Nutcracker Luncheon & Boutique
Eat, Shop, Join

An annual fundraiser presented by the
Detroit Symphony Orchestra Volunteer Council

Detroit Symphony Orchestra    Orchestra Size: Group 1    MSA Population: 4,292,060
3711 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48201

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Project Description: The Nutcracker Luncheon & Boutique includes a seated plated luncheon, entertainment, raffle and shopping opportunities for 200-230 guests. The DSO Volunteer Council has presented this fundraising event in November for more than 30 years. Since 2013 it has been held at the historic and nationally acclaimed Detroit Athletic Club in the heart of downtown Detroit. Beginning at 10:30 am guests are welcomed with a glass of champagne or sparkling water and invited to shop at the 14 +/- boutiques that have been set up at the venue by local vendors. At two points during the morning, there are 10-minute performances of Nutcracker ballet excerpts by Ballet Detroit students. Luncheon, a raffle and choral entertainment take place from noon to 2pm while shopping is suspended. Shopping resumes at 2 pm and concludes at 3 pm.

Project Timeline: Planning technically begins a year ahead with securing the date and venue. During the spring, the vendor agreement form is reviewed and updated, and potential vendors are contacted. It is difficult to get vendor confirmation before June for a November event, and often confirmations are received during the fall. A master of ceremonies (typically a local celebrity) is secured and sponsorships are sought beginning in the spring and summer. During the summer and fall, ticket pricing and invitation design are decided and entertainment arrangements are made. (Unfortunately, DSO musicians are rarely available due to rehearsals.) Invitations (2000) are printed and sent to various groups within the DSO, past attendees, and others.

Financial: Income

- Total ticket sales (levels $500, $165, $85) $22,090.00
- Donations in lieu of tickets 1,790.00
- Sponsorships 8,000.00
- Vendors (no sales portion to VC; only charged for space) 3,835.00
- Raffle Ticket Sales ($10 each or 3 for $25) 1,930.00
- Fall Centerpiece Sale & miscellaneous donations 2,163.00
Total Income: $39,808.00

Expenses:
- Art, Posters & Programs $842.00
- Invitations print & mail 2,105.00
- Vocalists, piano, guitar 1,500.00
- Venue, food, beverage 13,578.00

Total Expenses $18,025.00

Net Profit $21,783.00

**Project Goals:** As for fundraising, nearly $22,000 after expenses was raised for the DSO. Because of publicity, there was increased awareness of both the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and its Volunteer Council, and the VC gained several new members from the event attendees. The shopping aspect brought business to the participating vendors in the community. Finally, the Nutcracker Luncheon & Boutique made for a wonderful day of fun - and what’s wrong with that?

**Collaborations:** The DSO Volunteer Council has nearly always produced its events, including the Nutcracker Luncheon & Boutique under its own power using its own volunteers. The exception is the partnership with Ballet Detroit for the mini performances of selections from the Nutcracker Ballet during the shopping period.

**Volunteers:** Depending on how much any given volunteer wants to do, this event could be produced with 25 volunteers or less. Of course, if a group decides to make the arrangements very elaborate and unnecessarily labor intensive, more workers will be required. Quality, simplicity and “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” work the best. Most “extras” do not lead to extra money raised or enjoyment of the event. A few planning meetings at the beginning are warranted with key people assigned to obtaining sponsorships, invitations, raffle, obtaining, organizing and placing vendors, vendor paperwork, publicity, payment and registration, maintaining contact with venue regarding vendor, food and beverage and audio visual arrangements, and everyone’s favorite - seating and place cards! The day of the event, volunteers will be required for registration, assisting and directing vendors, set up and clean up, centerpieces, raffle set up and prize distribution, raffle ticket sales, etc.

**Changes/Improvements:** Following the Nutcracker Luncheon & Boutique, a report was submitted on behalf of the chairs that reviewed and critiqued the various aspects of this event. Issues/Recommendations included:

- reviewing ticket prices noting that there would likely be a future increase in food, beverage and venue prices;
- do not ask vendors to donate items for raffle so that there is not a hodgepodge of items that then must be grouped in an appealing manner;
- limit raffle to 3 or 4 exciting items and consider a live auction of 1 particularly special item such as a travel or an entertainment experience;
- start seeking sponsorships early and do not keep going to the same sources.

**Note:** Sample letters, schedules, agreements, invitations, etc. available upon request.