

October 7, 2011

Dear Mayor Bratina and City Council,

Introduction

For the past 15+ years The Canadian Ballet Youth Ensemble (CBYE) has been staging the annual production of The Nutcracker at Hamilton Place. Our productions began in 1997 with two performances and over the years the numbers increased to two school matinees and 4 public performances.

We have entertained thousands of Hamiltonians at this holiday season classic and have become a major part of many families' annual tradition. Each year we have generated significant economic benefit to our downtown businesses including hotels, restaurants and retail shops. Again this year, for example, we will be bringing approximately 60 people to the City from the renowned Cuba ballet for a week. Over **\$1,000,000** was generated as income to HECFI alone.

Our youth program engages over 40+ schools and children across the region. Our two school matinee performances and our in-school educational workshops reaches over 6,000 students.

Current Situation

As you are aware, numerous Arts organizations are facing financial challenges; increased competition, and economic conditions have contributed to both the decline in audience attendance and financial support from the community.

Despite CBYE continuing to receive critical acclaim for its work, the challenging environment put us in a position where we seriously considered canceling this year's performance. We reluctantly made a decision to move forward at significant financial risk, and produce the show in December because of its many contributions to the businesses, families, and youth development in our community.

CBYE is a charity operated entirely by volunteers. Our financial situation has prevented us from having live music at our performances over the past two years; this is a critical success factor going forward.

**Burlington has recently opened their new performance hall and has booked a competing production of the Nutcracker which will further impact our ticket sales.** We strongly feel that having a live orchestra at our Nutcracker will have a large impact to our ticket sales. IN addition it will be a differentiating factor to the Nutcracker being presented in Burlington.

We are working closely with HECFI to maximize ticket sales and minimize costs but still see significant financial risk which may result in this being our last year of operation.

We are planning to work with Burlington to discuss future programming schedules so that we can co-exist versus compete directly with the same production in the same year.

We are developing additional program offerings to distinguish CBYE productions from the competition.



We are reviewing our CBYE organization structure, future fundraising initiatives, and community partnerships to improve our financial position in 2012 and beyond.

Proposal

That City Council approves a one time grant of \$35,000 to enable the CBYE to hire the HPO for this year's performances, thereby improving the marketability of the Hamilton Nutcracker while simultaneously supporting another one of Hamilton's most valued performing arts organizations.

This contribution along with cost cutting measures, marketing efforts, and new fundraising approaches that we are pursuing will enable us to survive this year and will play a significant part in our long term sustainability

I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration of our request and for your understanding of the situation.

Sincerely



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