



Theatre for Everyone that Benefits Women and Girls
440 Spring Street, Lee, MA, 01238
www.WAMTheatre.com

October 13, 2014

RE: St. James Place

Dear whom it may concern,

We write in support of the application being made to Massachusetts Cultural Council by St. James's Place. We are a small, professional theatre company in Berkshire County, ourselves new recipients of a Massachusetts Cultural Council CIP award.

We envisage four uses for WAM Theatre at St. James's Place.

First, as a five-year old company, we are currently looking for office space to accommodate our operations. This includes meeting space, and office space, for our growing team of administrative and educational staff.

In addition, we need access to three kinds of performance space.

The first is for our main stage productions. Typically we rent venues with between a 100-250 seating capacity. Our requirements for professionally equipped venues of that size have limited us to renting the three available spaces of that size belonging to the larger professional companies; Barrington Stage Company's St. Germain Stage, Shakespeare & Company's Bernstein Theatre and Berkshire Theatre Group's Unicorn Theatre. All of these spaces are in central Berkshire County. There are no suitable spaces currently in Southern Berkshire County. Plus those three spaces are only available for rental on the off- season.

Third, we run an educational program for girls, currently located in Pittsfield, MA. In order to reach more girls from across the region, we are interested in hosting an additional after school program in a more southern location. Our program runs after school throughout the year and needs space to accommodate 25 girls.

Finally, we run a play reading series during the summer, where we explore 5 new plays, once per month. For this we need a smaller venue, but still one that has a professional set up, and is equipped to handle 30 – 40 members of the public in comfort.

In Berkshire County, it is the case that while there are a number of significantly sized, larger performance venues, there is a dearth of smaller, professionally equipped spaces for rental by companies such as ours, particularly in Southern Berkshire County area.

There is also a recognized need for space around which a community can form. This includes administrative space, where new and emerging companies can work and grow.

"The best way to fight poverty and extremism is to educate and empower women and girls."
Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl Wudunn, authors of 'Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide', the book that inspired WAM Theatre.



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The renovation and repurposing of St. James's Place meets all of these needs.

It is our belief that St James's Place is both ideally situated, and is being renovated and converted in ways that will directly meet the needs of WAM Theatre, Inc. as a growing professional theatre company.

Sincerely,

"WAM's support of us makes a big difference in what we do."
Carla Oleska, CEO - Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. van Ginhoven". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kristen van Ginhoven,

Artistic Director

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