Final Report for Visiting Scholar Grant

Dr. David Cutler  
Director of Music Entrepreneurship  
School of Music  
dcutler@mozart.sc.edu  
412.425.9531

Principal Investigator for:  
Visiting Scholars Grant  
**A Brass Quintet in Residence: The C Street Brass**  
$25,000 award

The School of Music is extremely grateful for a Provost Visiting Scholars Grant that helped fund two residencies at USC during the 2014-15 academic year by the brass quintet C Street Brass. This ensemble, from Pittsburgh, PA, is quickly growing into national and international prominence, and we could not have impacted our community without the support of a granting program like this. The first residency was scheduled from September 20 to 27, 2014, and the second was from February 11-18. During these visits, they made a significant impact on USC and the greater Columbia community.

Each residency included at least one major performance. On Sep. 24, C Street’s Recital Hall concert was packed, with all the seats filled, people standing in the hall wings and aisles, and even extra seats placed on the stage. After a variety show representing a number of styles, the featured work on this program was the world premiere of *Rhapsody in Purple*. Joined by USC faculty member David Cutler on piano, this choreographed re-composition of George Gershwin’s famous work *Rhapsody in Blue* was modeled after the original, but written with more virtuosic brass and solo parts that spanned a wider range of styles. As with all C Street performances, this was memorized, which gave the group freedom to move while performing. At one more humorous moment, the pianist broke out into a gospel dance while members of the group ignited an ad hoc circus, jumping rope, riding a bike across stage, and juggling. (Incidentally, this historically significant performance will be repeated again in January 2016 as the kickoff to Chamber Music America’s national conference in New York City.)

The second visit included two public performances. On February 14, they performed a multi-movement concerto with USC Symphonic Winds at the Koger Center. This event was part of Band Clinic, and reached an audience of 500 high school students from across the region. Their full-length concert on February 17 at the Johnson Performance Hall featured Baroque music, the Beatles, tango, and a suite from Leonard Bernstein’s *West Side Story*. 
When C Street Brass adds guitar, saxophone, and DJ, they are transformed into a larger group called Beauty Slap. Performing what they call “electro-brass-thunder-funk,” this band combines a horn section with electronic dance music. During each residency, Beauty Slap performed one sold-out show at Conundrum Music Hall. Audiences consisted of musicians as well as fraternity/sorority members and other young audiences with little prior experience to such sophisticated music.

C Street was also involved with a number of community engagement activities. During both visits, they worked with Richland One schools delivering multiple workshops to elementary and middle school students bussed in from across the district. These friendly events featured a combination of playing and talking about music. They were treated like rock stars, with hoots and hollers from an excited audience. They played a children’s concert at the Richland Library called “Plink, Rattle, Toot!” This event, open to the public, featured original music by USC student composers written specifically for them. As they played, a librarian read books in ways that corresponded to the musical underscore, including one that was about an African-American child growing up in South Carolina.

While the previously mentioned engagements were geared towards kids, C Street also worked with older populations. During both visits, they met with New Horizons Band, USC’s community ensemble made up of members over age 50. It was amazing to watch these enthusiastic amateur musicians interact with C Street, building relationships and finding inspiration in their music. During each rehearsal attended, C Street performed, coached and conducted the large ensemble, and also worked with their big band.

A final aspect involved engaging USC students in a number of ways. During their residencies, C Street:

1. Led discussions with undergraduates during School of Music seminars, addressing topics such as rehearsal technique, professionalism, and career advice;
2. Coached the trumpet and trombone ensembles;
3. Conducted a brass master class;
4. Presented a fascinating lesson to an ethnomusicology class of non-music majors, discussing their history as an ensemble;
5. Taught a session of the class “21st Century Performer,” which focused specifically on life as a freelance musician;
6. Offered a master class for composers on writing for brass instruments;
7. Performed and recorded a number of one-minute pieces written by USC student composers.

Finally, C Street recorded their version of *Rhapsody in Purple*. While this is still in the editing phase, it will be a long-lasting representation of their collaboration with USC.

Needless to say, the two C Street residencies were busy, but incredibly high impact. In summary, the audiences impacted were:
1. Audience members at various concerts
2. USC music students in classes and workshops
3. USC non-music students in classes
4. Public school students from Richland one at community engagement events
5. High school students from across the region at band clinic
6. Senior citizens working with New Horizons
7. Families who attended the library performance

Grant money was used to cover the following expenses:
• Stipend to C Street performers for residencies
• Payment to extra members of Beauty Slap
• Recording
• Accommodations for group while in town
• Travel
• Some meals
• Marketing

Bringing chamber groups like C Street Brass to USC is extremely important and valuable to our community. Thank you again for this Provost support of such a meaningful project.