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ArtsWave Announces 2025 Young Professionals and Pride Grants, Fueling Cincinnati's Vibrant Arts Scene

ArtsWave, the engine for the arts in the Cincinnati region, is proud to announce the recipients of its 2025 **Young Professionals (YP)** and **Pride Grants**. These grants, totaling over \$100,000, will fund innovative programs that engage young professionals and celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community, further cementing Cincinnati's reputation as a national center for the arts.

"These grants represent ArtsWave's commitment to fostering a thriving, inclusive arts community that resonates with all segments of our diverse population," said Alecia Kintner, President & CEO of ArtsWave. "By supporting programs that engage young professionals and celebrate LGBTQIA+ voices, we're not just enriching our cultural landscape – we're driving economic growth, enhancing education, and building a more connected community."

The awarded grants align with ArtsWave's strategic vision of making Greater Cincinnati a more vibrant and connected community through the arts. They support programs that will enliven neighborhoods, fuel creativity and learning, and bridge cultural divides, contributing to the region's reputation as a hub for artistic excellence and innovation.

These grants reflect ArtsWave's dedication to nurturing a dynamic, inclusive arts ecosystem that strengthens the entire Cincinnati region. By supporting these innovative programs, ArtsWave continues to drive its vision of a community where the arts are universally accessible and recognized as a catalyst for growth, learning, and unity.

Details about the projects funded by this grant cycle can be found below. For more information on ArtsWave's affinity and networking groups, please visit artswave.org/groups. To help support projects like these, please visit artswave.org/give.

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About ArtsWave

ArtsWave, the local nonprofit arts agency serving the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky region, is the engine for the arts. Its roots stem back to the late 1920s when the Cincinnati Taft family provided initial investment matched by community support. In the

late 1940s, it established the first United Arts Fund in the nation and, in the mid-1970s, the first organization to initiate workplace giving for the arts. ArtsWave continues to innovate while leading, as illustrated by its No. 1 rank nationally in community arts fundraising, coordination of a sector-wide Blueprint for Collective Action, piloting of new technologies to maximize arts engagement and development of resources for the arts. Each year, ArtsWave raises millions of dollars from tens of thousands of donors — corporations, employees, foundations, residents and others — to support more than 150 arts organizations, projects and artists. This year, ArtsWave raised a record \$12.5 million through its yearly campaign from individuals, businesses and foundations to further the region's strategic growth goals. Donations can be made at artswave.org/give.



ArtsWave Pride Grants

The ArtsWave Pride Grant Program provides funding for arts or cultural heritage projects that promote and/or celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community, advancing Cincinnati's reputation as a welcoming and inclusive community through the arts.

For more information about ArtsWave Pride, visit artswave.org/pride.

Organization

American Sign Museum

Art Academy of Cincinnati

Cincinnati Arts Association

concert:nova

Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati

The Ghostlight Stage Company

Pones

Young Professionals Choral Collective (YPCC)

Project Title

Signs & Spouses: A Sparkling
Celebration of Marriage Equality

Where We Thrive

Project Shattered Silence Pilot

Memory Box

Where Do THEY Fit In?

"Late, A Cowboy Song" by Sarah Ruhl

Fringe Project 2025: Sharing Rural
Queer Stories

The LGBTQIA+ City that Sings

American Sign Museum | Signs & Spouses: A Sparkling Celebration of Marriage Equality

This unique celebration marks the 10th anniversary of marriage equality with a public vow-renewal ceremony set against the museum's collection of historic signage. The event features a specially curated exhibition of signs from LGBTQIA+-led businesses throughout history, sharing the stories of these pioneering establishments and their impact on the community. Participants will enjoy performances by queer-identifying artists and support from LGBTQIA+-owned vendors, coming together in a comprehensive celebration of progress and community.

Art Academy of Cincinnati | Where We Thrive

This month-long celebration of LGBTQIA+ creativity culminates in a Queer Prom event that reimagines traditional celebrations through an artistic lens. The program features an art exhibition showcasing LGBTQIA+ artists and allies, complemented by interactive elements including a non-binary fashion show and drag queen makeup tutorials. The initiative creates multiple platforms for creative expression while fostering a sense of belonging and celebration within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Cincinnati Arts Association | Project Shattered Silence Pilot

This transformative seven-month program provides LGBTQIA+ high school students with a safe space to develop their voices and share their stories through performance art. Meeting weekly, participants build confidence and community while exploring their

identities through guided storytelling exercises. The program culminates in a powerful live performance at the Aronoff Center, where students share their personal narratives with the broader community.

concert:nova | Memory Box

This innovative performance project combines contemporary classical music with immersive visual art to explore LGBTQIA+ experiences. Centered around composer Sarah Hennies' work, the program features performances by local LGBTQIA+ musicians who contribute their personal stories to the piece. Set within a custom-designed installation by artist Lizzy Duquette, the performance creates a multi-sensory experience that bridges musical expression with broader conversations about identity and representation.

Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati | Where Do THEY Fit In?

This comprehensive program uses theatrical performances as a springboard for exploring diverse LGBTQIA+ identities and experiences. Through a series of facilitated discussions following select productions, the program addresses topics ranging from gender identity and pronoun usage to the intersection of cultural and LGBTQIA+ experiences. Each discussion features perspectives from different segments of the LGBTQIA+ community, creating opportunities for deeper understanding and connection.

The Ghostlight Stage Company | "Late, A Cowboy Song" by Sarah Ruhl

This production brings Sarah Ruhl's exploration of gender identity and self-discovery to the Falcon Theatre stage. The story follows Mary's journey through her relationship with Red, a nonbinary cowboy who introduces her to new possibilities of freedom and expression. The production will be complemented by post-show mixers and community partnerships, creating opportunities for dialogue about gender identity, self-expression and representation in the arts.

Pones | Fringe Project 2025: Sharing Rural Queer Stories

This groundbreaking project captures and preserves LGBTQIA+ experiences from rural areas through a unique combination of film and dance. Centered around stories from Lebanon, Kentucky and surrounding areas, the project addresses the isolation and lack of support often faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in rural communities. The resulting production, premiering at the Cincinnati Fringe Festival, will combine recorded narratives with live performances incorporating music, dance, theatre, spoken word, burlesque and drag to create a powerful, multi-dimensional storytelling experience.

Young Professionals Choral Collective | The LGBTQIA+ City that Sings

This ambitious two-year project begins with a community dialogue event that will inspire a newly commissioned choral work celebrating LGBTQIA+ experiences. The recorded conversations from this event will provide both thematic material and actual lyrics for the new composition. The project culminates at BLINK in 2026 with a collaborative performance, featuring singers from multiple Cincinnati choral organizations in a powerful celebration of community through music.



Young Professionals Grants

The ArtsWave Young Professionals (YP) Grant Program began in 2016. It provides support for programming that engages young professionals and is funded in part by donations from young professionals to the 2024 ArtsWave Campaign.

To learn more about ArtsWave YP, visit artswave.org/yp.

Organization

Project Title

Cincinnati Opera	Cincinnati Opera Young Professionals (COYP)
Cincinnati Preservation Association	Young Preservationists Program
Cincinnati Shakespeare Company	YP Preview Night
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra	CSO Listening Lounge
Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati	Show Up!
The Ghostlight Stage Company	Shining A Light Workshop and Lecture Series (2025)
Taft Museum of Art	Taft at Twilight
Young Professionals Choral Collective (YPCC)	Create, Engage, Connect

Cincinnati Opera | Cincinnati Opera Young Professionals

Cincinnati Opera Young Professionals (COYP) introduces new audiences to opera through social events and discounted opera tickets. It was created to increase engagement with Cincinnati Opera for young professionals in our region. COYP activities are created and led by members of the Cincinnati Opera Board Associates (COBA), a cohort of young professionals, in coordination with Cincinnati Opera staff. These activities help to develop a personal investment with Cincinnati Opera and establish a peer network for deeper engagement in the community as a whole.

Cincinnati Preservation Association | Young Preservationists Program

The Young Preservationists Program offers experiences for young professionals to learn about and connect over local architecture and design. Monthly events like behind-the-scenes building tours, social mixers, field work and bike tours showcase the diverse, historic buildings of our region — many of which house local arts organizations. The Young Preservationists Committee partners with arts organizations to provide art activations like photography walks, curated soundscapes and culturally relevant performances. The organization aims to introduce a new wave of preservationists to its mission of protecting the region's endangered historic buildings.

Cincinnati Shakespeare Company | Cincy Shakes YP Preview Night

Cincinnati Shakespeare Company's YP Preview Night brings young professionals to the first public preview performance night of each Mainstage Show, offering a subsidized ticket rate that includes a complimentary beverage. Afterwards, participants chat with members of the CSC artistic team and provide feedback or share insights. This program provides area Young Professionals with a mid-week outing to relax and socialize, as well as a chance to add their voices to the art-making process.

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra | CSO Listening Lounge

CSO Listening Lounges are social music-listening experiences outside of the Orchestra's main stage concerts. Audiences gather in Music Hall's Wilks Studio for an informal listening experience. Large screens allow for easy viewing of the live (or pre-recorded) concert. They can enjoy a specialty cocktail, mingle, move about the studio and discuss the ongoing concert while reclining on plush seats. Staff members, conductors and guest artists will be on hand to provide context for the work and answer questions. Children are invited to a specially designed May Festival MiNiS program, designed for musicians ages 0-12, in another section of the Wilks Studio.

Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati | Show Up!

Show Up! fosters an inclusive environment for young professionals to connect, discover Over-the-Rhine and support local businesses while engaging with important social issues. As many young professionals graduate, relocate or navigate new careers, Show Up! invites both newcomers and long-time Cincinnatians to dive into the city's dynamic arts, culture and food scenes. Ensemble Theatre invites young professionals (ages 21-40) to gatherings designed around the organization's productions. Each event takes attendees to a local business for a discussion of the work, including its social impact. Show Up! aims to create a welcoming and thoughtful space for examining themes and issues relevant to both art and society.

The Ghostlight Stage Company | Shining A Light Workshop and Lecture Series (2025)

The Ghostlight Stage Company's Shining A Light program is a dynamic, educational workshop and lecture series, designed specifically for young professional artists. The Ghostlight is a leader in unique, cutting-edge lectures and education workshops, training arts professionals as they begin their careers. Workshops include:

February 10: Taxes for Artists with Leanne Greenberg

March 10: Teaching Transitioning Voices with Danielle Marie Steel

April 14: Intimacy Direction, Dramaturgy and Cultural Sensitivity with Torie Wiggin

May 12: Casting Beyond the Binary with Shira Helena Gitlin

Taft Museum of Art | Taft at Twilight

Taft at Twilight is a program by young professionals for young professionals. It cultivates an inclusive community and vibrant arts experiences for the contemporary and curious. It offers unique experiences where you can meet like-minded individuals and get involved in the local arts community. All Taft at Twilight events are networking opportunities where attendees can connect with their creativity and see the museum galleries for free. Young professionals on staff in departments across the museum run the program.

Young Professionals Choral Collective | Create, Engage, Connect

Create, Engage, Connect is a series of free events that introduce young professionals to the YPCC experience while helping them to reflect on their experiences of connection

and engagement. The series includes a social art event, sing-in rehearsal, community service project and concert. Young professionals seeking connection and belonging can find it by participating in the arts. YPCC is committed to meeting these needs by expanding opportunities for artistic engagement that foster community and connection.