Community Recitals Benefit Musicians and Community

Engaging the community through recital performance improves orchestra attendance and loyalty.

Project and Volunteer Group:
Project: Community Recitals Benefit Musicians and Community. Annual Fall Recital Series

Name of volunteer association: Friends of Music Guild, Orchestra of Southern Utah • P.O. Box 312 • Cedar City, UT 84721

Symphony Information:
Orchestra of Southern Utah serves a large geographic area with professional and dedicated amateur musicians providing programs of standard repertoire, plus commissioned works, and popular music.

OSU is a cultural bedrock for our community. In addition to our recitals and concerts, many of our musicians are active teachers and performers. Our OSU musicians participate in pit orchestras for the Utah Shakespeare Festival, community musicals, and for community events from bank openings to memorials. We are in a transition period and have added several younger musicians which has increased energy and commitment to the organization. The recital series has helped several of these musicians to gain performance experience and develop their musicianship.

Orchestra meeting group size: 8

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Approximate population of community: 30,184 in Cedar City, but audience and musicians come from as far as 50 miles to participate.

Overview: For 20 years we have provided Tuesday evening recitals throughout September with solo and ensemble performances. We plan to continue this project.

Description:

Goals: The OSU Fall Recital Series serves several purposes:
1) Gives OSU musicians a chance to shine and to explore music they might not otherwise perform. For example, the concert pianist who will play Rachmaninoff next Feb. with the full orchestra has played jazz with saxophone in the recitals and harpsichord for the Messiah. Violinists shared their considerable vocal talents. Others tackled difficult music which helped them develop their skills.
2) Fills an otherwise “dead” period in the cultural life of the community between the summer festivals and the start of university productions. With less competition from other events we get great support for publicity. This also helps with marketing our concert series because it keeps OSU in the forefront of cultural offerings.
3) Develops a new generation of musicians. When our concertmistress of over 20 years retired we had a seasoned younger violinist ready to step in because the recitals had helped give her years of performance experience.
4) Reaches new audience because we are able to engage community performers whose families may not have been aware of the orchestra.
5) Helps us sell season tickets to the regular concert season because the recital patrons fall in love with “live” music.
6) Obstacles have been venues over the years, but now we are at the Heritage Center we feel like we have a much better situation with full technical help which was not available at the school auditoriums and churches we used in the past.
7) We plan to continue the recital series, now in the 20th year.
Timeline: Start planning in the spring with recital directors and developing themes, music selection, and musicians.

Financials: Recitals started as a fundraiser for OSU and because of our low income area we decided to have admission by donation rather than ticketed. Several people give $100, while most give $5. The audience has grown so that we had to move from a church which was just $50 per recital to the Heritage Center Theater which is $450 per recital rental. We have now started arranging recital sponsors at $500 to cover the rental, marketing, sound engine for recording, and other expenses so all patron donations benefit the orchestra. The annual amount varies from $2000 to $3500, but is steadily rising. Persistence is key to this type of project.

Collaborations: The OSU recitals have helped develop local performing groups like Master Singers (male choir), Wilhelm (gypsy jazz ensemble), and In Jubilo (women's choir) by giving a quality performing experience with good technical support. Youth groups, university professors, and individuals have all benefited from this series.

Volunteers: All musicians volunteer their performances to benefit the orchestra. In turn they get significant publicity, the opportunity to perform in a concert hall with good technical support, and access to a professional recording of their performance. Each recital now has a director. Each recital includes 12 to 60 volunteers depending on which musical groups are involved.

Successes: Several of the young people who performed in the series have gone on to become professional performers and teachers. Several now play in OSU. For example, Sarah Sun played piano as an exceptional child performer and this year has played Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto, 1st movement with three Utah orchestras.

What Learned: It is important to plan ahead to develop an engaging and effective recital. The themes help guide audiences to the types of music they will enjoy. Flexibility is valuable in dealing with community musicians, but we have to insist on quality performances and preparation. Starting early is valuable so the musicians are adequately prepared.

West Wind Flute Trio
Tracey Bradshaw, Brad Gregory
Jack and Elaine Vickers
Pianist Sally Hunter Jensen with songwriter Sandi Milne
Red Hill Rangers
Village Voices
Wilhelm