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Virtual Music Festival Blueprint

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Buffalo State
The State University of New York, Buffalo
Department of Creativity and Change Leadership

Virtual Music Festival Blueprint
by

Jo’Vanni Maynard

An Abstract of a Project in Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2021

Virtual Music Festival Blueprint

My Master's project is focused on the development of a virtual music festival geared towards giving exposure to local musicians in the Buffalo Area. Buffalo has an immense pool of talented musicians across various genres along with an avid passion for music which is present in nearly every aspect of the city's culture. This depth of talent would allow for a virtual music festival for the citizens of Buffalo where they can be introduced to artists of various genres and cultures creating a sense of unity and a break from the current struggles of the pandemic. The blueprint I will provide in this project is a guide and will include steps necessary to effectively put on a virtual music festival.

Jovanni Maynard

Your Signature

5/11/21

Date

I would like to acknowledge Aristotle Copeland for his continuous help and inspiration throughout my project. I would like to say thank you to Dr. Susan Keller- Mathers who has done an amazing job teaching this course and has helped me to progress through my project. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. John Cabra, Dr. Gerard Puccio, and Dr. Selcuk Acar for the tireless work they have put into the Creativity and Change Leadership program. This program has allowed me to discover myself in ways I never knew possible. I could not thank you all enough for guiding me through this journey.

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Dates of Approval:5/11/20
Susan Keller-Mathers

Name of Project Adviser
Academic Title

Jovanni Maynard

Name of Student
Student

Permission to place this Project in the Digital Commons online

I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State college permission to place a digital copy of this master's Project (insert title) as an online resource.

Jovanni Maynard

Name

5/11/21

Date

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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Music is a driving force in this world and its impact on everyday life is hard to ignore. It is nearly impossible to avoid music as it is present nearly everywhere we go such as on TV, in our cars, in stores, at work, on our phones, and in the streets. Throughout history music has revealed its positive impact on society and has had the ability to help with depression, decrease stress, be used to express creative and innovative ideas, improve sleeping habits, encourage happiness, and unite communities. Music has shown time and time again that it has the ability to change the world.

I have continuously felt the impact of music all of my life. It has been the most effective stress reliever and control method I have encountered and has influenced my life in more ways I could never have imagined. Artists such as Led Zeppelin, Jim Hendrix, The Beatles, David Bowie, ASAP Mob, Janis Joplin, Bob Marley, Trippie Redd, Prince, Pink Floyd, Young Thug, and Tyler The Creator, have been major influences in my life. I believe that an artist's work gives insight into their own creative minds and their own personal experiences which in many instances I have been able to relate to and understand. Music has also encouraged me to educate myself about cultures other than my own and has led me to understand that each person's life path is different and that acceptance and understanding is important for a thriving society.

Since moving to Buffalo from Queens five years ago I have been exposed to a hotbed of culture and creative thinking. What has intrigued me the most about Buffalo is the diversity of the individuals who reside here and the impact of music which is widely exhibited throughout

the city. My first realization of the impact of music within Buffalo was my observation of the abundance of record stores here. Prior to moving to Buffalo I had never shopped at a record store and had rarely seen one. I have met individuals who are very aware of music history and whose passion for music is easily detectable. Live performances by local artists seem to be a tradition and have exposed me to various artists in multiple genres such as rock , hip hop, Jazz, R&B, classical, and soul. The depth of musical talent in the City of Buffalo is deep and these artists deserve a platform to showcase their talents and in turn expose their fellow artist and other Buffalonians to culture and music they may not be familiar with and create a sense of unity within Buffalo.

The purpose of my project is to create a blueprint for a music festival showcasing Buffalo artists. Music festivals have been used for years to unite communities, expose artists to new audiences and for general entertainment and enjoyment. Festivals throughout history such as The Newport Jazz Festival, Woodstock, The Monterey Pop Festival, Lollapalooza, and Coachella have not only given fans the chance to experience new artists but have been driving forces in social and cultural change. A music festival for local Buffalo artists whether organized in person or virtually due to pandemic will give artists the opportunity to show off their creative talents and potentially bridge the gap between the diverse communities that coexist within Buffalo. Multiple challenges will be posed in the development of the festival such as securing permits , securing a virtual platform, finding sponsors , booking artists , food and beverage, merchandise vendors , film crew, security , seating, and ticket pricing. The rationale for this project is to provide a platform for artists to exhibit their creative talents and supply an encouraging environment where

Their creativity can develop and flourish and a clear cut blueprint that myself or a successor would be able to follow.

My personal goals for this project include:

- To gain knowledge and insight on festival planning and organizing.
- To Build connections with various local Buffalo artists.
- To build a platform for artists to showcase their talent.
- To develop and foster my CPS abilities and implementation skills.
- To bridge the gap between various
- musical styles and cultures within Buffalo.

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE & RESOURCES

There are various works of literature that provide direction in planning and organizing events such as concerts and festivals whether it will occur in person or virtually. These pieces have been instrumental throughout my process of building this blueprint. Below is a list of these works:

Preston, C. (2012). *Event marketing: How to Successfully Promote Events, Festivals, Conventions, and Expositions 2nd Ed.* Wiley Global Education.

In this work Chris Preston provides strategic marketing plans that are essential to planning a successful event. Preston provides readers on information of what event planning entails and provides marketing strategies from both a “ conceptual and practical” standpoint. The work discusses marketing events such as festivals, corporate and social events, and also covers e-marketing strategies for digital events and provides readers with real world case studies.

Harris, R., Allen, J., O’Toole, W.(2010). Festival and Special Event Planning. Wiley & Sons Incorporated.

This work provides an outline of the theory and procedures that relate to festivals and special event planning. The book discusses the role of marketing and communication, environmental planning, the increasing role of governments through the creation of event strategies, and the different perspectives of event management.

Fenich, G. (2018). Meetings, Expositions, Events and Conventions: An Introduction to the Industry, 5th Edition. Pearson.

This work gives an overview of the field of planning meetings, expositions, events, and conventions. It entails the work of the industry's most noteworthy educators and practitioners. And also provides case studies related to the point.

Chappell, L. (2020). Virtual Event Survival Guide: Plan, Build, and Host Successful Online Events. Laura Chappell University.

In her work Laura Chappell provides instructions for readers to plan, develop, and host a virtual event from start to finish, compare and host live, simulated live, and hybrid events, add interactive elements, and how to effectively market online events to attendees and exhibitors and sponsors. Chappell also provides multiple checklists for readers including platform checklist, agenda checklist, session checklist, speaker checklist, exhibitor checklist, sponsor checklist, and testing checklist.

INIT Live. (2021). The Complete Step by Step Festival Planning Guide for 2021.

https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.initlive.com/blog/festival-planning%3fhs_amp=true

Accelevents.(20221). What to consider when planning a festival.

Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.accelevents.com/festival-planning/amp/>

SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

In order to properly organize a music festival there are various steps I must take. First I will research locations such as parks and open spaces and also research permit requirements for these spaces and whether an in person festival is allowed to take place during the pandemic. I may acquire the assistance of event coordinators in organizing the show. I will then research potential social media and online streaming platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Vimeo, Zoom, and Periscope, that would provide a setting for a virtual festival to occur in case of COVID restrictions. I have also considered a potential format where genres would be divided into a breakout room style and attendees would be given the option to select which room they would like to attend. I will then reach out to local businesses to infer interest in sponsoring the festival. The next step in planning would be to reach out to various local artists. I will use previous connections along with social media to get in touch with artists who may be interested in performing in the festival. I hope to obtain at least 5-10 performers. The festival would last 2 days with each performer having an 1 hour set.

The main goal of this project is to create a platform for local artists to showcase their talents and gain exposure to the public. By doing this I hope to unite the Buffalo community and give Buffalonians the opportunity to experience styles of music that may be new to them. I want to build connections within the community for potential collaborations for other possible events in the future. In order to achieve my desired goals I plan to follow my created timeline and continuously track my progress using several deliverables.

Project Timeline

1. Collect all resources and information. Deadline: February 18,2021.
2. Get into contact and build connections with local artists. Deadline: February 25, 2021.
3. Develop an action plan for festival planning and reach out to event coordinators for assistance in planning. Deadline: February 26,2021.
4. Contact local businesses for potential sponsorships. Deadline:March 3, 2021.
5. Scout locations and obtain information on permit requirements. Research and obtain information on potential online platforms for virtual festivals due to COVID. Deadline: March 5,2021.
6. Contact food and merchandise vendors for the possibility of an in person festival. Deadline: March 20,2021.
7. Obtain information on security requirements. Deadline; March 26,2021.

- 8.Establish Festival location and date. Deadline: April.
8. Complete project and write up . Deadlines:
 - Revision of Sections 1-3, April 19,2021
 - Submission of Sections 4-6, May 3, 2021
 - Submission of completed Master's Project, May 9, 2021
 - Submission of completed Master's project to digital commons and presentation of project, May 10,2021 or May 13,2021.

Evaluation Plan

Goal: To gain Knowledge and insight on festival planning and organizing.

Evaluation: I will evaluate the success of this goal by how well I succeeded in the completion of planning the festival and the establishment of a potential date.

Goal: To build connections with various local artists.

Evaluation: This goal will be evaluated by whether I am able to get in contact with various artists and by whether they agree to participate in the festival.

Goal: To build a platform for artists to showcase their talents.

Evaluation: the success of this goal will be evaluated on whether the festival is able to occur.

Goal: To develop and foster my CPS abilities and implementation skills.

8

Evaluation: This goal will be evaluated on my ability to solve challenges and complete tasks during the process of developing my project .

Goal: To bridge the gap between various musical styles and cultures within Buffalo.

Evaluation: This goal will be evaluated by whether the festival is enjoyed by the audience and by new relationships being built within the community.

Section 4: Outcomes

The first step in carrying out my project was establishing a venue or online platform for the festival to take place. My research into COVID restrictions and guidelines led me to the conclusion that if the festival is to occur it would have to take place on an online streaming platform. The city of Buffalo would not allow a permit for such an event to take place in person at this time. My search for a streaming platform concluded when I learned about ZapLife. ZapLife is a black owned streaming app which was launched late last year in the midst of the pandemic as a response to the boom in online entertainment and to give minorities an opportunity to share their ideas and talents in the tech industry which had been mainly dominated by White and Asian males. The app is fit to stream events such as protests , concerts and festivals, fitness classes. educational classes and fashion shows. 90% of ZapLife employees are Black and Brown women and have focused on “ introducing a new stream of revenue for anyone with a cool idea in the digital space brought to you for us and by us .” The ZapLife app possesses various aspects and details that assures me that it would be a great fit for my potential festival. These features include , the ability to create and schedule an event, name the event, set the start and end time of the event , assign the event a category , allow others to RSVP to the event , create and search hashtags to share on other social media platforms and the ability to invite special guests. The app allows up to seven people to livestream simultaneously which would allow the audience to interact with the performers. Virtual gifts are an option with the platform which can be exchanged for money. Lastly the app allows the organizer to determine whether the event is free or to charge attendees a fee and features its own cryptocurrency system

that can be cashed out into real money. The myriad options and the capability to have up to 1 million participants in an event makes ZapLife my platform of choice for my virtual festival and I am confident the use of ZapLife would yield successful results.

The next step in my journey was finding artists who would be interested in performing in the festival and to build connections within the music community. I first attempted to reach out to Anthony Billoni but received no response after multiple attempts . I then contacted a friend named Aristotle who has been making his own music since his high school days . Aristotle performs in the genres of hip hop & R&B. My discussions with Aristotle provided me with an artist viewpoint on how I should go about organizing my festival and gave me a better look into the music scene of Buffalo. Aristotle first shared with me an experience he had attending a music festival in downtown Buffalo before the COVID pandemic occurred. Aristotle discussed the genres of music and culture that were exhibited at the festival such as Chinese Folk Music, Jazz , blues, rock , and hip hop, with sections being created for each genre. While talking about the format of my festival Aristotle suggested potential breakout rooms where audience members could determine what genre or what artist they would be interested in listening to during the festival as a result of the different music taste of different individuals. I attempted to incorporate these suggestions into my platform search but no platform I discovered other than Zoom allows the creation and use of breakout rooms. Aristotle also gave me a peek into his personal studio and how he writes and produces his own music. Unfortunately after multiple attempts to reach out to various artists , Aristotle was the only artist that I could secure to perform if the festival

was to take place in the future. In order to increase the number of potential performers I have created a calling all artist flyer which I am prepared to post on social media or post throughout the streets of Buffalo. The flyer includes information on the festival and reiterates that the festival will be held virtually. The date of the concert on the flyer is TBA and I provide my name, email, along with my phone number. The release of the flyer will hopefully yield positive results.

The success of my virtual festival is highly dependent on community support. This is an event for the Buffalo community and in order to gain support and get the word out I have prepared a letter to send out to local Buffalo business owners in hopes of gaining their support for the event and for potential advertisement opportunities. The letter details the different aspects of the festival and I briefly explain my rationale and reasoning for organizing this event which is to increase cultural awareness and unity in Buffalo. I also provide a brief description of the ZapLife app and how it is used. Business owners who participate would also be allotted time during the festival to introduce themselves and discuss the various services they have to offer to the community. Partnering with local businesses could not only spread the word of the festival and give the people of Buffalo something positive to look forward to in these trying times and also help the growth of local Buffalo businesses and allow them to show the community the services they have to offer.

Section 5: Key Learnings

Completing this project has given me the opportunity to gain key learnings and insights that I believe will stick with me and affect how I will approach other creative projects in the future.

:Content Learning

In a sense I dove into this project completely blind as an avid music fan with no experience in either the music industry or in concert and event planning. Even with the unknown ahead of me I was eager and excited to put my creativity skills to the test and realize what I could accomplish. At the start of my project I was preparing my blueprint to be geared towards an in person festival that not only included performances but also, merchandise vendors, food and beverages, and fun attractions such as face painting and personal portraits drawn in person by artist. A piece of literature that I examined early on in my project was Leonard H. Hoyle's "Event Marketing". Hoyle examines event planning and gives tips to organizers on how to market their event to ensure it runs smoothly and is successful. Proper marketing and advertising techniques are essential to a successful event. It is stated that "Marketing should integrate all of the management decisions so that they focus on the goals and objectives of the event as well as those of the sponsoring organization itself"(Hoyle, 2002). I considered this quote when constructing my letter to local business owners. A major goal for my project was to increase unity within the Buffalo community and having local businesses involved with the festival would help to do this. The goals and objectives of the business owners may align with those of the festival organizer because owners would be able to display what services they offer to the community and display how proud they are to run their business in Buffalo. In a festival where attendees pay

a small admission fee, a business that has struggled financially due to the COVID 19 pandemic may find some relief through a cut of the money that is raised. In the early stages of my project I also dove deep into INIT Live's online step by step guide for festival planning. I found this specific resource to be both valuable and to have an abundance of useful information due to the fact that INIT Live has "helped hundreds of event organizers manage their stage and volunteers" (INIT Live, 2021). The first step this guide led me to was setting the goals I hoped to accomplish by throwing the festival. I was encouraged by the guide to keep my goals high but also realistic. The main goal I formulated through the guide was the desire to have musicians of multiple genres performing in the festival so that audiences would have the opportunity to experience new culture and art that is unknown to them. I was then led to consider how I would promote and advertise the festival. My main platforms I would use to advertise are twitter, facebook, instagram and through flyers posted throughout Buffalo. One of ZapLife's features which allows the creation of a hashtag and the sharing of the hashtag to other platforms would allow people who are interested in attending the festival to quickly gain information. I was asked by the guide to consider my budget and how I would expect to pay for the expenses an in person festival would incur such as, "Venue rental cost, talent or entertainment cost, catering and associated logical cost, sanitary facility cost, staffing and volunteer management, health and safety measures, equipment rentals, and security and local authority permits.(INIT Live, 2021

While researching local permit requirements I discovered that the city of Buffalo is not issuing permits at this time for events such as concerts and festivals. This caused me to change gears and focus on planning my festival to be completely virtual. Although I may not be able to put on an in person festival in the near future I was able to accomplish my goal of gaining knowledge and

insight into festival planning and organization. I now know how much work goes into planning an event and I highly respect festival organizers for their determination in overcoming the various challenges they face in organizing a successful festival as well as ensuring audience enjoyment.

Process Learning

When it came time for me to carry out my action plan, various items on my checklist scouting locations, gaining permits, contacting food and merchandise vendors, and obtaining information on secure requirements, were crossed out due to my focus being switched to a completely virtual festival. Through my various meetings with Aristotle I was able to build a connection with a local artist and what their outlook on the Buffalo music scene is like. During our talks I realized that Aristotle enjoys the variety that the Buffalo music scene has to offer and his willingness to perform and showcase his own gifts and talents shows how hungry the artists in this community are. I am deeply appreciative of Aristotle who not only opened my viewpoint of the Buffalo music scene but also introduced me to new genres such as Chinese Folk which I will be happy to explore in the future. Aristotle also welcomed me into his personal home studio where I was able to observe two other local musicians recording a song produced by Aristotle. I was able to watch the complete process of song making from the production of a beat, to the recording of the vocals and finally editing. I was deeply immersed in the entire process as I watched art being created before my eyes. I was aware that an immeasurable amount of work

went into perfecting a song and being able to sit in a studio gave me the full experience. By planning this festival I am giving artists like Aristotle the chance to show their passion for music.

COVID 19 restrictions have forced me to plan my festival virtually and has perhaps made the possibility of the festival occurring much more likely as a result of the elimination of permit requirements, food and vendors, and security. I turned to Laura Chappell and her guide on hosting successful virtual events for next steps. Chappell provides a checklist in her writing that includes, "Platform checklist, Agenda Checklist, Session checklist, Speaker checklist, Exhibitor Checklist, Sponsor checklist, and Testing checklist." (Chappell, 2020). I first searched for my virtual platform with the preference of the platform having breakout rooms that would allow for multiple artists to perform at once while giving the audience the choice of genre they would like to hear. I quickly discovered that no other streaming platform offers this other than Zoom. I discovered ZapLife through various social media posts of a virtual concert being organized by rapper Dave East. I attended some of the concerts and was impressed by not only how smoothly the app ran but also by how organized the concert was. These factors led to ZapLife becoming the streaming platform of choice for my festival. Finding this platform awarded me the new experience of learning how to set up a virtual festival. The features of the app that I found most intriguing is the ability for participants and audience members to broadcast video at once. This would allow for the musicians to interact with their audience as well as build connections and their own fanbases. The app allows you to set a start and end time for your event and also allows you to pick a one or two host layout. A VIP room option is also present in the app which I would use to communicate with artists during the festival. Lastly the app allows me to set event admission to free or paid which would be important for potential sponsors. The audience would

pay the admission fee with Gems which is the cryptocurrency for the app. Discovering this platform and the options abilities I had with planning my own event gave me insight into how organizers have continued to put on successful events in the midst of the pandemic.

Key Insights

Completing this project has allowed me to discover new details about my own creativity and problem solving skills. Throughout my project I faced various challenges that I successfully overcame. When faced with challenge of finding sponsors I created a letter to local business owners and when faced with COVID restrictions I was able to find a platform to hold the festival virtually. My ability to come up with solutions to these challenges exhibit how my creative problem solving skills have improved and developed since starting the CRS program. The skills I have learned in the CRS program have essentially prevented my project from derailing as a result of the ability to brainstorm and formulate various solutions to a challenge or problem. This project has also tested my openness to novelty as a result of nearly every one of my experiences during this project being new. The highlight of my experiences during this project was being able to attend the studio session with Aristotle where during this time I had to keep an open mind and be willing to embrace something outside the box. I believe the skills I have gained during my time on the Creativity and Change Leadership program will follow me and continue to impact my personal and professional life.

Section 6: Conclusion

A major goal I had going into this project was gaining insight into how a festival is planned and executed. Completing this project has given me that knowledge and has led me to realize the creativity and problem solving skills that go into event planning. Anything can happen at any moment and it is required for festival planners to be on their toes to prevent their event from derailing and being unsuccessful. The CRS program would be highly beneficial for individuals with careers in event planning due to how unpredictable their profession can be. As I stated earlier the highlight of the project for me was attending a studio session. I observed the free flow of creativity and the ability of artists to pinpoint and determine what goes into making a great song. Witnessing the creative personalities of the artist and how they relate closely to the course content of the CRS program and the creative personalities of some of my classmates show that creativity is endless and is essential in nearly every aspect of life. What I see myself doing next is taking steps to making my festival a reality. I plan on furthering my connections with the artist I have met. I also plan to post my “ Calling all Artist” flyer on various social media platforms and will be posting printouts throughout Buffalo. I have scouted multiple local businesses who could be potential recipients of my sponsorship request letter and when I Have acquired more performers will be sending the letters out. If I am unable to bring the concert into reality myself I believe the blueprint can be passed on and followed by a potential successor. In the future where COVID restrictions are hopefully lifted I would like to shift planning of the festival to once again take place in person depending on the success of the virtual version.

References

- Preston, C. (2012). *Event marketing: How to successfully promote events, festivals, conventions, and Expositions* 2nd Ed. Wiley global education.
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Appendices

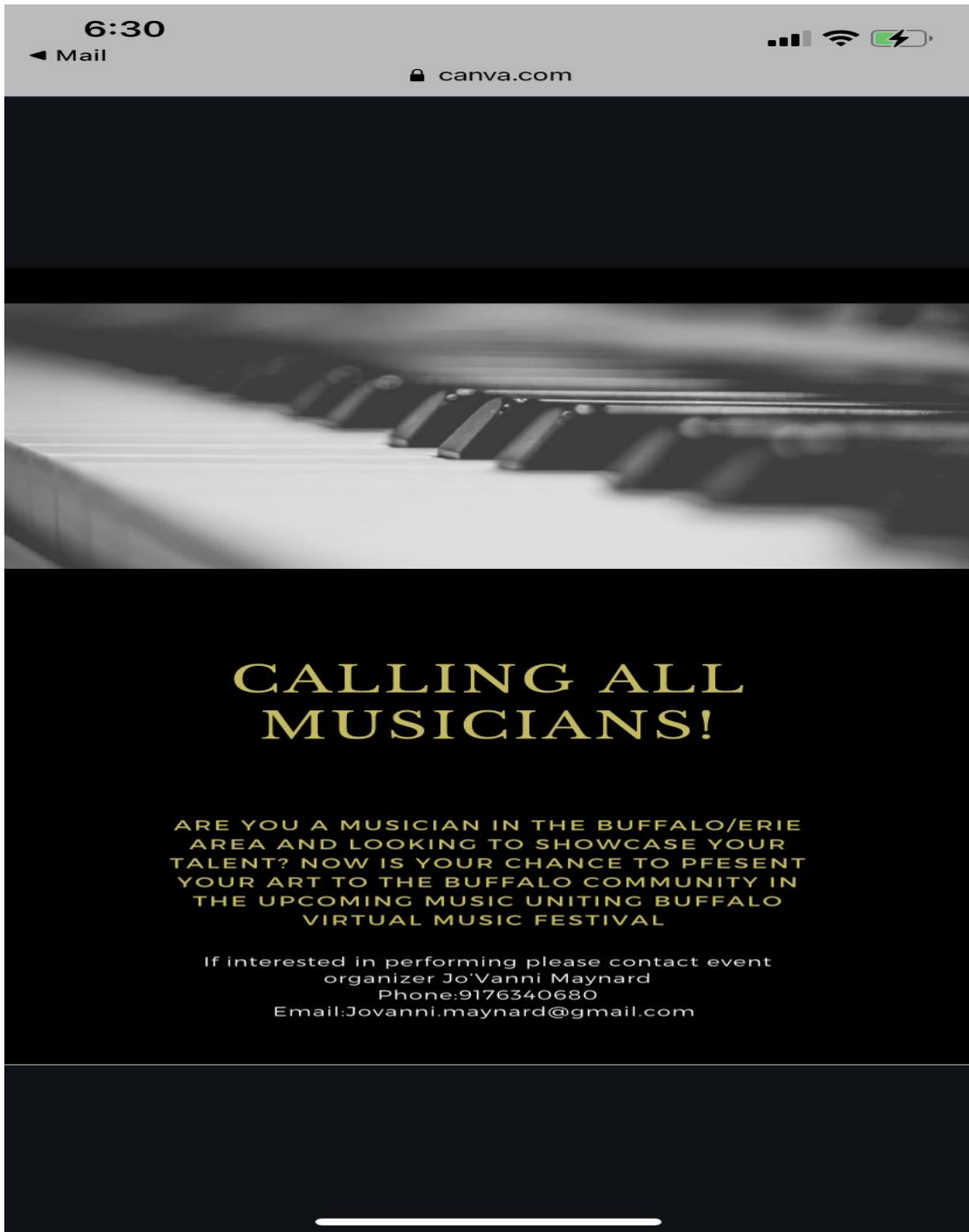
Appendix A: Calling All Artist Flyer

Appendix B: Sponsorship Request Letter

Appendix C: ZAPLife Event Creation Page

Appendix D: My Musical Inspirations

Appendix A



Appendix B

Jo'Vanni Maynard

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Buffalo, NY
(917)634-068
maynarjc02@mail.buffalostate.edu

April 5, 2021

Dear Buffalo Business owners,

Hello my name is Jo'Vanni Maynard and I am a student at the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College. I am writing you this letter to request your support for a virtual music festival geared towards giving exposure to local artists in the Buffalo area. I am planning this festival to take place some time in the future and with your support will help to provide an outlet for Buffalo talent to showcase their skills and also provide advertising and local awareness for your business. The concert will take place on the Zap life app which is easy for viewers to download and in this challenging time of the pandemic allow viewers to experience live music and raw talent that exist within their community. Since moving to Buffalo five years ago I have experienced first hand the love for music this city has and this festival will help to bring the community together and provide a much needed break from the challenges we have experienced in the past year. Please notify me if you would like to take part in the festival. You can reach me at maynarjc02@mail.Buffalo state.edu,

Take care and be safe!,

Sincerely,

Jo'Vanni Maynard

Appendix C

