Symphony Space

Suggested by: TCC Group

Current Request	$10,000	**Organizational Budget**	$5,773,535
Previous Grant Amount	$10,000	**Last Site Visit**	2024
Grants Since 1998	6	**Project Budget (if applicable)**	$584,015
Total Grants Awarded	$60,000	**Purpose**	Global Arts: Cultural Literacy and Heritage program

Mission

To connect art, ideas, and community through programs and a commitment to literacy and education through the arts.

Organization History

Founded in 1978, Symphony Space was based on the belief that the arts bring people together, transcend barriers, and celebrate both our similarities and differences. Symphony Space conducts staged productions and education programs in classrooms throughout New York City. Their programming focuses on three areas:

Music: Musician residencies allow artists to innovate and collaborate across disciplines.

Literature: Symphony Space fosters collaborations between authors, performers, and audiences who share a love of literature. *Selected Shorts*, a literature-in-performance series, showcases underrepresented voices in classic and contemporary fiction.

Arts Education: *Global Arts: Cultural Literacy & Heritage* provides opportunities for arts exploration through hands-on workshops and interactive performances with professional teaching artists. The free All Write! adult literacy program partners with dozens of organizations, including the New York Public Library system, to improve literacy among adult learners.

Update on Last Grant and Current Request

Support from the Vidda Foundation last year enabled Symphony Space to expand its Global Arts: Cultural Literacy & Heritage program to more than 19,000 students, up from nearly 17,000 students in the previous year. Symphony Space partnered with 88 New York City schools, approximately 80% of which were returning partners and the majority Title I and worked with nearly 70 professional teaching artists (up from 50) to provide 124 programs totaling nearly 1,000 instructional hours. Offerings included classroom workshops, residencies, cultural series, assemblies, and live performances in African, Asian, Latin American, and Native American music, dance, storytelling, and other art forms.

One notable accomplishment was the return of African Music, Dance, and Storytelling; the full workshop series and culminating performances at Symphony Space had been suspended since 2020. Symphony Space redesigned the African Cultural Arts curriculum to place greater emphasis on student-created art and delivered 18 African Arts offerings to approximately one-fifth of its partner schools. Feedback from schools has also led the Education team to develop more opportunities for students to create their own artwork in response to the cultural traditions they study.

Symphony Space requests a renewed grant of $10,000 to support Global Arts in the 2026–2027 school year. The organization expects to serve at least 19,500 students in 90 schools through workshops, residencies, assemblies, and performances exploring African, Asian, Latin American, and Native American arts and cultures. Symphony Space will also expand multilingual programming and opportunities for student-created work.

Although New York City has established baseline arts-education funding, Symphony Space notes that schools are not required to spend those funds on arts programming, and school budgets, leadership, and curricular priorities change from year to year. This makes it difficult to predict which schools will return and the amount of programming they will purchase. Cancellations caused by changing school calendars, testing, and transportation issues can also leave Symphony Space responsible for teaching-artist fees not fully covered by its fee-for-service rates.

Notes

A 15-month renovation beginning in December 2026 will require Symphony Space to move its spring performances to smaller pop-up venues across the city, potentially limiting the number of students able to attend. Symphony Space was first funded as part of Vidda Foundation's 2020 COVID response grants. Richard Mittenthal is Treasurer of the Board of Directors.