Office of the Arts within the Department of Economic and Community Development. Thank you also to Senator Steve Cassano and State Representatives Jason Doucette, Jeff Currey, Geoff Luxenberg, and Jason Rojas," said Executive Director of CAST Children's Theater Donna R. Mercier.

The COVID Relief Fund for the Arts is administered by the Connecticut Department of Community and Economic Development and was created to support arts nonprofits that:

- Are performing arts centers, schools of the arts, or performing groups for whom grants will make a difference in terms of survival or rehiring; and
- Have had to curtail operations for a period of time due to the pandemic and which have had limited ability to reopen due to pandemic restrictions or have had to pivot their service delivery due to pandemic restrictions.

"These two theaters may be little, but their impact is enormous. I am happy to see they were included on the list of grant recipients. It is disappointing the pandemic cancelled the 2020 season, but it is encouraging to see they will get some help to keep afloat during these difficult times," said **State Representative Jeff Currey** (D – East Hartford, Manchester, South Windsor). "As a former board member of the Little Theatre of Manchester, I saw how this gem brought joy to area residents, but as a performer, I know the value of the performing arts goes beyond that. They challenge us to think differently by literally making us walk in someone else's shoes and create space for dialogue and reflection."

"The pandemic has significantly impacted arts nonprofits and I am grateful our state is offering support for these two community-based theaters," said incoming **Majority Leader Jason Rojas** (D – East Hartford, Manchester).

"The Little Theater and Children's Theater are two vital parts of Manchester's culture and community, touchstones that bring us all together to celebrate the arts, and I'm thankful these grants will help make sure stage lights at Cheney Hall remain on for years to come," said **State Senator Steve Cassano** (D-Manchester). "These theaters bring us memories that live on in so many lives, especially the Children's Theater, where every performer can learn new skills and discover new talents."

"COVID-19 has been devastating to our arts organizations, so I am pleased to see these grants go out. I am particularly happy to see CAST Children's Theatre on the list, an organization that has touched the lives of so many children and families in our community over the years and is very special to me as a former 'CAST kid' and CAST parent myself," **State Representative Jason Doucette** (D – Glastonbury, Manchester) said.

"CAST and LTM are treasured pillars of the Manchester arts community but also the community at large and their value and impact extends beyond our town's borders. We encourage people to support the arts with their philanthropy in addition to this critical state assistance. We are in this together," said **State Representative Geoff Luxenberg** (D – Manchester).

Additional information about the COVID Relief Fund for the Arts is available on the DECD web site, www.ct.gov/DECD.

[CAST Children's Theater](#) began as a small children's theater group, operating mostly in the summer out of local schools. Today, it offers year-round productions and classes to children between the ages of 5 and 18 residing in 15 different communities.

The [Little Theatre of Manchester at Cheney Hall](#) provides an array of year-round arts programming including plays, musicals, concerts, and other activities for residents in the Greater Manchester area. It was established in 1960 under the town's Recreation Department, and in 1966 it reorganized as a nonprofit. Since 1961, it has produced over three major works annually and performed over 197 major productions. It has resided at Cheney Hall, a national historic landmark and oldest operating theater in the state since 1991.

###