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Miller Arts Scholars - Minigrant Proposal
October 9, 2020

Funding to Submit to Film Festivals

Overview:

I am seeking funding to cover the application costs of submitting my short film, “All That Grief,” to student film festivals. It’s a personal, documentary-style account of being a person in theater looking at the magic put on a stage from the past. In addition, I use a musical theater song that is essential to the plot of my short film, so I will additionally need to purchase the song rights. I expect the song not to cost an unreasonable amount, as I am a small, independent creator with no intention of profiting off the film.

Background:

This past semester, I worked alongside Mona Kasra, the Drama Dept. professor of Digital Media, to create a 360 film as part of her MEAD Virtual Reality Research Team. However, due to COVID-19 and being sent home by the university, our team got separated. Nevertheless, we continued to create work on our own over the summer. She sent each of us our own 360 cameras and film equipment, guiding us over Zoom from our concepts to a finished product.

I am proud to say that I found a topic I was deeply passionate about and produced an 8-minute short film in Virtual Reality. When I was back home in the Spring, my high school theater teacher unexpectedly passed away. The film focuses on my experience returning to my high school, exploring the empty hallways, auditorium, backstage, and on the catwalk. Interlaced with my narration are accounts of what happened here and its impact on my life. I included audio of my old theater teacher and clips of a performance (hence, the essential musical theater song I need for my story).

Mona found the project deeply moving and suggested that I submit it to student film festivals. Many of these festivals have a category dedicated solely to Virtual Reality/360 films, and I believe I will find great success in sending it under this niche genre.

Funding Plan

With the help of Mona Kasra, we will select the best student film festivals to submit the film to, which are listed here: <https://filmfreeway.com/festivals> . Thankfully, there are hundreds to choose from around the country, many of which have moved to a virtual format, so nothing is impossible to attend. In fact, some festivals have a category specially titled “Covid-19 Inspired,” which I could apply to as well. Additionally, most festivals have application due dates throughout the year tied to the season, so timing is not an issue.

The entry fees can range from around \$10-\$100, so it’s tough to give an exact number of how many festivals I’ll be able to apply to with this grant. It seems there’s an average cost of around \$45, so I will aim for that price when selecting my festivals. This will hopefully allow me to apply to a solid number of around 5-10 festivals.

However, I do anticipate the rights to my song, *Magic to Do* from Pippin, to take about a half or more of the grant. I’ve already reached out to the licensing holder from ASCAP (<https://www.ascap.com/>). The type of license I’ll need to get is a synchronization licensing, which is obtained directly through the copyright owner (Stephen Schwartz). Thankfully, I will

only need to get the rights from the music creator and not the record company, as my film doesn't play a record company's version of the song, but audio from my own high school's production. I already have the contact information from his publisher, Jobete Music Co Inc. (tel: 615-726-8300), to seek permission to use the song. If they let me, and the cost seems reasonable, I'll purchase it with the Minigrant.

If all else fails and I cannot get the song rights or it is an unreasonably high cost, I will re-edit my film and try to replace the music with something cheaper or in the public domain. The acquisition of song rights is a complicated process, but an essential skill to get for a career in film or theater production.

Summary:

I wish to share a small, personal piece of art I made over the summer with the public. I hope to gain feedback from experts or recognition in the form of certificates or awards that I can use on my resume and propel my career in film. I go into this film festival process humble but hopeful, knowing that whatever the outcome, I will learn the process of submitting to film festivals and will attend them virtually- witnessing other films that can inspire me. Afterward, I'll continue to perfect my film technique and focus on stories I'm passionate to tell. Finding my voice as a filmmaker is a life-long process, and this is a big first step.

Timeline:

October 2020

- Research film festivals with Mona Kasra
- Inquire about song rights to Jobete Music Co Inc.
 - o Potentially re-edit the sound of my film if unsuccessful or too costly

November 2020

- Prepare & submit applications throughout the month

November & December 2020

- Attend film festivals virtually. Learn from watching other people's films.
- Get feedback from industry professionals on my film
- Make connections with other filmmakers and potentially win an award

Budget:

Expense	Description	Total (Estimates)
Application Fees	Can range from \$10-\$100 per film festival; I will aim for the moderate to low range. The amount of festivals applied to will be dependent on the money left over from the song rights.	Low end: \$250 High end: \$500
Song rights for "Magic to Do" from <i>Pippin</i>	May or may not happen. Depends entirely on the permission/cost from Jobete Music Co Inc. I assume it'll be the majority of the minigrant.	Low end: \$250 High end: \$500 (if more, I'll take the song out)
Total Cost:		\$500