

WALKER|WEST

GROW THROUGH MUSIC



2025 Legacy Funding Talking Points

About Walker|West Music Academy

Mission

The mission of Walker|West Music Academy is to create a music learning community rooted in the African American cultural experience, where people of all ages and backgrounds gather to explore, perform, and grow through music.

Background

- One of the oldest community music schools in the United States founded by African American musicians, Walker|West has been a place for expression, healing, resilience, cultural pride, and joy since 1988.
- Led and majority-staffed by African Americans, Walker|West annually provides around 6,000 people of all ages and backgrounds (including 30% low-income supported by scholarships and tuition assistance) with **exceptional, accessible, community music education and performance opportunities** in the Twin Cities and beyond.
- With a focus on styles from the African American tradition (jazz, gospel, blues, improvisational) alongside classical music, our students are taught by some of Minnesota's finest professional musicians. We teach 300+ students on 20+ instruments annually with students ranging in age from elementary school through adulthood (the oldest student recently celebrated his 103rd birthday). We project to serve 600 students per week in our new space.



- We act upon extensive research over decades showing that **music is foundational** to reading, writing, and math, and an essential part of brain development, academic success, and wellness.



- After moving into a new building in January 2025, Walker|West is located at 650 Marshall Avenue in the historic Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul, where it serves as a **cultural destination and community resource** serving the pillars of LEARNING, LISTENING, and CREATING. Our building includes unique features that are rare in the Twin Cities including:
 - **Eighteen music classrooms** with two of the larger classrooms dedicated to ensemble instruction for the strings and jazz ensembles.
 - **A digital music production lab** supported in part by the Best Buy Foundation. This space is the home of our Digital Music Production program which opens up a wide number of music industry career options for the community, including sound engineering, mastering, scoring, and multimedia production.
 - **A state-of-the-art recording studio** with a dedicated control room containing top-of-the-line equipment serving as a community asset in an area of Saint Paul with few accessible recording studios.
 - **An ADA accessible, state-of-the-art performance hall** with seating for 200 people. The hall will feature top-of-the-line technology, such as a control booth and cameras and microphones that will allow the live streaming of performances to audiences around the world. Due to the ability to host community partners and performance groups, the hall will be a community resource for residents of both the Rondo neighborhood and the City of Saint Paul.
 - **An outdoor performance pavilion** to perform outdoor concerts and events open to the neighborhood and for usage by neighbors.

Program Needs and Opportunities

Legacy funding will have a robust impact on Walker|West's work and the community, helping us build strongly on our almost 40 years of success and returning powerful dividends for decades to come for the Rondo neighborhood, the Twin Cities, and Minnesota. Examples of programming that will be enhanced by this funding include:

- **Expansion of Youth and adult music education - \$175,000**
 - **Early Childhood Music Program** – Our early childhood music program provides classes for children and their caregivers to support healthy child development for young children ages 6 weeks to 6 years old. The program is taught at the Mary T. Wellcome Child Development Center at the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center in North Minneapolis as well as at Walker West. Further expansion in 2025 will be with Jeremiah Project, Agape Child Development Center in North Minneapolis and the re-establishment of services in the Hallie Q Brown Child Development Center.
 - Led by teaching artists and performers, our 45 minute classes provide space for children to express themselves and their unique gifts through music, storytelling, and music theory. Our classes provide high-quality music education at a young age, enhancing cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as pre-literacy and numeracy skills.
 - **Dementia-Friendly Amazing Grace Chorus** – This dementia-friendly community gospel chorus for people aged 55+ supports the health of elders by helping them access memories through gospel music; diminish social isolation; promote healthy aging; and retain cultural knowledge. The Amazing Grace Chorus is uniquely and intentionally designed to use the power of music to raise awareness of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD), reduce the stigma attached to ADRD, and combat isolation in a dementia-friendly environment. Chorus members meet biweekly to sing together and experience memory exercises. An amazing example of community care in action, the chorus assists elders to remain in their homes for as long as possible.
 - This program has an online component that serves elders/seniors across the Twin Cities as well as across the United States
 - **Singspiration** - This community singing program serves elders/seniors in assisted living facilities in the neighborhood.



- **The Rondo Community Music Series – \$100,000**

- This free, 12-part concert series offers performance opportunities for our teaching artists, while supporting our mission to provide music enrichment to people of all ages and backgrounds. By featuring compelling music performances, the series showcases the exceptional talents of Walker West’s esteemed teaching artists who, with their exceptional musicianship, shine a spotlight on the rich cultural heritage and creative spirit of the community. Performances are available for free to the community in-person and virtually. The Series aims to remove barriers to musical performances for the community and supports the continued revitalization of the Rondo Community.



- **Professional development for music educators – \$25,000**

- Walker|West Music Academy is a cornerstone of the Twin Cities music community, dedicated to providing high-quality music education to students of all ages. For almost four decades, Walker|West has not only nurtured young musicians but also served as a vital resource for music educators. Although music educators often face challenges in staying current with evolving teaching methodologies, incorporating diverse musical styles, and addressing the unique needs of their students, Walker|West fills this gap in professional development by providing music educators with training in culturally responsive teaching, jazz pedagogy, innovative teaching methodologies, and mentorship and peer collaboration.

