May 31, 2016

RE: Letter of support for Theater with a Mission grant application

Dear Grant Reviewer:

I write on behalf of Mission San Luis (MSL) in support of Theater with a Mission’s (TWAM) grant application. Our staff has worked with TWAM for several years to revive Spanish Golden Age drama presented in our living history village. These performances have been well-received by our museum visitors.

Mission San Luis is a National Historic Landmark located on a 65-acre archaeology site and living history village that preserves our area’s Spanish and Apalachee colonial heritage from 1656 to 1704. Mission San Luis was the second-largest Florida mission and village. It was the capitol of western Florida where Native Americans and Spaniards lived together in an evolving Hispanic culture of intermarriage and shared customs.

Today, over 50,000 visitors, many of them local schoolchildren, walk through our recreated council house, church, settler’s home, fort, and more. They learn of Florida’s significant history by talking to costumed village educators, listening to the ring of the blacksmith’s hammer and smelling traditional foods cooked over open fires. Here at Mission San Luis, history comes alive every day.

Last year, the MSL-TWAM partnership produced and presented an original play/historic re-enactment of an Apalachee Indian and Spanish militiaman wedding during our annual “Share the Love” weekend event. It received enthusiastic accolades from the more than 600 visitors in attendance.

This dramatic interpretation of an Apalachee – Spanish wedding was presented in our 17th century village church. (This church reconstruction is fully functional and hosts a Catholic mass every year.) Pre and post wedding festivities were dramatized throughout the Mission village, engaging visitors in an authentic Spanish frontier frolic. We intend to continue this period drama for years to come.

Mission San Luis is looking forward to hosting the world premiere of TWAM’s new living history play, and that the Mission supports developing The Mystery of Cardenio. It will help everyday people today understand more about how English-speaking culture interacted with Spanish-speaking culture in the 17th century.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Blount
Executive Director
robert.blount@dos.myflorida.com

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Spanish Florida encompassed over 100 missions. As the western capital of La Florida, Mission San Luis (1656-1704) was one of the largest and most important of these settlements.

The Friends of Mission San Luis, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose purpose is to provide financial and administrative support to the programs and activities of Mission San Luis.
June 3, 2016

Florida Department of State
Division of Cultural Affairs
500 S Bronough St
Tallahassee, FL 32399

I am writing in support of Theater with a Mission’s application for a Specific Cultural Project, Discipline-Based (Community Theatre) Grant with the Division of Cultural Affairs.

Theater with a Mission is an asset to the events and programs in the Florida state parks we manage. In 2013, they brought their performances to San Marcos de Apalache Historic State Park in support of our International Archaeology Day event. The performances were well received and the troupe did a wonderful job of bringing some of our history alive in a meaningful way for children and adults alike.

We tried to bring the group back to the park in subsequent years, but were unsuccessful due to budget restrictions on both their end and ours. We have rebranded and grown the archaeology day event, now calling it “Forts, Flags, artiFacts! A Celebration of Archaeology and Heritage!” How wonderful it would be to have Theater with a Mission as a part of this event that also includes a living history timeline, children’s activities, non-profit groups, state and federal agencies, and guest speakers. In addition, we are in the planning stages for a storytelling event at Lake Talquin State Park. This event would be the perfect place to showcase the talents of these wonderful actors.

We are responsible for seven state parks and one state trail in Leon, Jefferson, Taylor and Wakulla Counties. Four of our parks are on the National Register of Historic Places. We continue to add programs and events at each of these, and Theater with a Mission definitely could fill a niche in those programs and events, assisting us in increasing visitation to these lesser known parks. We fully support their application for this grant funding.

Please let me know if I may provide additional information. I may be reached at 850-925-6216 or terri.messler@dep.state.fl.us.

Thank you!

Terri Messler, CPRP, CIG
Park Services Specialist
May 29, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

We want to write this letter on behalf of THEATER WITH A MISSION, INC., recommending them not only as a theater troupe with immense talent, but also for the role they play in educating the public of Florida and beyond. Their plays are about the early history of Florida, specifically when the settlers from Spain were coming to Florida in the early 1600s.

We had asked them to perform as a program for one of our luncheons in 2015. It was absolutely perfect; long enough to tell a story, but short enough for a wide range of attention spans for our age group of adults. Everyone was thoroughly entertained. El Muerto was a wonderful comedy, drawing much laughter. Because people were still commenting on how exciting it was to have such a professional group for our program, we asked them to come again and perform a new play, El Retablo de las Maravillas, Where Only the Pure See Miracles!, in February 2016. It was equally entertaining and in the future we look forward to seeing more plays by this troupe.

For anyone considering using THEATER WITH A MISSION, INC. as a program or entertainment, please don’t hesitate. They create plays with an authentic feel of the period through dialogue, costuming and even some Spanish, easily interpreted through acting. Their plays are suitable for small or large audiences.

Thank you for your attention.

Ann Todd
Church Administrator
atodd@advent-church.org
850-386-5109
May 30, 2016

Grants Program
Florida Division of Cultural Affairs
R. A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250

Ref: Support Letter for Theater with a Mission

Dear Grants Program:

The Fort Mose Historical Society is pleased to support Theater with a Mission’s grant application to the Division of Cultural Affairs.

Since June 2012, Theater with a Mission (TWAM) has performed plays from the Spanish Golden Age at the award winning annual Battle of Bloody Mose at Fort Mose Historic State Park. These include:

- 2012 – Scenes from El cerco de Numancia by Miguel de Cervantes;
- 2013 – Scenes from Nuevo Mundo by Lope de Vega
- 2014 – La Gloria de Espana, a TWAM composition of battle scenes from the Spanish Golden Age; and

At the Battle of Bloody Mose this year, June 18th, TWAM will present one of their newest productions, Miguel Cervantes’ El Retablo de las Maravillas (Where Only the Poor See Miracles). As TWAM has done in each of the previous four years, the play befits the commemoration of the June 26, 1740, battle at Mose that turned the tide against the British during the 1740 Siege of Saint Augustine. The Spanish desperately needed a “miracle” and they got it when they defeated the British encamped at Mose in a surprise attack.

At each commemoration, TWAM portrays a Spanish Theatrical Troupe on tour in Cuba that has made a side trip to Saint Augustine at the request of Spanish Florida Governor Montiano to help raise the spirits of a city fearing an imminent attack by the British colonies of South Carolina and Georgia. They become trapped in Saint Augustine in late spring and summer of 1740 when British forces besiege the city. Nonetheless they continue to do their best to bring levity to what is otherwise a desperate situation for the people of Saint Augustine.

Their performances are a highlight of the annual Battle of Bloody Mose commemorations. Their artful use of Spanish and English, humor and drama and interaction with the audience have delighted

A 501(c) (3) • P.O. Box 4230 • St. Augustine, FL 32085 • 904.823.2232 • fortmose.org
Facebook: Fort Mose Historical Society • Twitter: @FortMose • Instagram: @FortMose
audiences over the years. Visitors have given TWAM the highest marks for their performances – ranking them a near perfect 5.0 on a scale of 1 to 5.

This year we are fortunate to be able to help fund TWAM’s participation at the Battle of Bloody Mose through a Mini-Grant to Florida Living History from the Florida Humanities Council.

Like us, TWAM relies on grant and private funding to bring its rich cultural and educational theatrical performances to audiences not only in Saint Augustine but throughout Florida. A grant from the Division of Cultural Affairs will be an invaluable source of support to TWAM as it reaches out to Florida audiences with its growing repertoire of plays from the Spanish Golden Age.

We are pleased, privileged and honored to offer our support and endorsement of their grant application to the Division of Cultural Affairs.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Richard L. Shortlidge, Jr. Executive Board Member and Grants Committee Chair
Fort Mose Historical Society
To Whom It May Concern:

I am the Manager of the Woodville Branch Library, a part of the LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library System. Over the past few years, our branch has helped sponsor the Woodville Founders Day Festival. Each time, we have been privileged to have Theater With A Mission (TWAM) do two performances; we look forward to having them perform again, in the future.

In the past, we have had roughly 400 to 600 folks come through the library doors during the six hours we are open for the Festival. Audiences for TWAM range from fifty to one hundred attendees for each performance. I believe these performances give audiences a greater appreciation for Florida history, culture and the arts. It would be amazing for the troupe to be able to tour once more to other small, rural Florida communities!

I am asking the Florida DCA to consider TWAM when awarding grant monies. Whenever they perform here in Woodville, you can hear a pin drop, which I consider a testament to their performances, as well as how thirsty people are for live theater. This troupe deserves your consideration and support.

Respectfully yours,

Verna

Verna L. S. Brock

Woodville Branch Manager
LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library System
8000 Old Woodville Road
Tallahassee, FL 32305
(850) 606-2925
brockv@leoncountyfl.gov

"People Focused. Performance Driven."

Please note that under Florida's Public Records laws, most written communications to or from county staff or officials regarding county business are public records available to the public and media upon request. Your e-mail communications may therefore be subject to public disclosure.
The Crooked River Lighthouse Lantern Fest has been drawing around 300+ people to our modest-sized park. The popularity of this event is growing thanks to the wonderful performers who have found the autumn evening event an opportunity for enchantment! On this night we celebrate the birthday of the lighthouse and display a glowing lantern, like candles on a cake, for each year of the tower's age; now coming up on it's 120th. The party includes beautiful hand made lanterns, theatrical performances, an annual "glow -in -the dark" dance performance from the Tallahassee Community College Dance Company, delicious food, tower climbing and open house in our Keeper's House Museum and Gift Shop.

The Carrabelle Lighthouse Association has been thoroughly impressed with the professionalism, fabulous costumery, historical authenticity and superb acting of the THEATRE WITH A MISSION group. They are just what we are looking for in terms of outdoor theatrical performances and as an event planner, I can't express the value of knowing that I can trust them to do an excellent job! They engage the audience, are loud enough to be heard, and have great comedy and contagious enthusiasm.

I look forward to working with them again. We take pride in networking with local talent and are happy to have developed some lasting partnerships with great companies like THEATRE WITH A MISSION and Tallahassee Community College Dance Company. I hope to see them expand and cover many time periods of Florida History.

Joan Matey
Curator/Program Director
Crooked River Lighthouse Museum,Gift Shop & Park
1975 HWY 98 WEST
Carrabelle Beach, FL 32322
(850) 697- 2732
www.crookedriverlighthouse.org
Join the Carrabelle Lighthouse Association!
Florida Division of Cultural Affairs
Grant Committee

Dear Cultural Grant Committee,

I am pleased to offer this letter in support of Theater with a Mission (TWAM) and its efforts to educate, enlighten and entertain the public through living history performances.

I understand that TWAM has applied for a grant to support putting TWAM on tour in 2017-2018. Grant support would go a long way to help TWAM increase its reach to a broader audience, increasing the impact of its cultural efforts.

TWAM’s performances have brought Florida’s history to life for the past two years at the Le Moyne Chain of Parks Art Festival as TWAM actors have portrayed Jacques Le Moyne, Florida’s first known artist. Through a Le Moyne Living History Encampment located within the annual fine art festival, TWAM, along with other historically minded partners, engage the public in a highly entertaining and educational experience. The festival draws between 22,500 – 55,000 visitors over the two days.

I look forward to a long partnership between the art festival and TWAM as we refine the historical message, add deeper content and develop a following for the encampment living history experience; all in an effort to enrich the life of Floridians and visitors to Florida with the stories of early times in La Florida.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kelly S. Dozier
Festival Director
May 31, 2016

FL Division of Cultural Affairs

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Theatre With a Mission performed their Play of the Magi Kings for us in January of 2015. The event was held at the Leon County Public Library and over 100 members of the public attended. One of our members gave a short talk on the Kings Cake tradition which is celebrated in our time, but rooted in the story of the play.

The play was delivered partly in the original, medieval Spanish which helped to convey the constant change this uniquely human phenomenon - language- undergoes. Everyone that attended left with a deeper sense of our connection to the past, and specifically, of Florida’s past.

We collaborated again this spring in acquiring materials for the Jaques LeMoyne Encampment for which they appeared in period costumes. We hope to do so in the future - educate the public about the rich cultural heritage of Florida. We are grateful for this resource and encourage their support.

Sincerely,

Mary Bradford
President
Division of Cultural Affairs  
R. A. Gray Building  
500 South Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Panhandle Archaeological Society at Tallahassee (P.A.S.T) to endorse the grant proposal by Theatre with a Mission (TWAM) entitled “Touring La Florida with Plays from our Spanish Past.”

P.A.S.T. is a 501c3 organization and a chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society. P.A.S.T.’s primary purpose is to promote greater appreciation of the Tallahassee area’s cultural resources. The Society was formed in 1999 and has over 85 dues paying members who are both professional and avocational archaeologists. P.A.S.T. presents monthly programs to the community, organizes special events and outreach and conducts archaeological research in the area and engages in advocacy, among other activities.

We know firsthand that TWAM provides a valuable element to our cultural community by increasing the public’s understanding of our Spanish past in a unique and fun way. When the Florida Anthropological Society’s 2012 meeting was held at Mission San Luis TWAM worked with PAST to design a successful performance and audience interaction specifically appropriate for that purpose. Additionally, TWAM has performed for local meetings of PAST and in numerous venues in the area including the Tallahassee Senior Center. TWAM’s productions are lively, visually attractive and educational. TWAM’s portability and ability to adapt to circumstances will enhance their capacity to successfully export this excellent product to a wider area.

Sincerely,

Lonnie Mann

Officer, Panhandle Archaeological Society at Tallahassee

*PAST board members employed by DHR abstained from approving this endorsement
May 27, 2016

To the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs:

Theater with a Mission has performed for my congregation twice in the past, engaging us in encounters with Florida’s history through Lope’s (small) New World in 2013 and El muerto, or Better Wed than Dead in 2016.

We found these performances excellent in quality and unique in impact, captivating our church family, opening new doors on cultural history, and encouraging conversation.

As a Cuban-American, I loved hearing the plays performed in a blend of English and Spanish, building bridges between people from different cultural traditions and captivating audiences of all ages.

As a theater fan, I applauded the way that TWAM’s performances are enriched with all the magic of live theater, including colorful historic characters, authentic costumes, ear-tickling music, and eye-catching dance.

As a pastor, I appreciated TWAM’s family-friendly productions of highly entertaining, thought-provoking plays from the Spanish Golden Age – plays that could actually have been performed in Spanish La Florida – and I admired TWAM’s practice of presenting dynamic introductions to each performance, transporting audiences back through time, giving them a sense of the play’s place in history, and highlighting great ideas.

We found Theater with a Mission easy to work with, professional in demeanor, and well equipped to tour. TWAM’s visually appealing, transportable costumes and sets played equally well in our gym as a stand-alone performance, and in our social hall as dinner theater.

I strongly urge the Division of Cultural Affairs to support TWAM on tour. Theater with a Mission’s performances at John Wesley United Methodist Church have enriched lives in Leon County. I look forward to seeing TWAM tour to Polk County as I move to a new assignment this summer.

Many blessings, and thanks for your support of TWAM,

Rev. Armando J. Rodríguez, Jr., Ph.D.
e-mail: pastor@johnwesleyumc.com