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THE WAIT IS OVER: 36 SMALL DALLAS ARTS GROUPS FIND OUT THEY GOT MONEY FROM THE MOODY FOUNDATION

Written by Michael Granberry, Arts Writer
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During the spring of 2017, the Galveston-based Moody Foundation surprised the Dallas arts community with a bold gesture. It would make available to the financially troubled AT&T Performing Arts Center a desperately needed \$12 million. And it pledged to provide an additional \$10 million to a new endowment that would extend flexible grants to small and emerging arts groups.

[The Moody Fund for the Arts](#), as it's called, announced the second half of that commitment on Thursday, awarding 36 "small Dallas arts groups" \$150,000 — and even that was unexpected.

In exchange for Dallas City Performance Hall being renamed Moody Performance Hall, the foundation created the endowment which planned to provide \$100,000 in grants this first year. But Thursday's announcement noted that the amount had been increased — at the AT&T center's request — to \$150,000.

"These organizations and their proposals show what an exciting time this is for Dallas' arts community and the cultural impact these grants will have throughout the city," Francie Moody-Dahlberg, the chair and executive director of the Moody Foundation, said in a statement. "We are honored to support this vibrant, dynamic, cultural scene."

When the AT&T center's economic problems were disclosed — and at one time, its capital debt had soared to \$151 million — the center requested and got the Dallas City Council to contribute \$15 million in the form of annual payments of \$1.5 million for a decade. That prompted fierce criticism primarily from small arts groups, whose leaders essentially asked: "Why aren't we being awarded money from the city?"

Not long after, the Moody money surfaced, and Thursday's announcement revealed that some of those same organizations whose leaders had protested in the past would indeed get some of the new funding.

The recipients include Cara Mia Theatre, whose executive artistic director David Lozano had been among the most outspoken critics of the city helping the AT&T center with its debt.

"It's always important for our arts groups to have another opportunity for generating funding support," Lozano said. "That's how I look at the Moody Fund, as another grant opportunity. Maybe the Moody Fund is a way of addressing some of our concerns from 2016 when the debt relief plan was being passed into the city budget.

"But I view this as something separate — as another revenue stream for our organization, a small theater organization that needs all the support it can get. This particular grant is going to help our resident theater company generate new plays that we will workshop next spring at the Latino Cultural Center and hopefully have its world premieres and future seasons.

"So, this is an investment in local artists, a small theater company of color in Dallas and more unique programming at the Latino Cultural Center," he said.

Lozano said the \$15 million debt relief measure for the AT&T center passed by the City Council "represented bigger issues, such as inequitable funding and resources for small groups and groups of color."

Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings responded to the announcement by calling the grants "a shot in the arm to boost the health of these small organizations and our cultural ecosystem. It is exciting to see the wide range of groups and projects the Moody Fund for the Arts is helping and that this visionary fund will be there to support them year after year."

Fifty-two organizations applied for the grants, which ranged from \$3,500 to \$7,500. The foundation declined to disclose how much each of the 36 recipients received. Center officials say the grants were awarded after a multi-level peer review process. Center officials also note that, now, only \$2.3 million is needed in its debt-retirement campaign.

The Moody awards come in five categories: new works, commissions, unique presentations (eight grants); general program and operating cost support (18 grants); community performance/artist in residency (three grants), capacity building (five grants) and cultural equity/new initiatives, non-performance (two grants).

Here are examples of how the funding is expected to help three different small arts groups, whose dollar amounts were disclosed:

— Bandan Koro African Drum and Dance Ensemble received \$6,500. Its activities will include weekly dance classes at the Sammons Center for the Arts and monthly classes at Klyde Warren Park.

— Second Thought Theatre received \$3,500. In 2017, the theater produced a world premiere of *The Necessities*, by Blake Hackler, who wrote the play about four newcomers to small East Texas town. The new funding will commission Hackler to work with Artistic Director Alex Organ to "refine his initial treatment of *What We Were* and prepare it for design work and production."

— Color Me Empowered received \$3,500. The group typically executes seven to 10 public art projects a year. The new funding "will help ensure the execution of additional public art works in 2018." The funding, they say, will also help facilitate a cooperative program with the Cottrell House, a halfway home for boys exiting the prison system or serving as a "stopgap measure to keep them from going in."

This is the full list of the recipients of the 2018 Moody Fund for the Arts:

- Academy of Bangla Arts and Culture
- Anita N. Martinez Ballet Folklorico
- Arga Nova Dance
- The Artist Outreach, Inc.
- Avant Chamber Ballet
- Bandan Koro African Drum and Dance Ensemble
- Bruce Wood Dance Project
- Cara Mia Theatre Co.
- Chamber Music International
- Children's Chorus of Greater Dallas
- Color Me Empowered
- Creative Arts Center of Dallas
- Dallas Chamber Symphony
- Dallas Film Society
- Dance Council of North Texas
- Dark Circles Contemporary Dance
- Echo Theatre
- Fine Arts Chamber Players

- Indian Cultural Heritage Foundation
- Kitchen Dog Theater Company
- Museum of Geometric and MADI Art
- New Texas Symphony Orchestra
- Sammons Center for the Arts
- Second Thought Theatre
- Shakespeare Dallas
- Soul Rep Theatre Company
- SPARK! Dallas
- Teatro Dallas
- Teatro Flor Candela
- Texas Winds Musical Outreach, Inc.
- The Writer's Garret
- Turtle Creek Chorale
- Undermain Theatre
- Uptown Players, Inc.
- USA Film Festival
- WordSpace

Clarification, 2:40 p.m.: This story has been updated to clarify that the Moody Fund grants will be paid out through an endowment. A new detail has also been added that ATTPAC has reduced the amount needed for its debt-retirement campaign to \$2.3 million.