

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Twenty Grand Rapids Arts Organizations
Coordinating on New Ways to Support Artists, Communities**

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.—Twenty arts and cultural organizations signed on to the Grand Rapids Arts Working Group in 2019 to build relationships, share information and ideas, and work collectively to strengthen arts and culture within the greater Grand Rapids area. That consortium has now become an invaluable source of cohesion, encouragement, and innovation as members navigate a challenging new reality.

AWG members anticipated the Governor's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" Executive Order by a full ten days, making the proactive decision on March 13 to close facilities and cancel or reschedule events. In a joint statement, AWG members describe those decisions as painful but necessary "to ensure the health and safety of our employees, volunteers, artists, and patrons."

In the weeks since, members have continued to take a proactive stance, leaning into expertise and relationships fostered by the working group in 2019 to address unfolding challenges, ensure future sustainability, and identify new ways of sharing and leveraging their creative gifts. Many members have recently rolled out new offerings, from virtual events to at-home activities to specially-curated content anyone with an internet connection can experience from home.

"We want people in West Michigan to know their arts and cultural community is collectively here for them, even though our doors are closed," said Daniel Williams, President and CEO, West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology. "We know the power of the arts to heal, bring people together, and provide illumination of the good in times of darkness and we remain committed to helping everyone connect, reflect, be entertained, and find solace."

AWG members credit the group, as well as their donors, patrons, and friends, for providing much-needed encouragement and support during a time of unprecedented hardship. Despite lost revenue, canceled events, suspended programming, and reduced salaries, staff continue to accomplish heroic work behind the scenes to care for fellow staff members, donors, patrons, artists, and contributors.

"We are in this together now, and we are immensely grateful for the authentic and trusting relationships we have with our colleagues," said Miranda Krajniak, Executive Director, Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts. "West Michigan is a place where creativity and collaboration thrive. Together, we see hope for a better tomorrow."

Those interested in supporting the arts and culture organizations in the AWG—or others in their community—are urged to consider making a public commitment to future actions such as purchasing tickets, visiting a gallery, attending a performance, signing up for a class, or volunteering. Friends and patrons can also support by making a charitable gift, donating the value of tickets purchased for canceled events back to the issuing organization, or donating the value of memberships.

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About Grand Rapids Arts Working Group:

Grand Rapids Arts Working Group represents a collaborative and community-facing collective of 20 arts and culture organizations. Founded in 2019 to serve West Michigan and beyond, the collective provides organizations with a framework in which to connect, identify common objectives, engage in shared learning, encourage and support each other, and work in common purpose to ensure the vibrancy of arts and culture in West Michigan, now and in the future.

Grand Rapids Arts Working Group member organizations include:

Actors' Theatre Grand Rapids (atgr.org)
Artists Creating Together (artistscreatingtogether.org)
ArtPrize (artprize.org)
DisArt (disartnow.org)
Ebony Road Players (ebonyroad.org)
Festival of the Arts (festivalgr.org)
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park (meijergardens.org)
Girls Choral Academy (girlschoralacademy.org)
Grand Rapids African American Museum and Archives (graama.org)
Grand Rapids Art Museum (artmuseumgr.org)
Grand Rapids Ballet (grballet.com)
Grand Rapids Children's Museum (grcm.org)
Grand Rapids Civic Theatre (grct.org)
Grand Rapids Public Museum (grpm.org)
Grand Rapids Symphony (grsymphony.org)
Grandville Avenue Arts and Humanities (gaah.org)
Opera Grand Rapids (operagr.org)
St. Cecilia Music Center (scmc-online.org)
Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts (uica.org)
West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology (wmcats.org)

Media Contacts**Dana Friis-Hansen**

Grand Rapids Art Museum

dfriis-hansen@artmuseumgr.org

616.831.2902

Emilee Syrewicze

Opera Grand Rapids

em@operagr.org

231.388.2610

David Abbott

Festival of the Arts

davidabbott@festivalgr.org

616.558.2784