



Post Project Evaluation, July 31, 2013

Accomplishment and Use of Funding – The Urbana Pops Orchestra (UPO) offered two full-ensemble concerts this summer, both in the Urbana High School auditorium. *That's No Moon* on Saturday, June 8 at 7 p.m. was offered at a low adult ticket price and to encourage families, two adults and up to 3 children were just \$25.

Made in the U.S.A. on Saturday, July 6 was performed free of charge. The theme of this 90-minute concert has become a tradition with UPO—extending the patriotic character of early July by featuring music by American composers. This year's program included several Sousa marches, pieces by John Williams and Aaron Copland, the overture from the film *North by Northwest*, a special *Armed Forces Salute*, George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* played by pianist Ian Gindes, and excerpts from this year's Urbana Park District's Youth Summer Theatre production of *The Music Man*—for which UPO provided the musicians for the pit orchestra at performances July 25 to 28. For both concerts, enthusiastic audiences packed the high school auditorium to capacity. (See attached News-Gazette review from John Frayne).

Impact of Grant Funding – Musicians are frequently asked to perform for free, and although some of the UPO musicians offer to waive their stipend, most expect to be paid for sharing their talent. Obtaining the City of Urbana Arts Grant has enabled the UPO to attract more professional musicians, thus ensuring a high quality performance. With an orchestra of UPO's size, even a small stipend of \$50 per section musician and \$90 for a principal player adds up to a sizeable amount—more than local fundraising can accomplish. While other orchestras charge students a fee, UPO student musicians are mentored by professionals, given special student-only rehearsals, and are not charged a fee to participate.

The number of hours spent in completing the project – over 1,000 (see attached sheet)

The number of participants in events or activities – *That's No Moon* featured 59 paid professional musicians, 15 junior high and high school students, 18 singers, and approximately 350 people in the audience. *Made in the U.S.A.* included 49 pros, 13 students, 38 Park District cast members, and a standing-room-only crowd of approximately 450 people.

This year's Urbana Park District's performance of *The Music Man* included a cast of 53 youth (38 sang with the orchestra at the free July concert) and were supported by four professional and four student UPO musicians in the pit orchestra, assuring high-quality musical accompaniment that enhanced the production. *The Music Man's* four performances entertained a total of approximately 1,200 audience members.

Community Collaborations – In addition to the continued collaborations with the Urbana Park District and Urbana School District #116, at the June space-themed concert, members of the Midwest Garrison 501 made an appearance during the music from Star Wars and posed for photos with audience members following the concert. These costumed Star Wars “villains” come from Champaign, Mahomet, and other surrounding communities. A community choir of 18 singers was recruited and rehearsed for *Duel of the Fates*. At the July concert, UPO welcomed American Legion Post 71 for a presentation of the colors. Their participation was particularly fitting for this patriotic-themed concert. The audience was silent as the flags were solemnly retired at the end. International Galleries again provided gift certificates for a drawing at intermission. Because this concert featured the *Armed Forces Salute* to veterans, invitations were extended to numerous local nursing and retirement homes. Many people stood when the theme from their branch of the service was played.

Additional Information – The UPO is very grateful to have received this year’s Creative Mix grant. Without it, UPO definitely would not have been able to offer the July 6 concert for free. Although the concert hall was packed for the ticketed June concert, the income from ticket sales doesn’t begin to cover the expenses. The UPO fan base is growing, but still has fewer than 100 actual donors and most of those give annual gifts under \$50. Obtaining music in the Pops repertoire is also quite expensive as it is not in public domain. Some scores cannot be purchased and have high rental fees. For example, *North by Northwest* was a \$600 rental and *Rhapsody in Blue* was \$282.

There are many venues and opportunities for people to enjoy high school bands and orchestras, jazz combos, marching bands, blues, bluegrass, and other musical ensembles, but it is rare to hear pops music performed by a full orchestra for free or affordable ticket prices. The accessibility of UPO’s programs allows listeners to experience familiar music in a new way – music from films such as *Star Wars*, and the rarely performed piece by Aaron Copland, *The Promise of Living*.

Another highlight of the June concert was the premier performance of *Cold Moonlight* the winning piece from UPO’s first composition contest by 16-year old Daniel Stelzer. After the piece, Stelzer was presented with a certificate from Andrew Edwards who was one of the two professional adjudicators of the contest. The composition contest, as well as the Illinois Music Educators Association strings practice session which UPO offers will offer again this fall are two extra programs sponsored by UPO to promote and support music education in Urbana.