



Arts Groups Strengthen and Connect Communities

Over the past few years, community-based and other nonprofit arts groups serving low-income New Yorkers have brought together people and neighborhoods. Lawyers Alliance is pleased to provide quality legal services to these groups as they champion the arts, promote a sense of energy and neighborhood involvement, and support social justice.

Anchoring the Community

Arts organizations foster community pride by showcasing local artists and performers and bringing neighbors together for hands-on programming.

Case Example: BxArts Factory connects artists and the Bronx community, making art accessible and a means of personal expression and social justice. BxArts Factory collaborates with artists, parks, and small businesses to bring art to the public. The organization also offers programs that teach parents how to create art with their children and empower participants as community partners. These programs were especially meaningful during the pandemic, helping maintain emotional health and ties to the community. BxArts Factory needed its own studio space for these programs. Volunteers from **Milbank LLP** helped negotiate and review a lease for a studio, ensuring that the final document reflected BxArts Factory's needs, including ventilation maintenance in compliance with COVID-19 guidelines.

Breaking Barriers

Many community-based arts organizations seek to broaden access to arts by connecting with underserved populations, providing free or low-cost artistic experiences, and using traditional art forms to address contemporary social issues.

Case Example: Heartbeat Opera makes opera inclusive and socially conscious by reinterpreting classic operas through contemporary eyes, adapting the concept, libretto, and orchestration. Heartbeat also makes opera accessible to first-time theater-goers and people from diverse backgrounds. Recently, Heartbeat produced an online adaptation of Beethoven's 200-year-old opera, *Fidelio*, the story of a woman's search for her unjustly imprisoned husband. Set in our time, members of six different men's prison choruses appeared in the production. Volunteers from **Davis & Gilbert LLP** assisted Heartbeat with the negotiation of a collaboration agreement among three individuals responsible for adapting the story, book, and music. Heartbeat intends to use this agreement as a template for future productions. Jacob Ashworth, Artistic Director, says, "We're so grateful to have had the professional help to make sure we are on solid ground with our collaborators when it comes to sharing intellectual property."

Nurturing Talent

Community arts groups grow the next generation of talent by exhibiting or producing their work in the community or providing grants or direct financial support.

Case Example: Teachers & Writers Collaborative (T&W)

increases access to the literary arts through creative writing programs for youth and seniors, as well as an annual statewide poetry recitation contest, and training and other resources for teachers. When asked to fiscally sponsor a poet so that she could obtain a grant from New York State Council on the Arts, T&W received help from a **Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP** volunteer who drafted the agreement and also prepared a Board resolution approving the fiscal sponsorship. The poet's project includes poems encouraging readers to refocus attention from technology-driven media to social and environmental issues. "Lawyers Alliance was able to connect us to a wonderful volunteer, who went above and beyond to provide the legal support we needed," says T&W's Executive Director, Asari Beale.

Arts nonprofits provide an inspiring source of connection and community-building. If your nonprofit needs legal assistance, please contact our new Staff Attorney Jonal Hendrickson at jhendrickson@lawyersalliance.org. We thank Judith Moldover for launching and building the community arts program area and wish her well on her recent retirement from Lawyers Alliance. We also thank Elizabeth Wytock for assisting during her 2021-22 fellowship year and as Staff Attorney this fall.



Photo: Teachers & Writers Collaborative

Teachers & Writers Collaborative increases access to literary arts for youth and seniors.