

Foo Foo Fest Grant Application

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Name of Organization
Pensacola Little Theatre

Organization Location
Pensacola Little Theatre | 400 South Jefferson Street, Pensacola, FL 32502

Contact Name
Sid Williams-Heath

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Name of Existing/Proposed Event
Unrequited: an immersive Romeo and Juliet affair at Pensacola Little Theatre

Date(s) of Existing/Proposed Event
11/3/2022

Additional Dates for Existing/Proposed Event (if needed)

Additional Event Date 1

Event Date
11/4/2022

Additional Event Date 2

Event Date
11/5/2022

Additional Event Date 3

Event Date
11/6/2022

Additional Event Date 4

Event Date
11/8/2022

Additional Event Date 5

Event Date
11/9/2022

Website (If any)
<http://pensacolalittletheatre.com>

Funding Amount Requested
\$48,000.00

Please provide an overview for your vision and marketing plan to promote your event
Unrequited: an immersive Romeo and Juliet affair at Pensacola Little Theatre

Pensacola Little Theatre creates the most captivating, colossal, and memorable experience at Foo Foo '22 with a building-wide storytelling of Shakespeare's classic Romeo and Juliet – immersing audiences into the story as they transcend room by room in their new roles.

Fusing the haunting halls of The Center with the vibrant storytelling of local Shakespearean masters Arrant Knavery, PLT recreates the beloved New York City-inspired "Sleep No More" concept of escapism – winding and weaving audiences floor by floor, scene by scene – as part of the iconic unrequited love story. From locals craving an interactive out-of-body experience to visitors curiously attracted to the progressive emprise that emulates the big-city concept, the only question to ask at Foo this Fall is where for ART thou.

Background

Let's call a spade a spade – Shakespeare can be an acquired taste – so when the British theatre company manifested their New York City concept Sleep No More in 2011 to fuse the cult classic tale of Macbeth with an Alfred Hitchcock noir film style of storytelling – there were hesitations. Moving masked audiences through dimly-lit, theatrically-designed vignettes – flowing room by room, interacting with performers and props in a nontraditional, immersive maze-like performance – the shadowy, anxious atmosphere was intriguing. (Yes, masked guests – long before “masks” were a mandatory thing.) At Sleep No More, these masquerade guests make their way through the fictional McKittrick Hotel for this lengthy experience – giving our interpretation options for seamlessly creating safe, comfortable, and flexible contingencies surrounding the current state of COVID in November.

Fastforward to today, the avant-garde retelling of that cult classic story has geared its own cult following, becoming of one NYC's most sought-after and driving force for tourism in the arts beyond Broadway. Praise and involvement for Sleep No More has become ever-present by celebrities like Neil Patrick Harris, Emma Stone, Leslie Odom, Jr., Evan Rachel Wood, and Aaron Paul – all of whom have appeared as guest characters in the production.

Now, from NYC to PLT, it's no secret that the little theatre makes a big statement each fall for Foo, and our Shakespearean spin is as unique as it is impressive for visitors, utilizing the mystique of The Center to walk guests through thrilling vestibules, vignettes, and a vast array of multi-sensory visuals throughout the building. From the introduction to your personal courier amid street fight to being snuck through a back door of the House of Capulet's kitchen to curate a menu for the initiation-only masquerade ball to then suddenly dancing among Capulet's guests in costume – consuming their drink, conversing to the pace of their sways in a larger-than-life Gatsby'esque soiree – you become part of the evening.

First-hand fights. Back-door divulcation. Libations with the Montagues. Juliet's balcony and bedroom. A forbidden wedding. The friar's apothecary of poison. Candlelit crypts. The blurred line between reality and fantasy encompasses your senses as you envelop into the story.

Audiences enter and maneuver an entertaining, involved, mind-bending macabre chase right up until experiencing their own taste of sin – a sin of thy lips – as they are transported to a private parlor to imbibe intimately with the group they now know as Romeo and Juliet.

Running every hour from 7-10pm, the 60-minute experience includes the interactive performance, abundant opportunity for libation, and a private group courier to lead small tours through ten venues throughout The Center. Audiences, stripped of what is usually expected of a theatrical performance, are drawn more and more to the panic the piece incites and the promenade pacing to keep them moving floor by floor to create a mesmerizing multi-sensory experience.

Note: this isn't an escape room, and the Unrequited experience is not a haunted attraction. The interactive performance is a communal experience of escapism designed to allow audiences to participate as heavily or minimally as comfortable, knowing that part of the experience is the art of breaking the fourth wall between character and patron. While the aura of the evening is romantic, dim, daunting, stimulating,

synergistic and mysterious (so... Shakespearean), the production is not intended to be sinister.

Experience Romeo and Juliet reimagined as the unrequited tale comes alive in an indoor/outdoor retelling of the cult-classic on November 3-6, 8-9 – extending through half of the entire festival to attract audiences both weekend and weekday. Serving as an anchor event and driving force to retain visitors past the weekend, Unrequited is the artistic IT factor for Foo '22. Proven by our returning out-of-town patrons each year, this experience is guaranteed to set the bar for creative happenings and bring visitors back time and time again – knowing and recognizing the quality and consistency of a PLT production. This expansion to our usual repertoire of programming, though in tune with PLT's mission and strengths for execution, offers something unique for Foo not seen at other festivals.

Target Audience, Appeal, and Marketing

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce from Cultural and Heritage Traveler Research, “Cultural tourism accounts for 81 percent of U.S. travelers -- some 130 million tourists -- who include arts and heritage in their trips each year. They stay longer and spend more money than other kinds of travelers do, contributing more than \$190 billion annually to the U.S. economy.”

Pensacola Little Theatre and Arrant Knavery are teaming up to entertain and enrich these tourists and residents with an inclusive, interactive experience like no other. When coupled with Pensacola's proven affinity for the arts, this event has the potential to capture a broad audience of ages and interests - pairing a sophisticated performance, a timeless love story, an abundance of cocktail, and a blurred line of edgy escapism as delivered only by the talent and tech found at PLT.

Whether a guest enjoys the literary work of Shakespeare, a live production, supporting local talent, the art of promenade theatre, vocal performance, the story of historic structure, or an exclusive avant-garde experience – our immersive affair captivates and stimulates the pulse of art lovers and thrill-seekers alike - targeting a diverse population of ages and demographics. From an intimate date for two to a night out with the girls, this off-the-beaten-path spin on Shakespeare entertains everyone.

The event will be marketed through traditional channels, such as direct mail, e-mail, social media campaigns, and tapping into our existing distribution lists and fundraising resources. Alongside our relationships with WEAR-TV, Ballinger Publishing, Pensacola News Journal, Cat Country Radio, Visit Pensacola, Scarlett Magazine, Emerald Coast Publishing, and other regional and visitation media outlets, PLT will utilize the distribution lists of our partners Arrant Knavery, giving us a combined reach of more than 130,000 diverse individuals.

With Sleep No More as the inspiration, which already has its own cult following, the marketing materials will give a nod to its existing brand and style of creative allure. Because of the abstract, visual nature of the experience, video marketing that speaks to the Sleep No More branding on social media will help tell the clearest story of the event. PLT's marketing director, in tandem with Calliope Films, Giant Noise, and Hummingbird Ideas, will execute a dynamic and exciting digital campaign specifically for Foo using mysterious video motifs and staged character interviews paired with Sleep No More-inspired graphics – pushing our overarching marketing theme upon the poisoned lips for all at Foo to ask– where for ART thou?

Execution

PLT and Arrant Knavery house capable staff and volunteers to coordinate large shows and events, with the dynamic and talented technical team at The Center to develop and execute the multi-floor production. More than 40 actors will portray the guests of the experience, professionally trained to move patrons room to room to interact and guide the storyline while making guests an integral part of the evening.

Because of the impeccable location of The Center and considering the event's later timeframe, guests can effortlessly enjoy neighboring events, culinary experiences, and offerings by the Friends of Foo to build a

best-of-Pensacola style itinerary to get the biggest bang for their artistic buck – prolonging their stay.

In considering safety and social distancing, the event is designed to accommodate close-knit groups to keep capacities small and continuous. Because the concept already incorporates masks into the masquerade experience, face masks can easily be incorporated into the evening if CDC, local, or state guidelines deem appropriate at the time. As one tour makes their way throughout the performance, time for deep sanitation and resetting of the venues is already built into the programming.

Measure of Success

As a ticketed event to ensure accessibility for all audiences and comfort levels, PLT will monitor attendance levels and demographical information gathered from all attendees. Assessment of the number of participants and collected survey data will measure the event's success. PLT will consider the ticketed portion of the experience for financial success. To track the effectiveness of the funds generated by out-of-town visitors, PLT will collect ZIP codes for the ticketed event and through general survey of the attendees in the post-private parlor. Considering the location and timing of our events, PLT also deems the success of neighboring businesses impacted by our performances a valid return on investment, such as dinner, cocktails, or dessert at Jackson's Steakhouse or clothing purchased specifically for our productions from Don Alan's.

Last year, PLT helped the community fall in love with the Disney-like quality projections overtaking The Center's exterior. This year, we show visitors the history, the most haunting and interesting structure Downtown, and a taste of nearly 50 local talent to share with them our Unrequited love story. And as anyone who has attended our beloved Foo throughout the years knows – when PLT shows up, we show out. Thank you for considering what we know will be one of the biggest, most memorable Foo projects for years to come.

Budget Requirements - Grant may not cover more than 85% of program budget. Budget amendments must be approved in advance. Please upload your budget and ANY other supporting documents.

PLT_FooBudget.pdf

Certification: Sign your name - By signing my name here, I certify that I have read and agree that all statements contained herein, and in the application submission, are true and complete to the best of my knowledge, and I agree to the terms of this grant program as outlined in the guidelines. I also certify that submission of this funding proposal is authorized by the applicant organization's Board of Directors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sid White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Sid" is written in a larger, more prominent script, while "White" is written in a smaller, more compact script. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line that spans the width of the page.