

## Mequon Nature Preserve, Inc. Summary Report

### **Information about the Applicant**

Mission: The Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (MSO) engages and captivates diverse audiences through acclaimed musical performances and inclusive education and community experiences of exceptional quality.

The MSO is the largest performing arts organization in Wisconsin, featuring 72 professional musicians and a 170-voice volunteer chorus that deliver more than 135 world class artistic, community, and educational performances each year to thousands of children and adults statewide. Since 1959, the critically celebrated MSO has earned its reputation for artistic excellence in the presentation of time-honored and contemporary classical concert repertoire.

A pioneer among American orchestras, the MSO has performed world and American premieres of works by John Adams, Roberto Sierra, Phillip Glass, Geoffrey Gordon, Marc Neikrug, and Matthias Pintscher. Since beginning in 1971, the orchestra's nationally syndicated radio broadcast series, the longest consecutive-running series of any U.S. orchestra, has grown to reach more than two million listeners on 147 subscriber stations in 38 of the top 100 markets each year. The MSO was also the first American orchestra to offer live recordings on iTunes.

As Milwaukee's hometown orchestra, the MSO is committed to community engagement and partnerships that will improve the quality of life of the people we serve. The full public opening of the new Bradley Symphony Center (BSC), the MSO's first dedicated home, provides new means for direct collaboration including free opportunities like Doors Open Milwaukee and expanded professional development support for local teachers.

The MSO seeks \$10,000 from Wispact Foundation to support the purchasing of program supplies and to provide ticket scholarships for attendees of the MSO's second annual Sensory Friendly Concert in April 2023.

### **Statement of Need**

Funding support from the Wispact Foundation will be utilized two-fold:

1. \$3,000 of the Wispact grant would go toward the purchasing of additional needed sensory friendly materials (fidget toys, bean bag chairs, Sensory Kits and a Mobile Sensory Station from KultureCity) for use by individuals with sensory disabilities at the Sensory Friendly Concerts or other MSO events.
2. The other portion (\$7,000) of funds will be utilized as a scholarship to provide free and reduced-cost tickets to the Sensory Friendly Concert for disabled patrons and up to one companion. Wispact Foundation funds will allow the MSO to provide more hands-on supplies to disabled patrons who attend the Sensory Friendly Concert, and any other concert hosted at the Bradley Symphony Center this season. Also, subsidizing the cost of tickets to the Sensory Friendly Concert will provide an opportunity for people with disabilities to attend an MSO concert and can connect with the performing arts in ways they may not have had the opportunity to do so in the past. As the Sensory Friendly Concert is a newer program for the MSO, in order to create accessibility across the board ticket prices are much lower than a standard concert. Wispact's support will help the MSO work toward its objective to provide an inclusive experience for individuals with sensory accommodations or other disabilities.

### **Project Goals and Expected Benefits**

The MSO's objective for its Sensory Inclusive Programming is to provide an inclusive and seamless experience for patrons of all events, especially those with sensory needs. We strive to raise awareness of the needs and challenges faced by individuals with sensory processing disorders by supplying our staff and volunteers with continuous training and by offering the resources and accommodations below to our guests.

According to a 2017 study, there are currently between 5% to 16.5% of the general population who suffer from symptoms associated with sensory processing challenges (Miller, Schoen, Sullivan 2017). The MSO sees Sensory Friendly Concerts, and future sensory friendly programming, as a way to expand arts performances to be sensory accommodating. The MSO wants to create a space in which those with sensory disorders and other disabilities can feel safe to enjoy live musical performance and have fun doing it. By partnering with other organizations who support those with disabilities and sensory needs, the MSO will be able to increase accessibility to the arts for those who may currently not have access.

Funding from the Wispact Foundation would improve the experience of people with disabilities at the MSO's sensory friendly programming as well as help the MSO build partnerships with the larger disability community & increase the number of attendees at Sensory Friendly Concert.

### **Project Implementation Plan**

The fourth concert on the 2022.23 Family Concerts series is a Sensory Inclusive performance. In the 2021.22 season, the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and Bradley Symphony Center partnered with KultureCity and Mary Stone from Stepping Stones Educational Services to improve our ability to assist and accommodate guests with sensory needs, and to certify the Bradley Symphony Center as a 'Sensory Inclusive Venue'.

Accessibility features available at all MSO concerts include accessible seating and restrooms, hearing loop & infrared listening system, braille & large print programs, quiet rooms & quiet areas near the theatre, and service animals are welcomed. In addition to these elements of the Bradley Symphony Center, guests can view the MSO Social Story online and download the KultureCity All-Inclusive App prior to attending a concert.

Additional Sensory Friendly Concert Modifications:

- MSO Social Story for Symphony Spring Break
- Dimmed house lights remain on during performance
- On stage hosts will prepare and guide audience through concert
- Flexible seating and relaxed house rules
- Available sensory kits and noise-reduction headphones
- Free activity bags including fidgets
- Family-friendly food concessions
- Trained MSO Ambassadors on site to assist patrons
- Flexible refund policy if patrons are unable to attend

### **Evaluation Plan**

Program success is determined by ticket sales, proportion of the hall sold as compared to capacity, and earned revenues, as well as quality of the performance and reviews. Feedback from last season's Sensory Friendly concert was extremely positive! Both staff & patrons enjoyed the concert as well as the pre-concert activities. Program success last season was also measured by comparison to the MSO's

sensory friendly consultants’ expectations; 250 patrons was the threshold for positive turnout, and the MSO concert doubled that initial goal. The MSO will also solicit feedback from program partners and attendees for the 2023 Sensory Friendly Concert. Links to the concert recordings and accompanying critical reviews as requested.

**Budget**

<b>Revenue</b>			<b>\$143,360</b>
	<i>Single Ticket Sales</i>	\$5,000	
	<i>Wispect Foundation Request</i>	\$10,000	
	<i>Additional Grant Funding</i>	\$40,000	
	<i>MSO General Operations Budget</i>	\$88,360	
<b>Expenses</b>			
<b>Artistic</b>	<i>Orchestra services, artist fees, extra musicians</i>		<b>\$106,300</b>
<b>Box Office/Facilities</b>	<i>House managers, ushers, cleaning services, security</i>		<b>\$2,960</b>
<b>Marketing</b>	<i>Direct mail, online, administrative costs</i>		<b>\$7,500</b>
<b>Production</b>	<i>Music rental, stagehands, keyboard tuning</i>		<b>\$3,250</b>
<b>Education expenses</b>			<b>\$7,350</b>
	<i>Sensory Friendly Supplies (sensory kits, headphones, fidget toys)*</i>	\$270	
	<i>Mobile Sensory Station &amp; Equipment Disinfection System*</i>	\$2,675	
	<i>Quiet area supplies (fidget toys, bean bags, etc)</i>	\$405	
	<i>Other education program expenses</i>	\$4,000	
<b>Staff</b>	<b><i>Production &amp; Education Staff expenses</i></b>		<b>\$16,000</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>			<b>\$143,360</b>

**Staff Recommendation**

The grant application can be recommended in the amount requested of \$10,000.00. The Wispect Foundation funding would be split; \$3,000 would be utilized in the purchase of more sensory friendly materials, including KultureCity Sensory Kits & a Mobile Sensory Station, fidget toys, bean bags, and noise cancelling headphones. \$7,000 of the Wispect Foundation grant would go toward a scholarship fund to provide free and reduced-cost tickets to the Sensory Friendly Concert for disabled patrons and up to one companion. The expenses align with the initiatives of the foundation.