

2018 PROGENY SHORT FILM FESTIVAL REPORT

BY W. TRENT WELSTEAD

2018 Progeny Team

Festival Director

W. Trent Welstead

SOPA Faculty Chair

Susanna Rinehart

Faculty Advisor

Charles Dye

SOPA Business Manager

Dan Morehead

Judges

Kacy McAllister

Karl Precoda

Stephen Prince

Rachel Weaver

SOPA Marketing and

Publicity Manager

Susan Sanders

General Manager of The Lyric Theatre

James Arthur

Co-Organizers¹

Shannon Clarke (F)

Allison Lee Craft (F)

Jimmy Jaffee (F)

Trent Neely (F)

Jackson Noe (F)

Vincent Ruggieri (F)

Alex Salvato (S)

Laura Schneider (F)

Caleb Smith (F)

Program Designer

Rebekah Seiler

Certificate Designer

Katie Watanabe

¹ (F) indicates that the student assisted during the Fall 2018 semester, whereas (S) indicates Spring 2018.



The Progeny Short Film Festival at The Lyric Theatre. September 22nd, 2018.

General Preface

This report has been created by request of Virginia Tech's School of Performing Arts (SOPA), as a means of ensuring consistent organization and high quality execution for future iterations of the Progeny Short Film Festival. In this respect, it functions as somewhat of a hybrid piece, containing both formal documentation alongside personal suggestions for new staff members, and any supplemental material I felt was necessary to include for their purposes. Furthermore, certain sections of the original version provided to SOPA have been abridged, edited, or omitted altogether for public viewing, so not to disclose confidential information. I hope the following material proves helpful to anyone who's interested in the logistics of organizing a short film festival.

5 Reviews ★★★★★ Respond to Reviews

| | | | |
|----------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Overall Rating | ★★★★★ | Communication | ★★★★★ |
| Quality | ★★★★★ | Hospitality | ★★★★★ |
| Value | ★★★★★ | Networking | ★★★★★ |



aaron curtis

I had a lot of fun at the Progeny Short film festival. It was a great experience and my documentary Fighting Two Wars: The Story of Thalia Jane Ainsley was selected for Best Short Documentary and Audience award.

Helpful

September 2018

2018 Progeny Short Film Festival FilmFreeway Review

Total SOPA Budget: ~\$1,900

- Lyric Rental: **\$905**
- Awards Money (-1)²: **\$650**
- Photographer: **\$100**
- Gillie's Post-Show Reception: **\$100**
- Flyers + Poster Printing: **~\$60**
- Awards Certificates Printing: **~\$10**
- Award Frames: **~\$40**
- Mailing Framed Certificates: **~\$50**

Total SOPA Cost: ~\$1,915

2018 FilmFreeway Submission Money Generated: **\$374.91**

- Program Graphic Designer: **\$125**
- Virginia Tech Printing Services [200 Color Programs]: **\$271.68**
- Award Certificate Graphic Designer: **\$30**
- Best Animated Short Film Award: **\$100**

Total FilmFreeway Cost: \$526.68 (Seasonal Total + \$151.77 From Previous Years)

² See the *Awards* section on Page 16 for a thorough explanation of the 'minus one' element.

Website & Facebook - (<https://www.facebook.com/progenyfest>)

There was once an official website for Progeny. It may have been *progenyfest.com* or *progenyfilmfestival.com*. I'm not quite sure. We opted not to utilize the website for Progeny 2018. The website itself probably hasn't been updated since 2016, and may in fact be deactivated altogether. If the next Festival Director wants to resurrect the use of an official Progeny website, they'll want to contact former Faculty Advisor, Dien Vo. He will be able to provide any information pertaining to that website, since he used to oversee its design from roughly 2014 to 2016. Regarding maintenance of the official Progeny Facebook page, the previous Festival Director must enable the new Festival Director to manage the Facebook page as an Admin.



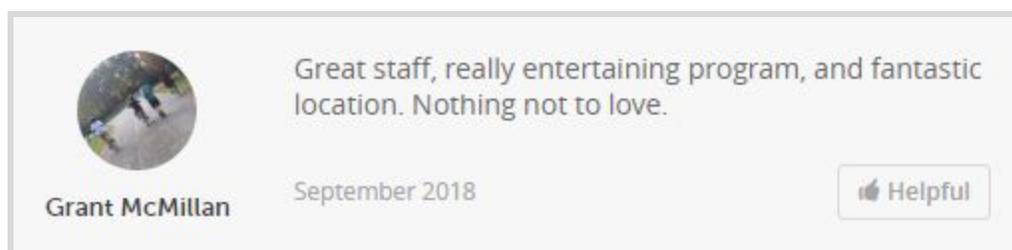
Patrons awaiting the start of the 2018 Progeny Short Film Festival.

LOGISTICS

Runtime: [7:00pm - ~9:30pm]

2 Hours + 15 Minute Intermission + Award Announcements

This is a standard event run-time, designed to attract the most audience members. It's preferable to allocate time for an intermission for anything over 90 minutes, in my opinion. Including an intermission provides patrons with the assurance that they will have a reasonable break. Without knowing an intermission will occur, patrons are more likely to exit and enter the theater in between or during films, which is never ideal. Hosting an event earlier than ~7:30pm runs the risk of losing audience members since anything before that overlaps with common dinner times. Nevertheless, since we're aiming to have a post-show reception afterwards, and we want to host the event as early as possible so we don't lose student patrons wishing to participate in late night weekend recreation afterwards, 7:00pm to ~9:30pm seems reasonable.



2018 Progeny Short Film Festival FilmFreeway Review

Reception (Gillie's Restaurant)

*"We have \$100 in the budget to fund anything pertaining to a post-show reception for the participating filmmakers."*³

[~9:30pm - ~10:30pm]

Logistically, this is one of the last aspects of the festival which needs to be finalized, regarding official reservations. However, the Festival Director and/or Faculty Advisor should figure out whether or not they want to have a post-show reception of some type, as soon as they are assessing the budget, and how much of the funds they wish to allocate towards those purposes.

We opted to have a reception at Gillie's Restaurant, which lasted roughly one hour following the conclusion of the event. There were complimentary hors d'oeuvres and desserts. Visitors were also able to purchase drinks, but we did not have the funds to allocate towards an open bar. This was remarkably more successful than previous receptions, but nevertheless, filmmakers and families did not stay long. The last 30 minutes consisted primarily of Progeny staff, and Virginia Tech Cinema students and faculty, most of whom were merely attempting to wait out the rain from outside. It's

³ Italicized sections indicate excerpts from the initial proposal submitted to Charles Dye in Feb. 2018.

already quite late in the night at the time in which one would naturally have a post-show reception, so turnouts are moderate at best, but still worthwhile if done properly for a low cost.



Progeny 2018 Reception at Gillie's Restaurant, mere footsteps away from The Lyric Theatre.

Event Admission — FREE!

*“There’s no need to charge an admission fee. That would **drastically** reduce audience turnout, probably to a detrimental extent. Progeny earns enough money through submission fees, and SOPA funds most of the festival anyway. If one wants a student audience, admission should be completely free of charge.”*

Judging

“We will sift through the entries between July 16th and ~August 1st, which will allow for the judges to review the filtered selections between ~August 1st and August 15th.”

Judges

Stephen Prince

Karl Precoda

Kacy McAllister

Rachel Weaver

There are many elements to consider here, subject to change based on each Festival Director or Faculty Advisor. For the most part, it’s about striking a balance between as diverse a lineup of judges as possible, while still keeping it relevant to those who have the ability to shrewdly critique cinema. Any more than four judges probably becomes overly complicated, and one could probably get away with three for an event of this caliber, but two simply doesn’t offer enough variety of input.



Judges Stephen Prince (left) and Karl Precoda (right) greeting patrons in the main lobby.

We wanted Dr. Prince and Dr. Precoda since they are both seasoned Progeny judges, longtime members of Virginia Tech’s Cinema Faculty, and each offer a unique perspective. We also sought someone from the School of Visual Arts (SOVA) on our panel, primarily because we added Experimental and Animated categories to Progeny 2018. This led to our pursuit of Rachel Weaver, at the suggestion of Charles Dye and Simone Patterson. Lastly, we brought Kacy McAllister onto our team, which conveniently rounded-out the gender representation of our panel members. Kacy serves as the Box Office and Student Engagement Manager at the Moss Arts Center, already had previous Progeny judging experience, and was a former student of both Dr. Precoda and Dr. Prince, having retained her passion for cinema over the years.

Though our panel lacked minority representation, it was nevertheless fairly balanced in terms of gender representation, and all judges had considerable experience, knowledge, and an evident passion regarding the craft of cinema. This is arguably the most important factor in determining who shall judge the entries of a short film festival.



Progeny Staff (left) and Filmmakers (right) conversing before the start of the event.



Filmmaker Christopher D. Lusk (*Prosperity*) awaiting the start of the Progeny Short Film Festival.

Submission & Judging Timeline

The submission fees do not affect SOPA's primary funding for the Progeny Short Film Festival. Any money we've generated from past entries sits in the Progeny FilmFreeWay account, for use at a later date. Therefore, each Festival Director or Faculty Advisor may choose the submission prices at their own discretion. It's common practice to have several waves or gates of submissions, each becoming incrementally more expensive than the last. This encourages people to submit earlier, rather than later, in order to take advantage of the lower cost. It's also common practice to offer a discount for students at any stage of submissions, which they verify by emailing a picture of their valid university identification to the official festival email. I recommend making the first wave of submissions **completely free** for students. This significantly increases the amount of films submitted.

SUBMISSIONS OPEN (April 15th)

EARLYBIRD (May 15th Deadline)

\$5; Free for Students (with valid University ID)

REGULAR (June 15th Deadline)

\$10; \$5 for Students (with valid University ID)

FINAL (July 15th Deadline)
\$15; \$10 for Students (with valid University ID)

NOTIFICATION DATE
August 15th

EVENT DATE
Saturday, September 22nd, 2018



Festival Director W. Trent Welstead (right) interacting with the cast and crew of *Disconnected*.

The filmmakers should be notified whether or not their submissions have been accepted or rejected **at least one month** before the event date. This gives them plenty of time to make travel arrangements if they want to attend. It also allows for a manageable amount of time for the festival organizers to handle everything that can't otherwise be executed until the official selections are determined. The most difficult element of this small window, even with one month, is determining the award winners in a fair, professional manner, creating the programs, preparing the certificates, and creating the awards presentation.



Caitlyn Murray (*Eclipse*) and Aaron Curtis (*Fighting Two Wars: The Story of Thalia Jane Ainsley*) at Progeny 2018.

There are many different ways to judge the films. We opted not to use the FilmFreeWay judging system, but rather, created our own rubric and asked the judges to simply respond to our questions from that specific rubric. No matter how the films are assessed, it's critically important for the appropriate festival organizers to somehow perform a preliminary vetting of the entire batch of submissions. The extent of this is dependent on the number of submissions received each year. The official judges shouldn't be asked to review more than a few hours worth of film. It doesn't necessarily take a long time for the official judges to review the films, but they should know exactly *when* they will receive the films, and when they're expected to deliver their results, months in advance. There are preferably two distinctive *waves* of judging—determining official selections for screening from the batch of already-vetted films, and then determining award winners from the official selections.

The 2018 Progeny Short Film Festival received 117 submissions, totalling over ten hours of content; we cut this down to roughly 4 hours of content for the judges to review. As part of this initial vetting, the Festival Director should disqualify any submissions which did not adhere to the rules and guidelines. For example, we set a 15 minute time limit for any submissions this year. There were several films submitted which were over 20 minutes in length. These are quick disqualifications. If the submitters didn't follow the established rules of the festival, the judges shouldn't have their time wasted watching films which won't be considered anyway.



Graphic Designs for the Official Selections and Award Winners, posted on the Progeny Facebook Page.

Needless to say, the judges cannot review films in terms of awards until the official selections have been announced. Therefore, this process can theoretically take place any time after the Notification Date, as long as everything comes together in the end, but it really should be done as soon as possible. We gave the judges an additional two weeks after they determined the official selections to figure out the award winners. Frankly, I think that deadline was a bit excessive, and it could have been accomplished in one week. This extra week would have lessened the burden on our certificate graphic designer, who was forced to deliver her material in somewhat of a time crunch, so that we could have everything printed, ready for the event. There's also usually some time needed for tie-breakers, which are handled at the discretion of the Festival Director or Faculty Advisor. In our situation, we designated the Best Animated Short Film tie-breaker to Laura Iancu, since she wasn't involved in any other element of the festival, and her experience was relevant in that decision. Similarly, we designated the Best Documentary Short Film tie-breaker to Charles Dye, due to his own experience in that particular craft. The more categories offered, and the more films selected, the more difficult it will be to reach a judging consensus; some degree of tie-breakers are inevitable. It's also possible to simply split the award money, allowing both films to receive the prestige, which we did not do for this particular iteration of the festival.



Faculty Advisor, Charles Dye (right), engaging with patrons during intermission.

Submission Map

This year, we opted to accept and program international submissions, rather than solely curating films from within the United States. There have been some years where we've only accepted student submissions, and others where we've accepted strictly Virginia films. The scope seems to change from year to year. In my experience, having curated an iteration in which we've accepted international submissions, I would suggest keeping it national. The variety of categories was successful, but it's difficult to program international entries when we're already trying to prioritize students, and *'those affiliated with the Southwest Virginia region.'* If the festival were longer, running multiple nights, accepting international submissions might make more sense for Progeny, but for the most part, I think it's unnecessary and perhaps overcomplicates the organization.

FilmFreeway Rules and Guidelines

- Submissions are open to independent filmmakers and students. The submitted films must have been completed on or after January 1st, 2016⁴.
- In your cover letter, please discuss how your film is affiliated with the Southwestern Virginia region, whether that's origin or residency of cast/crew, subject matter, or simply through the overall spirit of your production!⁵
- Films must be 15 minutes or less, including credits, with the exception of the Short Short category, in which the film's must be 3 minutes or less, also including credits.
- Films may be submitted to more than one category.
- All films must be in English or have English subtitles at the time submitted.
- Submission fees will increase incrementally as we near the final deadline.
- We must have a link to your film in order to review it. Hard copies and/or files requiring download will not be considered. However, if your film is selected for screening, we will contact you for a high-quality, downloadable copy.
- Applicants are solely responsible for obtaining all necessary rights and permissions for third-party materials included in their films, including but not limited to music, trademarks, logos, copyrights, and other intellectual property rights. Progeny expressly disclaims all liability or responsibility for any violations of the foregoing.
- Films must be the original work of the applicants. If a film is based upon another person's life or upon a book or other underlying work, applicant(s) must secure any necessary rights to make such adaptations. However, it is not necessary to submit the adaptation rights agreements to the Festival. Neither the Festival nor its jurists investigates or attests to the authenticity of an applicant's statement of authorship or rights secured. By entering the competition, you represent that you have secured all necessary rights.
- If you're submitting as a student, you must send confirmation with a picture of your valid university identification. Please send us an email at progenyfest@gmail.com
- We reserve the right to use stills, posters, and descriptions for promotional purposes.

These are fairly standard rules that festivals use when the call for submissions is open. Nearly every reputable festival has some variation of these same requirements and stipulations. The Festival Director may update these rules at their discretion, dependent upon what is relevant to each specific iteration of the festival.

⁴ This is lenient, but not an uncommon time span. Many festivals accept films completed up to three years before the date of submission. Yet, there are also festivals which do not accept films older than one year.

⁵ Nearly all submitters will neglect this rule, and simply not attach any cover letter. It's arguably an extraneous rule, but I personally enjoy reading how filmmakers sell themselves. It's relatively simple to figure out who's actually serious about their submissions, when you have the opportunity to read a cover letter. It's not too dissimilar to that of a job interview.

Categories

(15 Minutes or Less for All Entries)

Narrative Short

Documentary Short

Experimental Short

Animated Short

Super Short (3 Minutes or Less)

High School Short

"I would honestly advocate removing the theme/category of "Appalachia" or "The Southwest" in favor of more universal appeal. It's certainly important to keep that spirit alive in terms of the description and general information about the festival's history, but I think there are more worthwhile categories to utilize (such as experimental) in place of "Spirit of Appalachia". I think that hitting Narrative, Documentary, Experimental, and College will effectively make sure all critically important bases are covered. I like the idea of having a more specific fifth category, and I've proposed three thoughts for that.

My first preference would be "super short" or a 5 minute max category. It's very interesting to see what people can make in such a short amount of time. Also, if we have some really great stuff come in, it's very easy to program since it's so short. Additionally, there's always been animated films submitted/selected at every iteration of Progeny I've attended in the past few years. Why not make that its own category? If neither of these options sound appealing, I wouldn't mind having a High School section again as a fifth category, but that'd be my lowest preference."

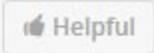


Sinead Stoddart

I've loved being part of this festival, although I could not get time off to fly out to the festival, I still felt very connected to the Progeny through their amazing communication and networking online. I also heard that it was a fantastic screening and I am hoping to network with attendees to see their films that I've missed as their posters have looked amazing and really gripping!

[Show Less](#)

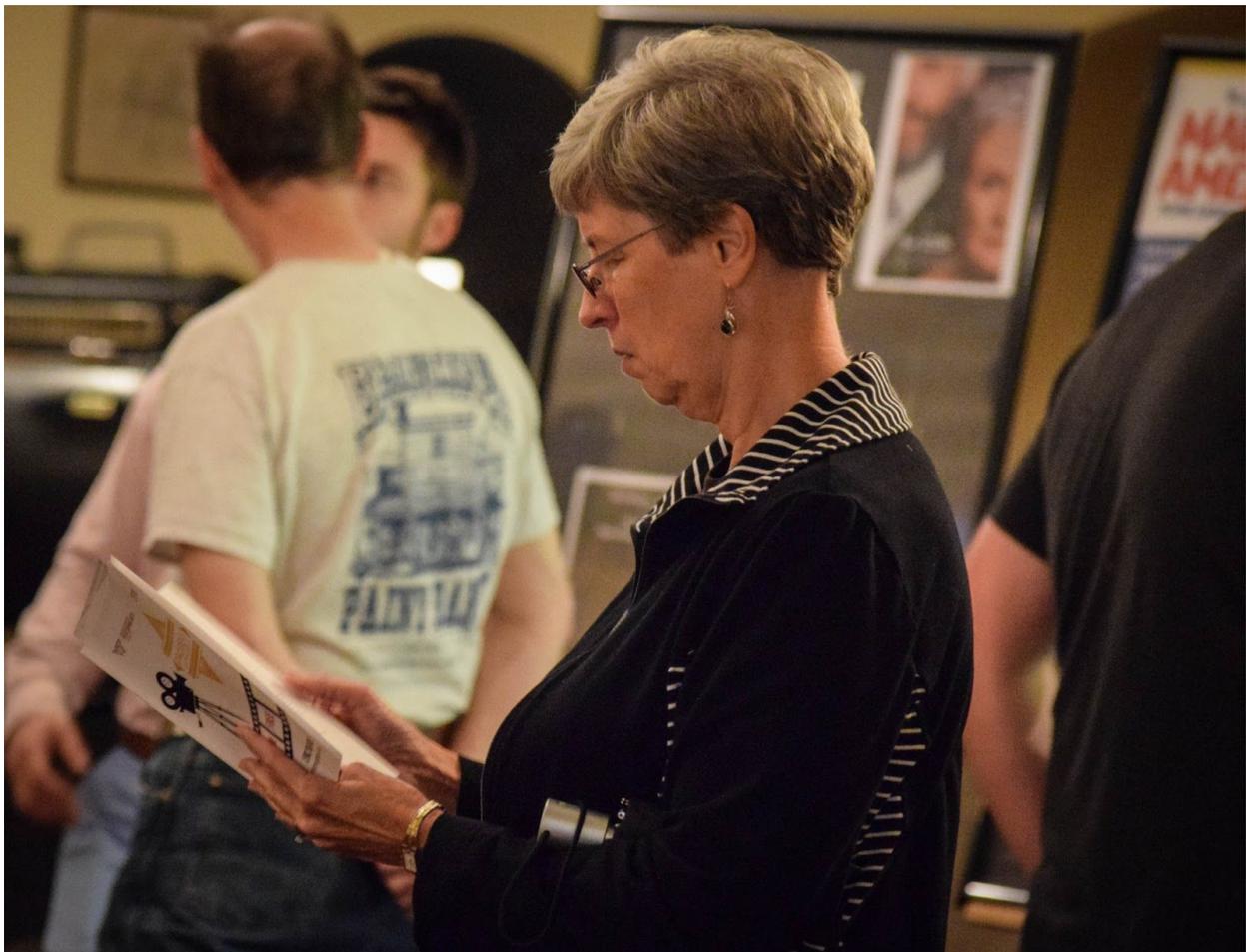
September 2018

 Helpful

2018 Progeny Short Film Festival FilmFreeway Review

Retrospective Analysis

The categories are subject to the discretion of the Festival Director and Faculty Advisor. The Super Short section was very successful, and it enables the organizers to program more films into the event, since screening several of these films may only consume fifteen minutes of total time, if that. We wanted to dedicate categories for Animated and Experimental, in order to give the festival more room to showcase films with elements of visual art. Including a High School Short category remains a tradition, enabling us to showcase talent mainly from the Blacksburg area. However, one must expect films of lesser quality within this category for obvious reasons. Rather than picking between Super Short, Animated, and High School, we opted to remove the “Student” or “College” category from previous iterations of the festival, offer a student discount for all entries as an alternative, and program all of three of the aforementioned categories. Though we originally intended to include only five categories, this revision was a pleasant solution, and enabled us to showcase a much more diverse range of submissions.



Patrons picking up programs before the commencement of Progeny 2018.

Cash Awards (+Certificates)

We had \$750 in the budget to allocate towards award money. This breakdown made sense because one can expect a significantly greater amount of submissions from the first three categories, and therefore can expect to program more of those films at the event.

Best Narrative Short Film - \$150

Best Documentary Short Film - \$150

Best Experimental Short Film - \$150

Best Animated Short Film⁶ - \$100

Best Super Short Film - \$100

Best High School Short Film - \$100



Virginia Tech students, ready to experience the college's annual short film festival.

⁶ SOPA only ended up funding \$650 for awards, rather than the \$750 which was originally discussed. The winner of Best Animated Short Film requested PayPal, which SOPA was apparently unable to handle overseas, since the winner lived in the United Kingdom. The logistics of why this one award could not be handled by SOPA was never made entirely clear to me. The winner was eventually compensated from the FilmFreeway funds. It's worth noting that SOPA was unexpectedly forced to pay \$125 to Light House Studios in early 2018, as a result of an unfortunate miscommunication regarding award money, from the previous iteration of the event. Though this wasn't caused by the 2018 management team, it could have potentially contributed to SOPA's suggestion that Progeny use some of the FilmFreeWay money to pay that particular award recipient, against the original plan.

Additional Non-Cash Awards (Certificates Only)

Best Directing

Best Editing

Best Cinematography

Best Performance

Audience Award (Audience Voting)

“This has the potential to be very interesting and effective. Perhaps we give out prizes for ‘Best Films’ but also give recognition in the form of certificate-only awards for several other categories, such as the ones listed above. Everybody loves the potential to win awards, so if we advertise this new aspect of the festival on Facebook and FilmFreeway, it could generate a lot more interest. People are more inclined to enter if they see more awards. Additionally, another possibility is to actually make these cash awards, lowering the value of the others, but I’m not sure if that’s the correct option. I also like the idea of enabling certain films to win more than one award.”

Retrospective Analysis

This was indeed worthwhile, and I would highly suggest continuing to implement additional non-cash awards in future iterations of the festival. If one takes the time to print quality award certificates, it adds a great deal of professionalism to the event. Filmmakers also greatly appreciate the extra mile, and chance to win additional awards.

Presentation of Awards / Q&A

I would highly suggest continuing to allocate time for a presentation of awards. This is one of the most exciting elements of a festival, and it serves as a special treat to those who traveled specifically for the event. Personally, I would suggest inviting recipients onto the stage in order to make brief acceptance speeches. This whole process generally consumes no more than 15 minutes of time.



Progeny 2018 Presentation of Awards.

Though we decided not to allocate time for a designated Q&A between audience and filmmakers, I would suggest doing that *if possible*. Patrons love hearing from the filmmakers after a screening event, and enjoy placing a face behind each film.

The Festival Director and/or Faculty Advisor must determine which elements they want to prioritize. It's probably not always necessary to have a post-show reception, and one could easily substitute a 20 minute Q&A in place of that, if desired, before the presentation of awards. Patrons and filmmakers socialize in the lobby immediately following the event anyway, so the elimination of a reception would not completely diminish the networking aspect.



Jacinda Wallace accepts her Best Performance Award for her role in Tony Batchler Jr.'s *Time of Ashes*.

Reservation of The Lyric Theatre

The Progeny Short Film Festival has historically been held at The Lyric Theatre in downtown Blacksburg. This is an ideal location, since it's a landmark of the town, and also a convenient walking distance for students living on-campus. Needless to say, before one can make any attempt to reserve this space, a date must be determined and confirmed by all those affiliated with the long-term management of the festival. This not an arbitrary decision.

Now that the event is held during the Fall semesters⁷, it's critically important to coordinate Progeny around the Virginia Tech football games. In order to draw the biggest potential audience, the organizers should aim to schedule the event on either a Friday, or Saturday night sometime between mid September and early October. Anytime later than that window arguably pushes into territory where schoolwork becomes overly hectic for both students and faculty, minimizing the chances of a sizeable crowd. Similarly, any earlier doesn't quite allow for optimal marketing, especially by word-of-mouth, since the semester has virtually *just* started in those preceding weeks.

Furthermore, once the organizers select a few plausible Friday or Saturday evenings, and have ensured that they do not overlap with a home football game, it's preferable to also cross-reference those dates with the School of Performing Arts calendar (contact Captain Kate Murphy, SOPA Facility Manager), and if possible, the schedule of performances at the Moss Arts Center (contact Kevin Ayoub, Moss Arts Center Facility Manager). It's certainly possible that a perfect date will not be found—one that doesn't conflict with *some* noteworthy event on-campus—but nevertheless, the festival organizers should avoid programming the event on the day of a home football game, at all costs, and should also strive to reduce as many conflicts as possible from additional campus events. When a date has been selected by the Festival Director, and confirmed by all necessary parties, the Festival Director should contact genmanager@thelyric.com in order to officially reserve the venue.

It's also preferable to have periodic meetings with the Marketing and Publicity Manager of the School of Performing Arts, during these early planning stages regarding scheduling and logistics. Keeping the Marketing Manager in the loop from the beginning will ensure that the event will receive proper promotion, many months in advance.

⁷ Progeny was previously held in April for many years, until a technical malfunction at The Lyric forced the 2016 Progeny Short Film Festival to reschedule its screenings from April to September.

Miscellaneous

As a filmmaker of the 2017 Progeny Short Film Festival, I remembered that last year's projections were significantly darker than they should have been, for whatever reason. I've heard conflicting information about what may have happened. Nevertheless, I wanted to ensure that such an unfortunate situation did not repeat itself. As we watched the films projected on The Lyric's screen throughout our preliminary screening tests, I did not notice any significant darkening, so this element didn't require much attention; it seemed to resolve itself. We made sure to project the films on the newest Macbook available, so it's possible that an older laptop with lesser display settings might have contributed to the issue last year. This year, we received no complaints about projection.

Programs

"We have a stash of money within the FilmFreeWay account that can be used towards generating thicker, glossy programs, nicer than previous Progeny iterations. If we provide the SOPA Business Manager with a digital template, he can check to see how much this would cost to produce. Additionally, we always have the cheaper option of utilizing a standard sheet of paper, enclosed within the 2018-2019 SOPA brochure."

Faculty Advisor Comments on Program Proposal:

"The limiting factor here hasn't been intention or budget, it's been timing (and half-assery). Multiple times, whoever has taken on this task has promised rich glossy brochures, but then has only finished the task minutes before the doors open (usually asking me to print on the SOPA copier and cut on the SOPA paper cutter). It didn't help that last year it took us awhile to finalize the show's edit, thus the printed program got bumped to this kind of half-assery... again. So, just be aware of that, timing-wise. The show edit needs to proceed a nicely printed program by at least 5 days.)"

Retrospective Analysis

This was one of Progeny 2018's finest achievements, in my opinion. The programs from Virginia Tech Printing Services were incredibly professional and contributed to the enhanced quality of our event. We were fortunate enough to commission a senior graphic design student, Rebekah Seiler. Nevertheless, this requires a lot of work, even if one hires a graphic designer. The Progeny staff must still write and/or compile all material to be included in the program. In our case, this included filmmaker biographies and headshots, judge biographies and headshots, loglines/descriptions of all official selections, along with staff credits. Not all of these elements are necessary, but we

wanted to *up the bar*, so to speak. We received **many** compliments on the quality of our programs from patrons, filmmakers, judges, staff, etc.



Progeny 2018 Programs, designed by Rebekah Seiler, printed and assembled by Virginia Tech Printing Services.

The Festival Director should anticipate a relatively small window of time to create these programs. If one chooses to commission a graphic designer, that person should know exactly when they will receive the compiled information, and when they're expected to deliver the digital file, so that it may be printed in time for the event. The Festival Director cannot collect the necessary information until the official selections have been determined, and one should ensure that the programs have been printed **at least** a few days before the event in case any problems arise, so there's truthfully only a couple of weeks to manage the conceptualization and execution of these programs.

This aspect of the festival was also quite expensive. We paid the graphic designer **\$125**, and frankly, I think she deserved more money, knowing the amount of work she put into the project. Virginia Tech Printing Services initially quoted \$346.01 for 200 colored programs, based on our page count, which was 9 pages (16 half pages), but I was able to bargain with them, leading to their final offer of \$258.01, discounting their initial calculation in order to support our student organization. This ended up being

\$271.68 when the tax was included, bringing the total amount paid for program design + printing to **\$396.68**. I would suggest printing the programs in color if one plans to include headshots or pictures of any type, but if that's not feasible, then the programs are significantly cheaper through Virginia Tech Printing Services when printed in black-and-white. In my opinion, Festival Directors and Faculty Advisors should strive to print high-quality programs, but must assess the respective costs and festival budget accordingly.

Signed Poster

We decided to print a large 24x36 version of the official Progeny 2018 poster, and display it in the main lobby of The Lyric, politely asking filmmakers for their signature. In my opinion, this is a wonderful tradition to continue, for several reasons. First of all, it ensures that we have an artifact from each iteration of the event. These posters can be framed, to serve as relevant decor for various hallways in the School of Performing Arts, advertising the event to students, faculty and visitors year-round. Furthermore, to put it simply, filmmakers feel special when they're invited to an event, and asked to sign an official piece of merchandise. It's a fairly cheap, easy means of ensuring that guests and visitors have a positive experience. Who doesn't love autographs?



Aline Souza (*Myw Speaking to the Night*) signs the official Progeny poster in the main lobby of The Lyric Theatre.

If a future Festival Director would like to continue implementing this concept, it's preferable that whoever organizes this element is the same person who has consistently communicated with these filmmakers throughout the process. These visitors should be greeted by a familiar face, or recognizable name upon entering the building.



Festival Director, W. Trent Welstead, preparing for his opening remarks.

Mailing Certificates + Checks to Winners

Though SOPA usually covers most of the costs associated with this, the Festival Director must either create the award certificates, or commission a graphic designer for those purposes. Regarding the design, one should research other short film festival award certificates, in order to garner a sense of the intricacy and professionalism needed. The Festival Director must determine who will sign the award certificates, obtain the necessary signatures, and frame the certificates all before the event, so that as many as possible may be transferred in-person. Those who are not in attendance may receive their certificates by mail. It's critically important that the Progeny staff regularly communicate with the filmmakers in order to know which filmmakers will be present at the event. The Festival Director should ensure that any confirmed RSVPs **and** 'Maybes' from the official award winners have framed certificates, ready to present at the event, just in case they're in attendance. Those who have informed the festival that they will not be present at the event do not need a frame when their certificates are mailed; this reduces costs, but requires a significant amount of preliminary analysis.



Matt Iglesias (left) and Grant McMillan (right) hold their respective Best Narrative Short Film and Best Editing Awards for *Against the Clock*.

Email & Facebook Maintenance

The Festival Director should regularly monitor the official Progeny email account (progenyfest@gmail.com) from the time submissions are open, all the way through **at least** several weeks after the event. Generally, one must communicate most frequently during the first couple weeks of accepting submissions, the last couple weeks of accepting submissions, and the entire month between the closing of submissions and the night of the event. In my opinion, all official communication between the festival staff and the filmmakers should be handled through the official email account. It is up to the discretion of the Festival Director and/or Faculty Advisor, which staff members are expected to check the account. Needless to say, when using the official email account, one should communicate in a friendly, professional manner. If anyone who monitors the account does not know how to appropriately respond to an inquiry, they should consult the Festival Director or Faculty Advisor. If done properly, managing the email account is one of the most time-consuming elements of the organization of this event.

The Progeny Facebook account should stay active as much as possible, though it generally slows during the off-months of the festival (October - March). All official information should be available on the Facebook account. Furthermore, once submissions are open, the Facebook account should continually and consistently promote the call for submissions, highlighting new and returning categories, and cheap/free submission costs.

Paid Photographer

We had \$100 in the budget to allocate towards a paid photographer for promotional purposes. I commissioned a friend who had a photography background and expressed interest in expanding her portfolio. I would highly suggest continuing to hire paid photographers, even if students, solely for the sake of documenting the event.



Patrons awaiting the commencement of the 2018 Progeny Short Film Festival.

Videographer

This was an idea we started entertaining relatively late in the game. There were no funds to dedicate towards the payment of a videographer, but an extremely generous former cinema student at Virginia Tech agreed to record the event, in the interest of helping expand the festival's image, and her own resume credits.

Needless to say, a videographer should ensure that they are not any disruption or distraction to the screenings and festival as a whole. Furthermore, ***it's critically important that a videographer capture crowd shots, faces in the crowd, reactions to what's occurring in front of them. Not just the focus of the event on stage.***

If possible, I would highly recommend continuing to find and/or commission a videographer for the event. It's a wonderful way to preserve the evening, and document its successes or learning opportunities for future organizers. However, it's a lot of work. Frankly, I would recommend recruiting two people for these purposes; it requires multiple camera setups, regardless. I have yet to edit an advertisement video / short film from the footage captured at Progeny 2018. This will be complete before Summer 2019, intended as a means of generating additional submissions for the 2019 event.



2018 Progeny Short Film Festival FilmFreeway Review

Audience Award Solution

*“Frankly, I don’t think it makes any sense to accept votes **before** the conclusion of the event⁸. If people didn’t stay until the end of the event, then they didn’t see all of the competition, and therefore, don’t deserve to cast a vote. However, if you don’t start the voting process until the event concludes, it’s rather unrealistic to expect that everyone will stay another 15-20 minutes just to hear the result. Therefore, why not extend the interest past the conclusion of the event? We could announce the winners of the pre-judged awards at the end of the screenings like usual, and then keep people on their toes by saying that people can vote for the audience award as they leave, and the winner will be announced on the Facebook page the following evening. This is a very easy, fun way to generate more activity on the Facebook page, as well as preventing ballot-stuffing.”*

⁸ This was the process for previous iterations of the festival, which amounted to several complaints.



Patrons casting their votes for the Audience Award following the conclusion of the main event.

Retrospective Analysis

This was a significant improvement to the audience award system. We received 83 votes, out of 143 in attendance. This revision substantially reduced receiving disingenuous votes, since patrons could not cast votes until the conclusion of the event. Furthermore, we managed to shave off roughly 15-20 minutes from the event, compared to previous years, since we didn't have to wait for judging deliberation regarding the audience awards, which in turn, enabled us to program more films.



2018 Progeny Short Film Festival Voting Station.



Festival Director, W. Trent Welstead, providing the closing remarks to Progeny 2018.

SEE BELOW FOR EXCERPTS OF FESTIVAL DIRECTOR EMAIL CONVERSATIONS

**Additional + Complete Conversations Available by Request
Please Email Trent Welstead at trent335@vt.edu**

Hello,

We're looking forward to meeting all of you at our main event this upcoming Saturday, September 22nd! I just wanted to send out an email with some helpful information as you prepare for the festival.

Parking

The North End Center Parking Garage will be your best option for parking. The address is 206 Barger St, Blacksburg, VA 24060. The fee is \$5 to park there. Alternatively, there's a chance you could find street parking slightly closer to the venue, but that's not guaranteed.

Venue

The screenings will take place at The Lyric Theatre, which is located at 135 College Ave, Blacksburg, VA 24060.

The Lyric Theatre's Website: <http://www.thelyric.com/>

Admission

The event is completely FREE. Filmmakers, guests, and patrons alike will not have to pay any money to attend the screening. That way, more people can view your wonderful films! Bring as many guests as you desire.

Schedule

Doors Open: 6:30pm

Event Start: 7:00pm

The films will screen in the following order:

Limbo (1:27)
Against the Clock (7:33)
Prosperity (14:56)
Munchies (2:21)
Black Girlhood: Access & Assets (10:00)
Eclipse (4:08)
Day in Wonderland (2:10)
Lines (4:25)
Stopgap in Stop Motion (4:40)
Changing Jane (5:30)

(INTERMISSION)

Fighting Two Wars: The Story of Thalia Jane Ainsley (8:29)
Table for Two (1:49)
Out of Stock (4:53)
Fisso (8:45)
Disconnected (2:56)
Stolen (6:13)
Myw Speaking to the Night (2:52)
The Author (5:49)
Animals Are Special Effects (9:09)
Time of Ashes (10:45)

Presentation of Awards: ~9:30pm

Know that if your film has won an award, we will invite you up onto the stage to make a brief acceptance speech.

Note: There will not be a designated Q&A session.

Filmmaker Reception

You (and your guests) are invited to our post-show reception at Gillies Restaurant. This will begin once our main event concludes (~9:45pm) and last until about 11:00pm. The address is 153 College Ave Blacksburg VA 24060. There will be an open bar. Please let us know the exact names of who will be attending this reception **before Thursday, September 20th**.

Gillies' Website: <http://lep2.blacksburg.net/~gbhome/>

Documentation

We will have a videographer + photographer documenting the event. It'd be great if we could have a handful of filmmakers participate in a quick, 2 minute interview, after the show. Please let me know if you would be interested in this, or if you would prefer not to be approached, just so I'm aware.

Communication between Festival Director and Filmmakers (Event Logistics)

Hello,

My name is Trent Welstead. I'm the Festival Director for the 2018 Progeny Short Film Festival, which takes place at The Lyric Theatre every year, put on by the School of Performing Arts, organized by students.

I've been in contact with Virginia Tech Printing Services over the phone, inquiring about commissioning your services for the printing/assembly of our programs.

I've attached a PDF, sent to me from our graphic designer. I was told that the following information is what you would need regarding the logistics of printing and assembly.

-Saddle-Stitched Binding
-4 Color Cover, 4 Color Guts
-Dimensions: 5x8in w/ bleed (5.25x8.25)

When I initially asked about cost, the kind representative on the phone indicated that it's likely that we could receive some type of student discount, but you'd need to take a look at the PDF in order to estimate a cost. As this is the first year we've sought out VT Printing Services from my understanding (hopefully the start of a regular collaboration for future iterations of our event), we were unsure what to expect for a fee. We have about ~\$250 in the budget, but any help would be greatly appreciated.

What would be the cost for printing 200 programs, versus 250, and 300? Preferably, we would like to have them by Monday, September 17th, and we'd need them for sure by no later than Thursday, September 20th.

Thank you for your time.

Trent.

Communication Between Festival Director and Virginia Tech Printing Services (Invoice Request)

Sandra,

Congratulations! Your film, *Animals Are Special Effects* has won the Best Experimental Short Film Award at the 2018 Progeny Short Film Festival. I received many comments from patrons about that film last night, and how it really intrigued them. A very successful screening, in my opinion.

I've attached the necessary forms for processing your award payment. If you are a United States citizen, please fill out the W-9 form. If you are not a United States citizen, please fill out the W8-BEN form. There may also be further documentation requirements needed by our accounting office, if you are not a United States citizen, but we will reach out to you if that's necessary. If you send this back in a timely manner, you should receive your check for \$150 USD from the Virginia Tech School of Performing Arts within 60 days.

If you wouldn't mind, we would really appreciate it if you could take a moment to review our festival on FilmFreeWay.com. This feedback provides us with helpful information so that we may continually improve our event.

Again, be sure to follow our official Progeny Facebook page, and stay tuned tonight for our announcement of the Audience Award. This is also where we'll be uploading pictures from the event once those are prepared, so like, comment, and share with your friends as those are uploaded!

<https://www.facebook.com/progenyfest/>

I hope you enjoyed the experience of submitting to our festival. As always, feel free to contact me, at any time.

Thanks again!

2 attachments



fw8ben.pdf
62K



Updated_substituteW-9_AP-1.pdf
29K

Communication Between Festival Director and Award Winner (Notification)

Congratulations! Your film, *Fighting Two Wars: The Story of Thalia Jane Ainsley*, has been selected to screen at the 2018 Progeny Short Film Festival on September 22nd, at The Lyric Theatre in Blacksburg, Virginia.

First off, I want to personally commend you and your team for your achievements, no doubt a result of the hard work put forth into your project. The judging process was no easy task; we had to reject **plenty** of great films because, unfortunately, there's only so much time we can allocate towards the screenings. That being said, out of the 117 total submissions we received this year, your film made the cut, and we're thrilled to screen it in front of a live audience next month. I've attached our official laurels, which you can use to promote your official acceptance!

Furthermore, I wanted to remind you that since your film has been selected, it will automatically be entered in competition for the following awards. These will be determined by our four official judges, and announced at the conclusion of the event:

Best Directing
Best Editing
Best Cinematography
Best Performance

Nevertheless, now that your film has been selected, we need a few things as we prepare for the event.

The File

We require a high resolution, H.264 **downloadable** copy of your film in order to screen it. Please send us a link via Vimeo, Dropbox, or Google Drive. Alternatively, please enable festivals to download the file you've already uploaded to FilmFreeway, and let us know once you've done that. Either of these options will work just fine.

Festival Attendance

Do you plan to attend the festival? If so, how many of your team members will attend?

Venue Address:

135 College Ave, Blacksburg, VA 24060

Promotional Materials

Please send us the following materials by no later than **Sunday, August 26th**:

- Promotional Poster
- 3 to 5 Stills (from the film itself)
- Film Logline (1 Sentence)
- Film Description (100 Word Max.)
- Director Biography (100 Word Max.)

Facebook Page

Please like our official Facebook page, in order to stay up-to-date on the event. This is also where we'll announce the winner of our **Audience Award** on September 23rd. Share the news with your friends! Tag us in your posts!

<https://www.facebook.com/progenyfest/>

If there's anything you need in the meantime, please reach out to us. Thanks again for submitting to our festival, and we look forward to screening some amazing films!

Trent.

Communication Between Festival Director and Official Selections (Notification)