

Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival 2010 Request for Information from Prospective Partners:

INTRODUCTION

Inaugurated in 1986, the biennial Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival is widely recognized as the largest poetry event in North America. Since 2000, each of the four-day Festivals has attracted between 16,000 and 19,000 attendees, including nearly 4,500 high school students and 2,000 teachers.

The Dodge Poetry Festival has been national and international in scope. Attendees have traveled from forty-two states, and poets from Bangladesh, China, El Salvador, Nigeria, Syria and many other countries have appeared at the Festival. These poets have included Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners, United States and United Kingdom Poets Laureate, and our most honored poets.

Neither an academic or professional conference, nor a contest or competition, the Dodge Poetry Festival is the one place where Poets Laureate and Slam Champions routinely share the same stage. It has expanded the audience for poetry by welcoming poets from a diverse array of cultures often excluded from the Western canon. During its 22-year history, it has introduced these poets to 42,000 high school students and 17,000 teachers who have attended at no-charge as part of the Dodge Foundation's long commitment to arts education.

Past Dodge Poetry Festivals have given rise to several National Public Radio programs and five PBS television series, including *Power of the Word*, *Language of Life*, *Sounds of Poetry* and *Fooling with Words*, all hosted by Bill Moyers and seen by a national audience of nearly 50 million.

Eleven of the first twelve Dodge Poetry Festivals were held at Waterloo Village in Stanhope, New Jersey, where the Waterloo Foundation for the Arts had produced an annual performance season for decades. Between 1998 and 2007, the financial stability of the Waterloo Foundation gradually declined. By 2008, the costs of mounting the Festival at a site that could no longer function as a producing partner became prohibitive.

In recent months, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation has received queries from municipalities, performing arts facilities, and institutions interested in hosting the Dodge Poetry Festival in the fall of 2010, for which we are very grateful.

The purpose of this document is to:

1. Assist both the Dodge Foundation and prospective partners in determining whether a new site can realistically accommodate the Festival and offer adequate production support to sustain its professional performance values, and;
2. Provide potential partners with the opportunity to describe how local assets can enhance the Festival experience and help meet the Festival's artistic and educational goals.

PROCESS

The deadline for responses to this RFI is June 12, 2009 (postmark or email).

The Dodge Foundation will evaluate responses to the RFI and schedule site visits and interviews with the top three candidates prior to final negotiations and site selection by September 4, 2009.

EXPECTATIONS

The Dodge Poetry Festival will remain responsible for designing, developing, managing, coordinating, and funding the programmatic and logistical aspects of the Festival, including selection, booking, and payment of all poets, musicians, and theatrical performers who will participate in the Festival, and developing all program content and event schedules for the Festival.

SITE CRITERIA

Beginning with the understanding that no single location can meet every aspect of an ideal, prospective sites will be compared in terms of how many of the 17 site criteria listed below they can meet and to what degree. An ideal Dodge Poetry Festival site, based on the scale of past Festivals, would include the following:

1. Production History: Site Host has a proven record of producing safe, multiple-venue, multiple-day, festival-style events for large crowds (4,000 to 6,000 per day) to the highest professional performance and technical standards. Site Host also has a proven history of acting as chief liaison with local officials and code officials concerning all permitting issues related to large-scale performance events on their site, and has adequate resources and personnel to maintain site and to meet conditions specified below.

2. Setting:

- a. Site:** Site is inviting, aesthetically pleasing, and welcoming; clean, with maintained and attractive streets, pedestrian ways and grounds that create a special place for immersion in poetry, as well as a range of restaurant choices and amenities and spaces that provide for everything from impromptu gatherings to quiet reflection.
- b. Local Area:** The site and the surrounding area can easily accommodate the traffic and parking challenges of the Festival.
- c. Handicapped-Accessibility**
Site and all performance venues are already 100% ADA compliant.

3. Concert Performance Space: A Concert Performance Space (Main Stage) in a weather-protected amphitheater style structure with a thrust stage, professional lighting and sound system, with comfortable seating, climate control, and flexible enough to feel intimate for audiences of 300 to 3,000.

4. Satellite Performance Spaces: Site has a number (up to 11) of additional acoustically isolated performance spaces with weather-protected seating capacities ranging from 100 to 750 and within easy walking distances from each other and the Main Stage. If some or all of these satellite performance spaces are not permanent structures, or supplemental temporary structures are required, there are adequate grounds for and a demonstrated ability to install such supplemental temporary structures in full compliance with local fire, safety and building codes.

5. Access: Site Host has adequate experienced staff to coordinate and facilitate site access for all mutually agreed upon contractors, vendors, officials, and visitors.

6. Technical Consultation: Site Host has experienced staff that can provide technical consultation to Dodge Festival staff, and act as liaisons with utility providers, vendors, and contractors for the set-up of the overall site and the individual performance venues.

7. Power & Lighting: More than adequate power at all Festival performance, staff, food, and public spaces; and safe levels of lighting (as defined by code officials) for all walkways, roads and parking areas is available.

8. Water and Septic: Adequate clean and well-maintained restrooms for a general public that could reach 6,000 per day, and demonstrated water supply for staff, catering, food court and fire suppression needs.

9. Telecommunication and Data: Adequate telecommunication and data lines or towers to meet ideal needs of Festival retailers, box office, site staff, EMTs, and general public.

10. Security: Contained Festival site with a single, secure entrance for box office, requiring minimal security presence. Security supplied by site is professional, experienced in large-scale public events, trained in basic first-aid, courteous, and non-intrusive.

11. Sustainability: Site hosts have a commitment to an eco-friendly approach to all aspects of event management and production, including attention to recycled and biodegradable sources for print and paper products, dinnerware and flatware; energy use; emissions; waste stream; recycling and composting practices; and local eco-friendly food sourcing.

12. Food: Appealing and comfortable dining facility on-site with a catering service known for offering excellent fare, including vegetarian options, and the capacity to provide three meals a day to 250 staff and guests; fine dining options are available to the public; and a Food Court exists or site has a history of arranging temporary food vendors to provide a wide array of healthy, appetizing and affordable dining options to festival audiences of up to 6,000 per day, including the capacity to provide quick turn around in meeting the lunch needs of students on High School Student Day.

13. Transportation: Easy access to highways, mass transit, and international airports; within a reasonable driving distance navigable from anywhere in New Jersey during rush hour on Thursday, Student Day and Friday, Teacher Day; highway exits designated specifically for the site, requiring no additional police and causing nominal traffic congestion. Onsite transportation includes appropriate trolleys, shuttles, golf carts and related transportation modalities to assist in the easy movement of people and equipment.

14. Parking: Reliable all-weather, well-lit, clearly identified on-site parking for 200 buses and 2,000 cars within easy walking distance to Festival site, and secure parking is available for 200 staff. Trolleys, shuttles and related people-movers are also available to support parking operations, including transport to and from any secure off-site parking options.

15. Staff & Poet Accommodations: Immediate proximity (5 to 10 minutes) to 300 quality hotel rooms for Festival staff, poets, performers, technicians, and Foundation guests.

16. General Public Accommodations: Close proximity to a range of quality and budget lodging options, including motels and campgrounds, with the capacity to provide accommodations for 1,000 members of the general public within a 20-minute radius of the site.

17. Set-up and Clean-up: Site host has the capacity to carry-out (or contract out for) all festival set-up, break-down and clean-up operations, including those related to venues, streets and related public spaces.

LOCAL ASSETS:

We know different venues and communities have unique and specific assets that would enhance the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival. We are interested in hearing from prospective partners their thoughts about how these local assets might be incorporated into the Foundation's thinking about any aspect of the Festival experience or outreach (see #3 below).

SUMMARY

A Proposal to Host the 2010 Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival should contain:

1. A cover sheet that includes the title of the document, the name and all necessary contact information for the submitting institution, and the names of the personnel the institution will dedicate to the project;
2. A 4-to-6 page description of how the prospective Site Host plans to meet each of the 16 Site Criteria listed above, including:
 - a. what resources, funding and personnel are available to meet those criteria the prospective Site Host is certain they can fulfill, and;
 - b. what supplemental resources, funding and personnel would be required to meet those criteria the prospective Site Host believes they cannot fulfill;
3. A brief description of how local assets might enhance the Poetry Festival beyond meeting the site criteria above.
4. A copy of the resume of each member of the Site Host's management or production team dedicated to the project, and;
5. Any supplemental supporting materials that might help the Dodge Foundation in the review process, including site maps that highlight festival-related community assets.

Proposals should be sent to:

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