New York/New Jersey Area
Common Application Form
Cover Sheet

Date of application: July 31, 2026

Name of organization to which grant would be paid. Please list exact legal name:
The Symphony Space, Inc.

Purpose of grant (one sentence): To support Symphony Space's Global Arts: Cultural Literacy & Heritage Program

Address of organization: 2537 Broadway New York, NY 10025

Telephone number: 212-864-1414 Fax: (212) 932-3228 E-mail: development@symphonyspace.org

Executive director: Kathy Landau

Contact person and title (if not executive director): Maren Berthelsen, Director of Development

Is your organization an IRS 501(c) (3) not-for-profit?: Yes

Grant request: $10,000

Check one (based on the organization's priorities and the funder's guidelines):

- ☐ General support
- ☑ Project support

Total organizational budget (for current year): $ 5,773,535

Dates covered by this budget (mo/day/year): July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027

Total project budget (if requesting project support):$$584,015

Dates covered by project budget (mo/day/year): July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027

Project name (if applicable): Global Arts: Cultural Literacy and Heritage Program

FY27 Proposal to the Vidda Foundation

SYMPHONY SPACE

I. PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Symphony Space is a multi-disciplinary performing arts center where adventurous programming, presented in a uniquely warm and welcoming environment, forges indelible relationships between artists and audiences. Each year, Symphony Space brings the magic of diverse arts education to underserved students across New York through our *Global Arts: Cultural Literacy and Heritage* program. Our uniquely designed program opens a window to a new culture for students in grades Pre-K-12 and provides them with a mirror in which they see their own histories represented, encouraging empathy and curiosity and offering them a greater understanding of themselves and others. **Symphony Space respectfully requests a grant of $10,000 from the Vidda Foundation to support our 2026-27 *Global Arts: Cultural Literacy and Heritage* program.**

Funding from the Vidda Foundation will be used to:

- Facilitate in-school arts workshops, cultural series, and assemblies.
- Produce live performances of African, Asian, Latin American, and Native American Music, Dance, and Storytelling at Symphony Space's venue during Fall 2026 and at our partner pop-up locations during our renovation period (beginning mid-Dec 2026).
- Support curriculum development for the *Global Arts* Program.

With renewed support from the Vidda Foundation, Symphony Space will continue to bring comprehensive and diverse arts education to students across New York by partnering with our expert teaching artists and uplifting the artistic traditions of various cultures.

II. NARRATIVE

BACKGROUND

In 1978, Symphony Space's co-founders threw open the doors to a long-abandoned theater, inviting hundreds of New Yorkers to join what would become our very first event: an entirely free *Wall to Wall* marathon concert. Since then, community and access has continued to stay at the forefront of all that we do. With these guiding principles, Symphony Space's fundamental mission is to connect art, ideas, and community through our programs and our commitment to literacy and education through the arts.

Symphony Space produces and presents adventurous literary, musical, film, and arts education programs, run by a team of 99 full-time staff and 40 part-time staff. From our groundbreaking literature-in-performance *Selected Shorts* program to our *Revelry* music series and various film showings, Symphony Space serves tens of thousands of visitors and New Yorkers with a full slate of original, affordable (and free) programming each year. Though our venue is based on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, our programs and their impact reach far beyond our immediate geography. We make our events available globally via livestream, tours, public radio broadcasts, and podcasts, reaching audiences that may live in areas with little access to arts. Our audiences are multigenerational and multicultural: our 2025-26 season alone brought in audiences from 4,236 ZIP codes, all 50 states, and 64 countries around the world. We continue to remain committed to removing barriers to participation—financially, culturally, artistically, and physically.

In a saturated not-for-profit arts ecosystem, Symphony Space is unique in that we are able to expand our high-quality productions and audiences while remaining a neighborhood cornerstone. For almost five

decades, we have been characterized by our intimacy and warm welcome, leading our artists, audiences, and partners to return regularly.

Literature

Selected Shorts

Selected Shorts, now in its fifth decade, is our trailblazing literature-in-performance series that brings established and emerging voices in classic and contemporary fiction to life on stage through readings by exceptional actors. The 2025-26 *Selected Shorts* season showcased a wide range of voices, with highlights including a celebration of 250 Years of Jane Austen, hosted by Hugh Dancy; O. Henry Prize Stories with Edward P. Jones; an evening of Irish-authored stories in A Passport to Ireland with Colum McCann; a night bridging together children, parents, and grandparents with Generation Gap, hosted by Wajahat Ali and co-presented by Asian American Writers' Workshop; and our final show of the season exploring stories of 'firsts,' from first kisses to first loves, in A First Time for Everything, hosted by *Selected Shorts* podcast host and award-winning author Meg Wolitzer. *Selected Shorts* is also livestreamed, as well as broadcast on nearly 100 public radio stations nationwide, attracting 100,000 listeners each week, with 55,000+ global listeners joining through the podcast.

Thalia Book Club and Other Special Literary Events

For more than two decades, *Thalia Book Club* has brought readers and writers together for intimate readings followed by audience-wide conversation. In our most recent season, we welcomed nearly 3,000 attendees, hosting events for George Saunders' *Vigil*, Percival Everett's *James*, Elizabeth Strout's *The Things We Never Say,* and Ann Patchett's *Whistler*, among others.

Other special literary events during the season included appearances by R.F. Kuang, Fareed Zakaria, Patti Smith, Abby Jimenez, and Caro Claire Burke, among others, reaching more than 12,000 audience members.

Performing Arts

Revelry and Other Special Music Events

Our signature music series, Revelry, showcases the best musical styles – ranging from World Music, Jazz, and Folk Music, to name a few – over ten select Thursdays throughout the year. In FY26, we featured evenings of extraordinary variety: from Symbio's hypnotic, high-energy fusion of Nordic folk and electronic to early American music by dynamic duo Jerron Paxton and Dennis Lichtman and soulful traditional Irish music by acclaimed artists Kevin Crawford and Cillian Vallely.

Other special music events during the season included Sunny Jain's world premiere of *Love Force*, two evenings with Tony Award-winner Mandy Patinkin, and a dazzling evening of Django a Gogo with guitarist Stėphane Wrembel, among others.

Residencies

Our Music Residency program builds upon our history as a presenter of emerging and established musicians, and continues to provide performing artists with time, space, and freedom to create new work for our stages. This year, we hosted a residency for world-renowned banjo player Tony Trischka, spanning three evenings. The first night, NY Banjo Night, brought to the stage an exciting celebration of New York's vibrant banjo scene featuring special guests, including Steve Martin and Bela Fleck; the second evening a tribute to the great Earl Scruggs; and the third night featured new work alongside selections from Trischka's haunting and lyrical Emily Dickinson project.

Film

Each year, Symphony Space's film program features a diverse range of art on screen, including Broadway and London theater, new art exhibitions, and film festivals. In FY26, we welcomed audience members to

enjoy a number of filmed performances, including Nicola Coughlan in *The Playboy of the Western World*, Marianne Elliott's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, and Rosamund Pike in *Inter Alia*. Our partnerships with Dance on Camera Festival and The Silent Clowns Film Series also offered smaller arts organizations and festivals a space to screen their films at a highly subsidized rate. Audiences enjoyed screenings of new shorts, feature films, and documentaries highlighting movement artists and genres of dance, as well as classic silent films.

Arts Education

Global Arts: Cultural Heritage and Literacy Program

In addition to public arts programming, Symphony Space invites students to experience various arts traditions and participate in artmaking through our arts education programs. Our *Global Arts: Cultural Literacy & Heritage* program provides opportunities for Pre-K-12 students in schools across New York – many of them Title I – for cultural exploration, creative engagement, and access to the arts. Our experienced teaching artists lead a journey of discovery and celebration of Native American, African, Asian, and Latin American history and cultures. Through our inquiry-based activities, students learn to interpret and analyze traditional art forms, as well as the preservation of these forms in modern times. In total, we program more than 150 arts education events over the course of the school year.

All Write!

All Write! is Symphony Space's adult literacy program that uses exploration of great literature, the excitement of live performance, and arts-based creative writing strategies to bring the stories of Adult Literacy and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students to the big stage. Each year, Symphony Space's Education team curates a selection of published short fiction and poetry to serve as reference materials for students. We provide our partner educators with the selected texts, a resource guide of supplementary activities, and professional development workshops to support facilitation and teaching strategies. Participants attend an initial performance at Symphony Space's historic Upper West Side venue, featuring professional actors presenting the published works. After a semester of exploring the works and diving into their own writing practices, the program culminates in a final performance in which the same cast of acts perform select stories and poems written by the students. The celebratory performance, which is also livestreamed for families of students to enjoy, makes for a deeply moving, joyous, and empowering experience for both participants and staff. Since 1993, *All Write!* has used the power of the spoken word to improve the lives of more than 30,000 adult learners, completely free of charge, since 1993. More than 50% of these learners immigrated to the United States and confront language barriers on a daily basis.

FUNDING REQUEST

Since its inception, Symphony Space has been a central hub for creativity and community engagement, serving multigenerational, multicultural, and multidisciplinary populations from across New York City. In addition to our wide array of public programming, Symphony Space is deeply dedicated to bringing the joy of art to the next generation of art lovers. Our *Global Arts: Cultural Heritage and Literacy* program takes more than 19,000 students in grades Pre-K-12 — many of whom attend Title I schools — on a journey of discovery and exploration to celebrate the diverse beauty of Asian, African, Latin American, and Native American art and history. Throughout the school year, students are immersed in both traditional and contemporary art forms from around the world, inspiring them to tell their own stories through the arts, building their sense of identity, and fostering a sense of belonging both within and beyond their communities.

With hands-on workshops led by more than 60 teaching artists, all of whom are passionate experts of their respective cultural arts, students learn to interpret and analyze traditional art forms, as well as the preservation of these forms in modern times. *Global Arts* emphasizes an understanding that different cultures and common traditions hold us together as a global community. Students are guided to make strong connections between past and present, as well as their own lived experiences. Our workshops,

series, residencies, and assemblies all take place at our partner schools, offering accessible formats of arts education.

Our program also offers live performances that take place on Symphony Space's historic stage for students to enjoy and take part in with guidance from performing teaching artists. This year, our performance schedule will be slightly adapted - during the 2026-27 school year, after almost fifty years, our venue will undergo a major renovation beginning in late 2026. This renovation will allow us to better fulfill our mission and artist vision, with a reimagined venue layout and new gallery spaces for public viewing. It is critical to us that we continue to offer cohesive programming for students and partner schools during this major shift. As a result, we will host performances on Symphony Space's stage during Fall 2026, followed by performances at partner venues in the spring during what we are calling our "pop-up" season. Schools will be invited to attend field trips at our partner venues once our renovation begins to continue enjoying our *Global Arts* live performances.

Our Education team thoughtfully adapts our offerings to fit the needs of individual schools and their student demographics. We work closely with teachers, customizing the *Global Arts* curriculum to fit each school needs and budget. This individualized approach creates a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment, while ensuring that students deepen their cultural understanding through critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication. *Global Arts* programs align with the Common Core/NYS Standards in Social Studies and English Language Arts. Additionally, for in-class instruction, we provide bilingual instruction and resources, easing language barriers for Spanish-speaking students. Our Latin American performances also include English/Spanish storytelling, and we plan to incorporate English/Mandarin/Japanese narration to our Asian American performances in this upcoming year.

Our *Global Arts* program is led by Lulu Fogarty, who serves as our Education Director. She brings over a decade of experience working as a teaching artist in public and charter schools leading acting and poetry workshops in blended classrooms of neurodiverse and neurotypical students. She has also worked with the Arts in Education Roundtable Task Force on Equity and Inclusion, where she co-chaired their 2022 Day of Learning Subcommittee. Most recently, Lulu served as the Program Director at BEAT (Bridging Education & Arts Together), a Queens-based, non-profit arts education organization.

With performances and workshops that encourage interactivity and inspire creativity, our *Global Arts* program remains focused on shared learning — once again proving the power of the arts to bridge distances, both literal and figurative. Now, more than ever, these arts education programs are a vital part of students' social and academic growth, and with renewed support from the Vidda Foundation, Symphony Space can bridge the gap for even more students across New York.

EVALUATION

Symphony Space wholly believes that the arts are a vital part to holistic learning, and according to the NYC Department of Education, all public school students should have access to high quality arts education so that they may develop positive outlets for self-expression and exercise their voice. Using this standard, we evaluate the success of our arts education program through both quantitative and qualitative measures:

- Measuring number of students served and number of partnering schools, particularly returning partners
- Collecting feedback from school administrators and teachers to assess alignment of programmatic goals, DOE standards, and efficacy of our curriculum
- Conducting annual evaluations with Teaching Artists to assess program needs and impact.

Our goals for *Global Arts* in the 2026-27 season are as follows:

- Serve at least 19,500 students with comprehensive and diverse arts education programs.
- Partner with at least 90 schools to facilitate programs, with at least 75% being returning partners.
- Adapt our live performances during our renovation period to incorporate more cohesive storytelling across the cultural art forms as well as multi-lingual narration for our Asian American performances.

CONCLUSION

We thank you for considering this request. We believe in the power of the arts to engage and inspire, and we hope to continue thriving as a home for art, ideas, and community worth sharing.

With Vidda Foundation by our side, we will continue to fulfill our mission of making the arts accessible to all.