



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

August 31, 2021

Contact: Bailey Pfohl, Near West Theatre  
216-961-9750  
Diane Wagner, Bank of America  
312-992-2370

**Near West Theatre Receives Grant from Bank of America**

Near West Theatre recently received a \$25,000 grant from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation as part of its broad initiative to support Ohio's long-term sustainability by advancing economic mobility and social progress through focusing on the needs of the community. This generous gift is in addition to a sponsorship at the \$5,000 level that was made earlier this year, bringing Bank of America's total contributions to transformational theatre arts experiences on the near west side of Cleveland to \$30,000.

The \$25,000 grant will sustain Near West Theatre's general operations and ensure that the organization can continue to create opportunities for transformational theatre arts experiences for community members of all ages. This includes supporting Near West Theatre's school-aged programming, community-building events, as well as a four-show 2021/22 Season lineup.

The initial \$5,000 grant was allocated to NWT's two popular LGBT-inclusive offerings: Drag Queen Story Hour, for children ages three to eight, featuring Cleveland's tallest Drag performer: Veranda L'Ni, and Queer Prom, an event geared toward high schoolers and presented annually in partnership with The LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland. This will be the second year that the bank has supported Queer Prom.

"We are honored to receive this generous support from our friends at Bank of America. This grant ensures our ability to serve NWT's mission of creating loving and inclusive communities at a critical time for live theatre," said Mike Obertacz, Near West Theatre's Executive Director. "Bank

of America is a valued community partner, not only supporting the institution financially, but through volunteerism and board leadership.”

“Bank of America is proud to support the artistic efforts of Near West Theatre,” said Ann Hatvany, Near West board member and Bank of America Managing Director, Treasury Sales. “The theatre’s diverse events and productions, especially for the LGBTQ+ community, are engaging and creating a better, stronger and more inclusive Cleveland.”

Generous grants such as these represent Bank of America’s commitment to improving the financial lives of individuals and families. So far this year, \$1.83 million has been distributed by Bank of America to local nonprofits in two rounds, this latest focusing on economic mobility and social progress through investments in the arts, amongst other concentrations.

Beyond financial catalysts, Bank of America recognizes that volunteer investments play a key role in this effort to build thriving communities as well. “Addressing community needs through our philanthropic investments is just one way we deploy capital to help build a more sustainable community,” said Jeneen Marziani, Ohio State President, Bank of America. “We’re honored to partner with nonprofit organizations across Ohio, like Near West Theatre, that are helping to advance economic and social progress.”

###

### ***About Near West Theatre***

Near West Theatre builds loving relationships and engages diverse people in strengthening their sense of identity, passion, and purpose, individually and in community, through accessible, affordable and transformational theatre arts experiences. Since 1978, Near West Theatre has been shaping, changing, even saving the lives of children, teens and adults. The community theater hosts a variety of free community events and free after school programs to underline its commitment to accessibility for all people. The organization serves people of all ages, but a focus on youth goes back to its founding and continues to this day. [www.nearwesttheatre.org](http://www.nearwesttheatre.org). @nearwesttheatre.

### ***About Bank of America Environmental, Social, and Governance***

At Bank of America, we’re guided by a common purpose to help make financial lives better, through the power of every connection. We’re delivering on this through responsible growth with a focus on our environmental, social and governance (ESG) leadership. ESG is embedded across our eight lines of business and reflects how we help fuel the global economy, build trust and credibility, and represent a company that people want to work for, invest in and do business

with. An important part of this work is forming strong partnerships with nonprofits and advocacy groups, such as community, consumer and environmental organizations, to bring together our collective networks and expertise to achieve greater impact. Learn more at [www.about.bankofamerica.com](http://www.about.bankofamerica.com), and connect with us on Twitter at @BankofAmerica.

###