

A Night of Magic: Grant Application

Project Purpose:

While 2020 has been a year fraught with loss, we have learned the importance of digital technology, the challenges included in sustaining the arts, and the responsibility we have to protect each other through trying times. As concerts have been canceled and performers have embarked on desperate job hunts, we have recognized the power of community. A certain responsibility lies in our hands: to continue persevering in shaping the evolution of future concerts and social gatherings. Walt Disney World has remained a place of light and laughter since opening in 1965, and they continue to prosper through this pandemic. This is due to following strict guidelines and striving to do what they do best: make people happy, bring magic to the mundane, and animate beloved characters to life. The purpose of this concert is to pull magic out of the darkness. Almost like a phoenix rising from the ashes, these musicians will show their strength in emerging from difficulty. The timing is essential; we are currently emerging from a year with COVID-19: how are we going to proceed? Will we be defeated, or will we rise from the ashes?

This concert will be held at the America Gardens Theatre in Epcot. It will be an in-person event, as Disney has been extremely thorough with ensuring safe social distancing. Donations will all go towards Disney's Grand Floridian Society Orchestra. These members have had a changed schedule this past year due to COVID-19, and just a few months ago, played their last. This concert will work to give back to them and give them an opportunity to do what they love best: perform. While Disney concerts are not out of the ordinary, this one will be special. Honoring Alan Menken, a Disney composer of over 30 years, this concert will feature his compositions and spotlight him as a conductor. He will also be accompanied by Jon Batiste, a jazz composer who created the music for Disney's *Soul*. This film was released in December of 2020, arriving at the end of a traumatic year. Batiste will speak about COVID-19's impact on the arts community, and how he managed to continue persevering in his work on this film. The showcase of Menken and Batiste will make this a concert to remember and give people a reason to fall in love with music all over again.

Concert Contributors:

The Grand Floridian Society Orchestra is comprised of six members, who have played in the halls of Disney's Grand Floridian for over 32 years. Unfortunately, their last concert premiered last October 2020 in Disney's Hollywood Studios, as COVID-19 caused their jobs to come to an end. They deserve a tribute for their long-lasting legacy, and this concert will fulfill a closing memory for their Disney careers. They will be accompanied by the Orlando Contemporary Chamber Orchestra, a group of 50 musicians directed by Timothy William. This group focuses on bringing contemporary music to life, which will flow perfectly with the arrangement of new Disney pieces. Together, the GFS Orchestra and OCC Orchestras will be directed by Alan Menken. Menken is the perfect leader for this concert; he is a Disney legend. Composing most of Disney's hit songs, he has pioneered the tunes we know so well today. They have transformed Disney's impact on

animation; we could argue that Menken brought the magic to life. The final featured contributor is Jon Batiste, who will speak on his experience composing for *Soul* and his adaptations due to COVID-19. He will also play the piano, accompanying the orchestras for a few songs. This talented group of musicians will piece together a wonderful concert, which will inspire and enchant their audience. It will reinvigorate the power of music and show how these musicians have managed to have a dominant work ethic, through their careers and through the time of COVID-19.

New Concert Ideas

This concert will be quite different than others, in part due to guidelines surrounding COVID-19. As mentioned above, this will be an in-person event. In Florida, outdoor events are allowed to hold 50% capacity, so that will guide how many people can attend in-person. Tickets and reservations will be required, with all people agreeing to wear face masks for the duration of the concert. People will also be seated away from others, so social distancing guidelines are held. Performers will be spaced out on the stage but will not have to wear masks when performing.

Part of this concert's uniqueness will be the film additions. Before each song is played, a short, 30 second clip will be shown from the movie it's derived from. This will connect the film to score and allow the audience to dwell on the nostalgia and happiness that the films bring. It will add power to the piece that is played after it, showcasing the emotional ties so many of us are drawn to. The outdoor amphitheater will be scattered with pink and white roses, as this concert will take place during the summer. The variations on the pieces will include both original compositions by Menken and contemporary arrangements by the Orlando Contemporary Chamber Orchestra. This will allow a spin on prevailing trends for this time period, while the main focus circles on traditional orchestra playing with a blend of old and new pieces.

What's at Stake?

This concert is so important because it concentrates on perseverance: the idea that you keep going, no matter what. These musicians have been out of work for a long time, with some of them having no prospects of returning anytime soon. Yet, their willingness to put forth this concert shows resilience, and people attending and watching online will be encouraged to support them. We must stand by the performing arts community. Their lives have dramatically changed this last year, and we can't let them continue to suffer in silence. This event will raise support, show hope, and demonstrate how concerts can be done during this continued time of social distancing.

A common thread about Disney is that it matters to people. They are drawn to the characters, the music, the films. They feel connected to this life behind the screen, and if any concert is going to pull people into the light, it would be a Disney one. People feel Disney magic in their soul. It is music that has stood the test of time, and it resonates with people all over the world. It won't change simply because of challenging times, and people need this to hold onto.

Audience and Marketing

The in-person audience of this event will be reserved on a first-come, first-serve basis for tickets and reservations. Because this concert showcases prestigious musicians with limited availability, tickets could be sold at a high price, with all money going back to the musicians. Donations would be encouraged from those watching online as well. The majority of the audience will be watching the broadcast, as it will be streamed live. This includes the people of North Georgia, and any Disney fans wanting to join in on the event. The University of North Georgia has agreed to allow a space for students to gather on campus and watch the livestream together. This, of course would follow social distancing guidelines.

Disney music bridges the age gap of young to old, as people all over the spectrum love to listen to these timeless classics. The marketing for this event will mainly be done on social media. The Disney Instagram accounts can advertise it (Disney Studios and Disney Parks) which have a combined 43 million followers. The posts will be designed using Canva, which can create fun graphics and include all the important information needed. Disney also has Facebook and Twitter accounts, which can handle postings as well. In addition to Disney, the orchestra musicians, Menken, and Batiste may post of their own accord, as well as UNG students or anyone interested in the concert. This way, it would not be difficult to get the word out. After broadcasting the event, it will also be available to watch online on YouTube.

Conclusion:

On behalf of the Night of Magic project team, we want to thank you for reading our proposal. This night would bring light and happiness to thousands of people, whether they attend in-person at Epcot, or watch from their homes. This life-changing event would shower musicians with support, and help create magic, after a year of desolate darkness. We know the impact this concert would have, and only hope to spread positivity and kindness in this year of 2021. To the DSPM, we thank you for the opportunity to apply for this grant, and hope that if we succeed in achieving it, we can inspire the people of North Georgia with arrangements of old Disney classics into new, contemporary pieces that excite and enchant for years to come.

As Walt Disney says: “When you believe in a thing, believe in it all the way, implicitly and unquestionable. All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.”