

1. Please provide a summary of your project. Describe what the project is, when and where it will take place, who/what is being featured, artist(s) involved, final presentation, and any other relevant information. Specify for what specific part of the project Heritage Arts Grant funds will be used.

For more than 20 years, the Junior Orchestra's (JO) outreach concert has targeted students in the Springfield region and held at Springfield High School. We work with the district to invite elementary and middle school students from many Springfield-area schools to attend one of two daytime performances. The orchestra performs a number of familiar tunes that the young audience can relate to. The conductor introduces the different families of instruments in small group performances from the woodwind, brass, strings, and percussion sections. ESYO provides pre-concert teacher guides and post-concert worksheets to all teachers in the district. For many students at lower socio-economic schools in Springfield, this outreach concert is a unique chance to learn about the joy of music in an accessible, memorable way. The two concerts take place on a school day in mid-March.

The concerts are both led by ESYO's Junior Orchestra conductor, Chris Noel. Originally from Eugene, Mr. Noel is an alum of ESYO orchestras and grew up participating in outreach concerts just like these. Mr. Noel's enthusiasm and energy add so much to the performances. Watching him engage with the audience is a joy. And his way of making learning about the orchestra fun and exciting leaves a lasting impression on all who attend.

In 2021 we were forced to move our outreach concerts online, due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. We look forward to meeting again in person in 2022 and are currently planning these concerts as we would have pre-pandemic. That said, we are prepared, if necessary, to supplement online content, add additional performances to adhere to social distancing requirements, or make any other changes that might be required of us due to the state of the pandemic.

Funds from this grant would go toward continuing ESYO's tradition of presenting outreach concerts to the Springfield community during our 2021-22 season. These costs include bussing for the students; supplies for teacher guides and worksheets; sheet music costs; conductor, coach, and registrar salaries; stage manager fees; and administrative costs.

2. What is the need your project addresses? What is the impact you expect to see in the community as a result of your project?

The goal of the outreach concerts is to encourage young children to consider playing a musical instrument and expose them to the world of symphonic music. When students reach middle school, many are given the opportunity to choose an instrument to play in their school band or orchestra. These outreach concerts provide youth a chance to see musicians and their instruments in action as well as show children – and let them hear - the excitement of playing with an ensemble. Although we've made due during the pandemic, there is nothing quite like a live performance, which can be so much more impactful than a recording.

ESYO measures the success of the individual concerts in several ways including: number of students and schools reached; student reaction during the concert, teacher feedback, and other personal communications with audience members. We also evaluate the concert preparation process by meeting as a staff afterward to discuss how the concert went, and how we might be able to improve it in the future. Probably the most important feedback comes from the teachers and students. We ask teachers to fill out an evaluation form, which has always been very positive. Each teacher is asked to evaluate every element of the performances including choice of repertoire, programming, pre-concert arrangement, teacher guide, and the post-concert worksheet. The ESYO staff uses this information to improve the concerts for the following year.

In the past, the school districts would provide bussing for students to attend outside events/field trips. But as school district budgets continue to be reduced, many schools have to provide their own financing for any more than one field trip per year. The feedback we have heard from teachers over the years is that the transportation costs are a prohibitive factor in attending the outreach concerts, especially from lower SES schools. ESYO partners closely with our area schools and is committed to financing bussing for all interested schools, so that teachers can include the outreach concerts in their field trips for the year, without having to use their limited school budgets. This makes the concerts accessible to all.

3. Describe how your project represents, preserves or celebrates the historic, cultural and/or ethnic diversity of the community and its traditions.

Orchestral music is a vital piece of our culture. With school budgets continuing to limit – or eliminate – music education curriculum, students in our area have increasingly fewer opportunities to play an instrument or learn about orchestral music. The inspiration that comes with exposure to young musicians of this caliber, playing this type of classical, orchestral music is invaluable and unique to our organization. Most children who attend the JO outreach concerts have never even seen an orchestra, or learned about what one actually is in such detail. It is especially impactful that this is a youth orchestra – and they can see what might be possible for them.

4. Explain how your project will provide access to arts experiences to residents and visitors. Please include a description of your target audience(s).

The target audience for these concerts is 1000+ 3rd-6th graders from Springfield School District 19. In March 2020, ESYO served 782 students from seven Springfield Elementary schools (Maple, Mt Vernon, Page, Riverbend, Thurston, Two Rivers, and Walterville Elementary Schools). The attendees are not limited to these schools only, as we invite all Springfield Elementary and Middle schools to participate.

The concerts are mutually beneficial to both the concert-goers and the performers, because while audience members become familiar with the orchestra literature chosen especially for these performances, members of the ESYO ensembles learn the importance of sharing their music with deserving audiences. The students also gain confidence by acting as concert narrators and performing solos or in small groups. Students also learn the value of being advocates for the arts now and in the future. The audience is consistently appreciative, and we hear from teachers afterward about the value of the event they attended, and the importance of youth musicians for inspiring others.

5. Describe your past experience in administering similar projects where you or your organization has been financially responsible for the outcome.

ESYO has been successfully running outreach concerts of this type in Eugene and Springfield for nearly 60 years. Along with our two Springfield High School concerts (which we've run for the past 23 years), we also host two concerts at South Eugene High School in Eugene and two additional concerts at area retirement communities. ESYO's outreach concerts have huge support from our area teachers, parents, and students. This is part of the reason they have been so successful for so long, and also part of the reason why ESYO has expanded our outreach to include all of our orchestras. Because ESYO outreach concerts have such a long and rich history, local school teachers mark their calendars annually and reserve slots for next year's concerts far in advance.