



30 July 2014

Arts, Parks, Health, Aging & River Committee
Attn: Chair, The Honorable Mitch O'Farrell
200 No. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Submitted via: email

Re: Griffith Park Performing Arts Center MND Appeal

Dear Chairman O'Farrell & Committee Members:

Symphony In The Glen (SIG) is one of the organizations that present free events at the Old Zoo in Griffith Park. SIG has provided free, high quality, innovative classical music concerts in that spot since 1996. Over that time thousands of low-income children and families have had their first taste of live symphony music at our events. Our history, and the history of the Independent Shakespeare Co., of presenting events at this site provide a unique measurement of average usage for cultural events at the Old Zoo.

As such, it is our hope that the Arts, Parks, Health, Aging and River Committee will carefully weigh the validity of the appeal that comes before you on August 4, 2014.

We feel it important to address four of the most questionable statements conveyed by the Appellants in their notice letter.

Appellant Claim #1: "Audiences of up to 5,000 people"

Throughout the MND document the highest anticipated attendance is cited at 2,500. This indicates infrequent and exceptional peak attendance. Actual, historical attendance numbers average between 900 and 1,200. Therefore, the citation in the Appeal of an average attendance of 5,000 is pure invention that bears no relation to reality.

- MND Pg. 35 under Project Operations: "...the proposed project would not increase the frequency or audience capacity of these existing events."
- MND Pg. 85 under Operational Noise: "because the proposed project would not increase the frequency or audience capacity of these existing events, the noise levels that are normally generated at the project site by these annual events would not be increased as a result of the project".

Appellant Claim #2: Wilderness Area/Gray Fox and Bats

Noticeably, Appellants provide no independent, third party citation to support the validity of their wildlife impact claims. Additionally, it should be noted that the "Griffith Park Natural History Survey" is not a scientific study but a volunteer driven project generated largely by the Appellants. The one existing, third party study, Dan Cooper's Griffith Park Wildlife Management Plan, provides no guidance on assessing the validity of Appellant's claims.

- Gray Fox: Ultimately, natural predators such as coyotes and P22 are greater hazards to the Gray Fox than are occasional classical music performances.
- Bats: Again, no independent confirmation is provided by Appellants including specifics as to the location of bat populations/foraging ranges in relation to the Old Zoo.

Appellant Claim #3: "An increase in the attendance or frequency of performances would reduce the Old Zoo Area's tranquility, especially for picnickers and passing hikers." The MND document clearly states, "... the proposed project would not increase the frequency or audience capacity of these existing events..." Again, there is a guiding precedent regarding this concern. Performances at the Old Zoo have peaceably co-existed with hikers and picnickers for nearly twenty years. Please keep in mind that performances are held in the evening, starting at 7:00 PM (as the sun is setting) and ending by 9:00 PM (Griffith Park closes at 10:00 PM). Therefore, daytime tranquility remains unchanged. The vast majority of hiking & picnic activity takes place in the daytime. It also helps to consider that the 4600 acres of Griffith Park contain 53 miles of hiking trails, only two of those trails start at the Old Zoo.

Appellant Claim #4: “Considering its likely environmental cost, Appellants believe the Project is unnecessary.”

Throughout the process, the Appellants have repeatedly stated this opinion. We ask the Committee and City Council to see this for what it is: an opinion; one held by a small number of self-appointed folk who collectively represent only the narrow views of the boards to which they belong. These groups have claimed in previous letters that ample performance spaces already exist, however, not one of the facilities they have cited can accommodate regular, free, outdoor, park performances with lawn seating. All of the venues cited are inside proprietary, independently run facilities and are therefore incompatible with an established use which prompted the need for this wonderful project.

We appreciate the opportunity to add to the discussion as you deliberate on this matter and we trust to your wisdom to sort fact from fiction when making your decision.

Sincerely,



Barbara Ferris
Managing Director
Symphony In The Glen
symphonyintheglen.org

cc: The Honorable Tom LaBonge
The Honorable Joe Busciano
The Honorable Gilbert A. Cedillo
The Honorable Curren D. Price