

The Wooster Group (TWG) is an ensemble of performers and technical artists who, for over twenty-five years, has collaborated on the development and production of theater and media pieces. Under the direction of Elizabeth LeCompte, TWG, with its associate artists and staff, has created and performed sixteen pieces for the theater and five film and video productions. Each year, we are invited to tour selections from our repertory nationally and internationally. At home in the SoHo neighborhood of Manhattan, we own and operate The Performing Garage, a flexible "black-box" theater that serves as our creative laboratory and performance space. Our work is known for its radical re-staging of both modern and classic texts. We carefully build every production, sometimes taking a year or more to complete a new piece, using found materials, film and videos, dance and movement, multi-track scoring and an architectonic approach to theater design. Individually, and as a company, The Wooster Group has won numerous national and international awards. Because of our many years of sustained excellence and innovation, The Wooster Group is considered part of the "canon" of modern theater by the academic community. Our reputation therefore draws a substantial number of young people to our performances, as well as a diverse socio-economic cross-section of New York's population. It is an intrinsic part of our mission to keep our low ticket prices well below the commercial average so that we can share our unique aesthetic with as many people as possible. We further wish to build a community of artists and those who value the arts by teaching and working with students. For ten years, core members of The Wooster Group have conducted an arts in education program with I.S. 131, Dr. Sun Yat Sen Intermediate School in Chinatown, that uses our performance development techniques to reinforce the classes' academic curriculum.

The two programs we propose foster our mission by making our productions accessible to a wide, diverse audience and by sharing our methods and ideas with students who are the future generation of artistic creators and theater supporters.

Low Price Ticket Subsidy: The Wooster Group is committed to open access for all and our ticket prices reflect this. For our March and April production at St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn, we will set aside a block of student price tickets that will offer a 10% discount from the regular price seats. In May at The Performing Garage, we will be presenting four weeks of work-in-progress showings of our newest creation. Keeping with our tradition of low cost tickets at The Garage, we will charge \$20 for regular price seats and \$18 for student seats.

Arts in Education: The Wooster Group (TWG) requests funds to continue the ten year collaboration between TWG and I.S. 131, Dr. Sun Yat Sen Intermediate School. The program brings the dramatic arts into the classroom, reinforcing and broadening the academic curriculum through theater games that increase student skill levels in spoken language, literacy, cooperation, self-esteem, and technical and performing arts. The project also opens up creative and cultural opportunities for the students and encourages a life-long appreciation for the arts.

The Department of Cultural Affairs has been instrumental in strengthening both of these program and we hope they will be able to continue their support in fiscal year 2003.

Low Seat Prices: The Wooster Group is an established, renowned, experimental theater company. We believe the originality and quality of our work stems from our collaborative, ensemble based process between performers and technical artists. Creating a new work often takes us a year or more since we approach each new endeavor by carefully layering new ideas, production elements and found materials. Our contracts with the artists we work with over this development period are at union rates. However, our black-box space, The Performing Garage, located in SoHo, has a limited seating capacity of seventy-five. We know, from our national and international tours, from our 1997 production of *The Hairy Ape* at the Selwyn Theater on 42nd Street, and our 2002 run of *To You, the Birdie!* at St. Ann's Warehouse, that we are capable of selling out venues that accommodate 300-400 people. We could, therefore, charge at least the average off-Broadway ticket price of \$40 and increase box-office revenue by \$75,000. We continue to perform at The Garage and offer low price tickets because our work attracts such a diverse cross-section of New York residents and we wish to continue serving them. As our work incorporates dance, film and video, complex sound design and music, as well as classics from the literary and dramatic literary canon, we attract artists from those mediums and their supporters. Academia has also made study of The Wooster Group a regular part of any course on contemporary, avant-garde or experimental theater. This brings a substantial number of students and young people to our shows. Artists and students are very often at the bottom end of the city's economic scale but they make up some of our most loyal and culturally sensitive following. Through our outreach and education efforts with New York City public schools, we have cultivated an audience of minority and underserved residents who might otherwise have

limited exposure to theater and the visual arts. It is therefore vital to our mission of creating and maintaining a community of artists and arts advocates to keep our performances accessible to these populations. That is why we ask the Department of Cultural Affairs to help us keep our ticket prices low and feasible for all.

Projected Dates and Locations: In March and April, 2003, we will be reviving one of our repertory pieces at St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn. St. Ann's is a 250 seat theater. During the run of five performances a week for seven weeks, we will offer a 10% student discount from the full price St. Ann's charges its audience. In May at The Performing Garage, we will be presenting four weeks fo work-in-progress showings of our newest piece based on the movies El Dorado and Johnny Guitar and the mythology of the American West. For that run, we will charge \$20 for a full price ticket and \$18 for a student price ticket. The Perfoming Garage is a 75-seat theater.