



Sophie Hahn
 Councilmember, District 5
 City of Berkeley
 2180 Milvia Street
 Berkeley, CA, 94704
 (510) 981-7150 | shahn@berkeleyca.gov

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmember Sophie Hahn (Author), Councilmember Terry Taplin (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Susan Wengraf (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Mark Humbert (Co-Sponsor)
 Subject: Relinquishment of Council Office Budget Funds to the General Fund and Grant of Such Funds for the Berkeley Symphony's Spring Benefit

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution approving the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$500 per Councilmember – including \$500 from Councilmember Hahn – to the Berkeley Symphony, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, to support its upcoming Spring Benefit, with funds relinquished to the City's general fund for this purpose from the discretionary Council office budgets of Councilmember Sophie Hahn, and from any other Councilmember who would like to contribute.

BACKGROUND

The Berkeley Symphony Orchestra (BSO) will be hosting its Spring Benefit on May 17, 2024 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel to celebrate and raise funds, and will feature musical performances from Berkeley Symphony Musicians, and violinist Charles Yang.

For more information, visit: <https://www.berkeleysymphony.org/event/2024-spring-benefit>.

Since its founding in 1971 by Thomas Rarick, the Berkeley Symphony has gained a national reputation for taking programmatic risks and presenting major new works alongside fresh interpretations of classical repertoire, all while maintaining strong community ties. The Symphony has reimagined the role of a contemporary community orchestra by honoring the people and spirit of Berkeley with culturally relevant work by living composers and collaborations with community partners, expanding the traditional definition of symphonic music while bringing together cross-sections of its broader community into the same spaces.

BSO presents a four-concert symphonic series and a five-concert chamber series in Berkeley and Piedmont, California, reaching an audience of 2,600 from throughout the Bay Area. The Symphony often presents the work of local composers and employs 200 musicians and teaching artists each year. Current Music Director Joseph Young devises programs that blend symphonic music with dance and other art forms to create concert experiences that excite audiences of all kinds, while championing new music and underrepresented composers, ensuring the BSO stage is reflective of the community it proudly serves.

The Berkeley Symphony also creates meaningful opportunities for the community to engage with symphonic music in their everyday lives, by moving out of the concert hall and into the community with free performances at events like the Front Row Festival and the Bay Area Book

Festival. Through its strong partnerships with organizations like the Downtown Berkeley Association, Berkeley Public Library, and the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, BSO has presented innovative free programming for audiences of all ages.

Music in the Schools: The Berkeley Symphony is deeply committed to supporting music education and creating opportunities for students and their families to experience symphonic music together.

Founded in 1993, Music in the School (MITS) is a partnership with the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) that serves 4,700 public school students with over 300 engagements, including in-class visits, performances for young audiences and families, and opportunities to play alongside the orchestra on stage – all free of charge to participants. MITS exposes young people to new opportunities that instill confidence, encourage hard work, and broaden their horizons. Students engaged in the arts excel in other areas of their academics, have higher graduation rates, and grow to be more engaged citizens in their communities.

When students are given the opportunity to actively create art or play alongside professional musicians, it elevates their learning differently than passively watching performance. MITS engages students of all ages in participation, from clapping for singing along to receiving one-on-one professional coaching on their instruments. For most families in Berkeley, the cost of private music lessons is far out of reach, which makes it difficult for even motivated students to take up an instrument or receive the coaching needed to excel. In closing that gap, MITS makes it possible for all public elementary students in Berkeley to experience the joy of creating and sharing symphonic music.

Education Director Ming Luke ensures that young people of all backgrounds are represented and feel welcome in MITS. This includes featuring the work of BIPOC and female composers for at least 50% of its curriculum and adapting programming to best support individual school communities. Last school year, in collaboration with BUSD, BSO launched the Elevate Initiative to provide specialized activities and support to help students of color stay engaged in the arts, primarily through critical transition periods.

MITS consists of hundreds of touchpoints, including:

- In-class sessions with hands-on music education and curriculum guides.
- “Meet the Symphony” concerts introduce students to the orchestra, instruments, and classical music. BSO performs at all BUSD elementary schools and provides teachers with CDs and curriculum guides.
- “I’m a Performer!” concerts allow students of all grade levels to perform side-by-side with Symphony musicians. These concerts take place at six schools and include a total of 108 prep sessions and rehearsals.
- Community concerts for students, families, and community members to experience a performance together in an informal and welcoming setting.
- MITS programming is 100% free of charge for children and families.

In addition to these programs, MITS provides workshops and performance opportunities for students in the Berkeley High School jazz program. This partnership creates unique opportunities for students to work with a conductor, receive mentorship from a professional musician, and for BSO to extend its reach in the community by bringing new faces into the concert hall.

As part of its 2022-23 Symphonic season, BSO launched Students at the Symphony (SATS). This new program invites K-12 students in Berkeley and beyond to attend the Berkeley Symphony Symphonic Series concert for free, with \$15 tickets for their adult companions, teachers, and school administrators. As word spread over the season, BSO saw continual growth in participation and welcomed over 100 SATS attendees to its 2023-24 season-opening concert.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No environmental impacts.

FISCAL IMPACTS

Up to \$3,500 from Councilmembers' discretionary budgets.

CONTACT

Councilmember Sophie Hahn, (510) 981-7150

Attachments:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION #####-N.S.

AUTHORIZING THE EXPENDITURE OF SURPLUS FUNDS FROM THE OFFICE EXPENSE ACCOUNTS OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBERS FOR A GRANT TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR A MUNICIPAL PUBLIC PURPOSE

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Symphony is a non-profit organization serving the City of Berkeley and the Greater San Francisco Bay Area, and is one of the City's great cultural assets; and

WHEREAS, since 1971, the Symphony has honored the people and spirit of Berkeley with culturally relevant work by living composers and collaborations with community partners, maintaining its connection to the community while receiving international recognition for its adventurous programming, and premiering the music of international composers and showcasing young, local talent; and

WHEREAS, the Symphony presents a four-concert symphonic series and a five-concert chamber series in Berkeley and Piedmont, reaching an audience of 2,600 throughout the Bay Area; and

WHEREAS, the Symphony has partnered with Berkeley Unified School District for over 30 years to create the Music in the Schools program, providing comprehensive music curriculum to over 4,700 Berkeley public elementary school students, and offering over 300 in-class visits, performances for young audiences and families, and opportunities to play alongside the orchestra on stage; and

WHEREAS, Music in the Schools has been recognized by the City of Berkeley as a unique and treasured cornerstone of music education in Berkeley – and the League of American Orchestras as one of the country's top music education programs – and is provided to families free of charge, thanks to the generosity of the Symphony, its musicians, and community supporters; and

WHEREAS, the Symphony is cultivating Berkeley and the Bay Area's next generation of musical talent and community through its outreach programs and community partnerships, bringing its music to subscribers, Berkeley students and their families, and the general public;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Berkeley City Council that funds relinquished from the Mayor and Councilmembers from their Council office budgets – up to \$500 per office – including \$500 from Councilmember Sophie Hahn, shall be granted to the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra to support its 2024 Spring Benefit and its contributions to the community, especially the Music in the Schools Program.