Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Guild

*Awards – Wed, Jun 7  3:45 pm    #2*

Duplicate and Social Bridge Tournament

Presenter:  Paige James

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**SLIDE 1:**  Title Slide – ASOG logo

What do you do after a two-year selling spree of beautiful, Guild-designed, sponsored and enthusiastically supported Arkansas playing cards and find yourself with some left over?

How do you combine that with a low-key new fundraiser whose secondary goals are to reach a new audience for the ASO and to increase awareness of the ASOG and the role it plays in music education in schools?

Our answer: put on a bridge tournament!

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**SLIDE 2:**  Background

The ASOG has been a support organization for the ASO since 1968. Our major fundraiser is a biennial Designer Show House.

Our biggest alternate year fundraiser was, hands down, the Gold Book Award-winning Playing Card fundraiser. We created four decks of playing cards featuring professional color photos of every aspect of Arkansas life: landmarks, historic buildings, state parks, mountains, rivers, festivals, industries – and sold 6,000 decks at $10/deck over the course of two years.

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**SLIDE 3:**  The Reality

Designer Show House revenue has plateaued at a lower level than earlier years, making it even more important to supplement with alternate year fundraisers. The playing cards had a great run but needed a new fresh market in an increasingly challenging fundraiser scene.

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The bridge tournament was created by a team of four Guild members partnering with the education director of a popular local bridge house.

The committee’s goals were fourfold:

**SLIDE 5: Goal 1: New Audience**

Introduce our organization and our playing cards to a different audience to expand their knowledge of the Guild and what we do in the community to support the ASO.

**SLIDE 6: Goal 2: Reduce Inventory**

Reduce our inventory of cards and potentially influence additional sales of the cards by selling/giving each participant a deck of the bridge cards.

**SLIDE 7: Goal 3: Raise Funds**

Raise funds to be given to the ASO.

**SLIDE 8: Goal 4: Music Education**

Increase awareness of the symphony’s and the Guild’s efforts to provide music education in schools.

**SLIDE 9: Location**

The tournament was held in the large fellowship hall of a local church. This site is used for many bridge tournaments and was familiar to the bridge players we were trying to reach.
The church has an excellent maintenance staff to assist with set up and take down, as well as large, well-staffed kitchen facilities. The church is easily accessible to those both local and from out of town and offers ample parking.

SLIDE 10: Director

The Little Rock Bridge House’s American Contract Bridge Director Dick Heil donated his time and expertise in running tournaments by providing all the necessary tools (cards, bidding cards, pencils, computer to score) thus sanctioning the tournament for masterpoints. He also provided a detailed Tournament Checklist that we found invaluable in planning the tournament.

SLIDE 11: Public Relations/Flyer

The publicity flyer was designed by an ASO staff member & mailed to duplicate bridge club managers throughout central Arkansas, posted on bulletin boards at churches and club houses, posted to social media and put in the Guild’s newsletter. Other groups included a newcomer’s club, Meet and Greet, Hot Springs Village (a retirement community with many bridge players) and the two other symphony guilds in Arkansas that support the ASO. As a result they learned about the ASO and the ASO Guild and the programs we offer in music education for children. As you can see, there was a morning session and an afternoon session with lunch served in between. Players could stay for one or both sessions and opt for lunch.

SLIDE 12: Tickets &Sales

We printed our own tickets to reduce costs and pre-sold them to friends and those who regularly played bridge at the Bridge House. The flyer got the word out, but most sales were person-to-person. Pre-selling allowed us to get a count for the number of tables needed and lunch orders.

SLIDE 13: Set-Up
Four Guild members set up the venue the day before the tournament. Tables and tablecloths were rented, but the tables were unusable, as they had a 4’x4’ playing surface, as specified, but were also unacceptably 4’ high. The tables and delivery cost were refunded and the church was able to find enough tables for the tournament to continue.

Because duplicate bridge players play in silence, using bid cards to make bids, and social bridge players bid out loud and are permitted to otherwise talk, the two groups were separated by a partition as well as a distance. There were far fewer social players than duplicate players – duplicate bridge with its masterpoints and official nationwide scoring attracts quite a serious crowd.

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SLIDE 14: Volunteers

A total of nine volunteers plus the Bridge House director were used. Guild members manned the check-in table for both sessions and sold tickets to sessions and lunch at the door. Volunteers stood by at both sessions to assist with questions or play as needed. One volunteer was in charge of ordering lunches from the church staff and soliciting snacks from Guild members. Guild members were so generous in providing snacks that eating lunch for some was a struggle! Volunteers also cleaned up after lunch and broke down the venue at the end of the second session.

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SLIDE 15: The Tournament

The event attracted 80 players, each paying $20 a session (some played both). The $20 included $10 for the session and $10 for a deck of cards. 25 people took advantage of lunch. Duplicate winners were awarded masterpoints and all winners received 2 vouchers to exchange for an ASO performance of their choosing. All players received a deck of cards and a brochure about the ASO.

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SLIDE 16: Financials

Total income for the one-day event was $1955, which included 80 tickets sold for $1,600, 25 lunches sold for $250 and donations of $105. The lunches cost the Guild $8 each for a total of $200. Church rental was $100 and tablecloth rental was $49. The profit of $1606 may not be
large, but our goals were achieved and we hope to more than double our efforts and profit this coming fall.

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SLIDE 17: Looking Forward

Food
We had too much food!! Our Guild members outdid themselves with the array of choices & most people could have skipped the lunch. It was decided to greatly reduce the amount of snacks for each session in the future.

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Youth Orchestra
The committee decided that the next tournament will include members of the Arkansas Symphony Youth Orchestra playing during the lunch hour. This will give the youth a new venue and valuable experience while giving lunch-goers exposure to our talented young musicians.

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Location
The Little Rock Bridge House has changed their policy to allow the Guild to hold & publicize the tournament at the Bridge House, for a cost of $5 per player. This will enable us to grow the tournament to at least triple the size due to the size & number of tables already set up & available to us. Our recommendation is to locate a sanctioned bridge club to assist. Last year, we were unable to publicize our event at the Bridge House, because its board felt it was a conflict of interest. We were unable to make announcements, post the flyer or even put them on the cars of this rich group of potential tournament attendees. All publicity for the tournament at the Bridge House had to be done by word of mouth and tickets sold on the sly. For that reason we feel having secured 80 players for the first tournament was a very positive outcome.

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Future Tournaments
Our second bridge tournament is scheduled for fall of this year. We learned a lot from the first one and hope to make it an annual event.

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