

"Mister Chairman, members of the committee, for the record my name is Carolyn Valacich. I am the Grants Administrator of the Glacier Symphony Orchestra and Chorale located in Kalispell MT and serving a large rural area of NW Montana.. I am testifying on behalf of grant number # 2424 requesting funding for:

-- Operational support to be focused particularly upon Education and Outreach programs for students in NW Montana.

In addition to a robust concert schedule, the Glacier Symphony (GSC) mission prioritizes programs in the region designed to serve teachers and their students in rural schools struggling to recover from the past two years of isolation. The funds being recommended for our organization in this session will support the GSC's Education and Outreach "Youth Music Experience" (YME) programs such as described here.

Guest artists who are engaged to perform with the orchestra are also contracted to provide an interactive concert experience for an estimated 1,200 students from public, private and home schools each year. These programs are free to schools and students.

But, as schools returned to the classroom this past year, the GSC recognized that something more was needed. Teachers were being challenged to simply provide basic education requirements and struggled on a daily basis to provide meaningful experiences in the arts for their students. In response, this past spring of 2022, the GSC expanded the impact of the Youth Music Experience and initiated a completely free program which took small ensembles made up of principal musicians from the orchestra on the road. With partial support from a NEA Challenge America grant, the regions targeted for this series of interactive musical educational programs were Eureka to the north, and some 100 miles south of Kalispell to ten (10) K - 12 schools of Polson, Ronan, St Ignatius, Charlo, all located on the Kootenai/Salish/Pend d' Oreilles Tribal Lands of the Flathead Reservation. This program reached some 2,900 students in 10 elementary, middle and high schools on the reservation over the course of a week. We received over 50 evaluations from teachers and school administrators. They were asked to rate the program content, artistic quality, interaction and engagement with the students, value of educational materials provided, etc. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being low and 10 high, the lowest score given was a 7 and over 90% of the evaluations rated the programs at a 10! As one teacher commented following a program, *"They played beautifully, and we didn't want it to end!"*

Moving forward, based upon the initial success of this program, in spring 2023, plans include expansion of ensemble touring to the east of Kalispell into rural schools and communities such as Columbia Falls, Coram, Hungry Horse, West Glacier and on to schools in East Glacier, Browning, and Heart Butte on the Tribal Lands of the Blackfeet Nation.

On behalf of the Glacier Symphony, I thank this committee and the Montana Legislature for providing funds through the Cultural & Aesthetic grant program which supports positive experiences in the arts such as described here. The GSC believes such programs should be an integral part of the life of every child. We look forward to continuing to serve our constituents, both student and adult, by sharing the gift of "live" music in schools and performance halls of Montana.

GLACIER SYMPHONY
SPRING TOUR 2022 QUOTES

Representing 10 schools and 2,900 Elementary, Middle & High School students
in Polson, St. Ignatius, Ronan, Charlo, & Eureka.

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

I liked when we would have to guess what song was being played.

My favorite part was when they played 'In the Hall of the Mountain King.'

I liked the songs they played and the energy they had.

The music sounded amazing despite even though there were only a few instruments.

They were really professional and responsive to questions.

I liked how they were all on beat and together.

I wanted to hear more!

HIGH SCHOOL:

I liked their ability to play.

They were very calming.

I liked their music and their talent.

TEACHERS:

The musicians were great interacting with the students. They shortened pieces to help keep the kids' attention but still gave them a good taste of what that piece sounds like.

I liked everything! From the music, to the explanation of the music, to the questions at the end!

It was great to have classical music in our school.

The musicians were very talented.

I loved the time that they set aside to answer questions and engage students in between song selections. They played beautifully, and I didn't want it to end!

Great choice of selections for a student audience.

Just awesome music!

I like the types of classical music that was played which I have heard before and always enjoy.

The music was a nice change of pace for students from words, thoughts, and assignments. Having students learn something about culture is very important.

GLACIER SYMPHONY

Photos of children participating in ensemble tour performances Q&A and Instrument "Petting Zoo" following concerts.

-March 2022

