

Urbana **POPS** Orchestra

Post Project Evaluation July 11, 2011

Accomplishment and Use of Funding

The Urbana Pops Orchestra (UPO) provided two free concerts in the city of Urbana this summer. One concert, which included a quartet of musicians, performed at Urbana Adult Education's High School Commencement Ceremonies. It was held on Thursday, June 2 at the Urbana High School Auditorium. This was the first Commencement Ceremony that was exclusively for Adult Education students, and the four members of the orchestra were able to provide music to enhance the graduation program. They played music for thirty minutes before the beginning of the ceremonies and also performed a musical piece in the program.

The second free concert was performed by the full orchestra inside Lincoln Square on July 9. This concert was thoroughly enjoyed by over 400 audience members as demonstrated by their standing ovation. This two-hour concert included the World Premiere of *Red Nights* which was commissioned by local composer Benjamin Montalbano. It also featured Travis D. Stimeling, an assistant professor of music at Millikin University who narrated Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*. Another highlight was the performance of the cast of *Anything Goes*. The Urbana Park District Youth Summer Theatre Program will be performing this production at the end of July, and the UPO will continue their partnership with the Park District by acting as the pit orchestra for the four performances.

These two concerts fulfilled our commitment to offering unique orchestra experiences that enrich the cultural experiences of Urbana residents.

In addition to the City of Urbana Arts Council Grant of \$4,000, UPO received \$2,231 in donations. \$5,975 was used to pay musicians, \$256 for music rental/purchase, while the remaining \$456 summer season concert budget was funded by in-kind donations.

Impact of Grant Funding

The UPO's mission includes providing an opportunity for student musicians to be involved in a professional musical experience. Last year UPO was largely comprised of volunteer musicians. This year, with the grant from the City of Urbana, UPO was able to pay a small stipend to players who auditioned for a seat in the orchestra. (A small stipend multiplied by 65 musicians is a sizable amount.) Attracting more professional musicians raised the bar for the entire

ensemble. It both allowed the group to perform more challenging music and meant that the student interns were given the opportunity to be mentored by true professionals.

Obtaining the Urbana Arts Council Grant has enabled the UPO to accomplish its goal of providing a professional caliber orchestra. Although UPO has many supporters, the individual gifts are small denominations and in-kind. The magnitude of the grant from the City of Urbana is what gave UPO the fuel it needed to accelerate.

The Public and Artist Involvement

The UPO consists of 65 area musicians, which includes 21 local students -- 15 current or recently graduated students of Urbana High School. There were approximately 500 audience members at the Urbana Adult Education's High School Commencement Ceremony and approximately 400 audience members at the Lincoln Square *Made in the USA* Concert.

This year's Urbana Park District's performance of *Anything Goes* includes a cast of 80 students from Urbana and surrounding communities who performed with the UPO at the July 9 concert.

Community Collaborations

Collaborations, in addition to the Urbana Park District, included the Urbana School District 116, several Lincoln Square merchants, and Urbana Boy Scout Troop #6. A formal agreement was signed this spring with the Urbana School District 116 making UPO a school-sponsored group. The UPO worked with Lincoln Square merchants to provide a special drawing to highlight their businesses. Louie's BBQ sold a special lunch at the July 9 concert to enhance the concert experience. Due to the patriotic nature of the July 9 concert, UPO arranged with the Boy Scouts from Urbana Troop #6 to present the colors while UPO played a beautiful John Williams arrangement of the *National Anthem*.

Additional Information

The UPO is very grateful to have received this year's Creative Mix award. On the large scale, UPO concerts benefited Urbana residents by offering family-friendly concerts composed of high-quality repertoire by professional musicians. On the smaller, more personal level, there were other impacts. A sixth grade percussionist from Urbana Middle School received on-on-one mentoring, learning new percussion technique and Italian terms used in music scores. And in the audience there were also known impacts. One example of this is an Urbana father who took his son and daughter to a concert. After the concert, the son conveyed to his father that he wanted to play the French horn, and he began formal lessons just two days later. To be inspired by a UPO concert to learn to make music will have a life-long impact.