Fundraising

Mid-Peninsula League of the
San Francisco Symphony

Symphony in Flowers

San Francisco Symphony
Group 1
SYMPHONY IN FLOWERS

Principal Fundraiser for the Mid-Peninsula League of the San Francisco Symphony
A Short History

- Started as two-day garden tour
- Morphed into one day garden party
- Became evening dinner auction event
  - musically-themed flower displays – “bring the garden indoors”
- Event theme and musical themes
  - “An Evening in Paris” (2013)
  - “An Evening in Venice” (2014)
  - “An Evening on Broadway” (2015)
Event Revenue

- Dinner tickets and higher priced sponsor tickets
- Live and silent auctions
- Percentage from vendors invited to participate (2014 only)
- Fund-A-Need
Event Model

- Guest welcome area:
  - floral arrangements
  - silent auction tables
  - vendor tables
  - cocktails and passed hors d’oeuvres
- Seated dinner in dining room
- Silent auction results tabulated during dinner
- Live auction and Fund-A-Need
- Musical performance
- Guest checkout
Décor

• “Dazzle factor”

• Dramatic floral arrangements

• Design efforts focused on the evening’s theme
Décor – Table Settings and Auction Space
Auction Dynamics

• Member guests – 60% of money raised

• Tangible and service items of less interest

• Most popular: private home concerts, dinners, brunches, private tours

• Trips with revenue split added to auction but did not produce highest return

• Live auction requires inspiring auctioneer - costly
Vendors

- Valuable experiment in 2014

- Produced little real revenue relative to their distraction from the silent auction for guests

- Will not be part of event going forward
Volunteer Effort Involved

- Core committee: 17 (2014)

- Active MPL members (45):
  - contributed time, money, and/or items for silent and/or live auctions
  - worked on physically assembling auction packages or baskets

- On site volunteers (10):
  - 4 overseeing auction tables
  - 2 spotters for live auction
  - 2 for guest check-in
  - 2 for guest check-out
  - plus 2 SFS staff
Fund-A-Need

- Raises money specifically for MPL’s school music program - Ravenswood Project
- Enables MPL to fund entire project at least one year in advance with one ask
- Immediacy factor for audience to fund music program in local community
- Raised $13K in 2014, 2.5 times greater than in previous year
Event Preparation Time Line

• March Event:
  • 8 months planning and preparation
• Late Summer:
  • Date reserved with country club
  • SFS musicians’ availability determined
• Early Fall:
  • Event theme set
  • Committee assignments agreed
• Late Fall/Early Winter:
  • Auction solicitation begun by members
• Early Winter:
  • Firm donating invitation design/printing contacted
• January:
  • Menu selected
Near-term Preparation

- Invitations drafted, proofed and printed;
- Program cover designed and printed
- Invitation database reviewed and invitations mailed
- Auction item appeal reiterated; auction items catalogued
- Sponsor gifts selected and purchased
- Auction catalogue and program prepared
- Auction baskets prepared
- Table placement determined
Day Of Set Up

• Allowed only day-of set-up
• Floral arrangements delivered
• Wine (provided by SFS) delivered
• Décor and auction items placed
• Table place cards and sponsor gifts placed
Results - 2014

- Gross receipts: $73K
- Net income: $40K
- Fund-A-Need $13K
Challenges

- Significant effort and planning required
- Requires dynamic event chair skilled in managing an event of this complexity
- Attracting guest attendance is difficult
- Auction mechanics require focus and fast work
Accomplishment and Satisfaction
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. This project had a wide variety of special parties, dinners, and private tours donated for the silent auction. What innovative auction items have you used successfully in your fundraisers? Have you ever had an auction item that was highly successful and the donor has agreed to offer it two times, e.g., the item is highly active at auction and it is down to 2 bidders and they are $2,000 apart and the donor offers to have the private tour two times if the second donor will match the top price?

2. What are some adaptations you have made to your long-running fundraisers in order to make them successful in today’s non-profit world?

3. Do you utilize a post-event survey with any of your projects? Elaborate.