

2018
Strategic Conversations
League of American Orchestras Volunteer Council
MINUTES – CALL #3

Volunteer Presidents & Presidents-Elect

Wednesday, November 14, 2018

12 p.m.- 1 p.m. (Pacific) / 2 p.m. – 3 p.m. (Central) / 3 p.m. – 4 p.m. (Eastern)

Tiffany Ammerman, President, Volunteer Council, greeted the six Participants as they joined the call with her, Terry White, President-Elect, Volunteer Council, Sharon Hatchett, Secretary, Volunteer Council (Facilitators); and Derek Weagle, the League of American Orchestras Liaison to the Volunteer Council.

FACILITATORS:

- Tiffany Ammerman, Marshall Symphony League (Texas)
- Terry White, Amarillo Symphony Guild (Texas)
- Sharon Hatchett, Southside Friends of the Chicago Sinfonietta (Illinois)

GUEST: Cindy Kidwell, Women’s Symphony League of Tyler (Texas)

Tiffany began the discussion by reviewing the schedule for the two remaining one-hour calls. November 28th is the next scheduled call followed by the Fifth and final strategic conversation occurring in December. Tiffany asked about scheduling the fifth Strategic Conversation on December 5th or 12th. There was no consensus on either of these dates so it was agreed that Tiffany will reach out to everyone and propose dates to consider. **Participant 1** asked that we not consider Thursdays as she has membership and board meetings on Thursdays. **Participant 2** prefers the second week of December as her organization has a major fundraiser during the first week of December.

Tiffany then asked **Participant 1** to share information about herself, her volunteer organization, and Orchestra.

Participant 1

Her Guild has operated for 50 years. The Symphony Designer House is one of their key fundraisers held every other year. Their fundraising efforts support community outreach and youth education programs.

Successes:

- An annual competition to encourage and support experienced young musicians. With support from patrons, the Guild offers monetary prizes for student winners in piano, brass, string and percussion competitions. Their next competition is April 2019.
- The Guild also supports various youth orchestras.

Challenges:

- Attracting younger members to volunteer and serve.
- Getting members to become officers. Members do not want to be President because of responsibilities, including being in charge of fundraising. Initially serve as President-Elect. The next year you serve as President and thereafter lead the Nominating Committee. Often people serve in leadership roles for a total of three years. Recycling old members is not the way to go.

ONE AND DONE – CINDY KIDWELL (GUEST), WOMEN’S SYMPHONY LEAGUE OF TYLER (TEXAS)

Tiffany acknowledges the issues of getting young people involved and introduced Cindy Kidwell whom Tiffany had spoken to before presenting on “one and done” during the last Strategic Conversation and who has already spoken with one of our Participants about the model for her own organization.

Per Cindy, One and Done was developed about 5 years ago out of St Louis and was also adopted by her organization. She sees this model to be an effective way to retain new members. Allows organizations with very busy members to engage because they are committed one time for a project requiring 3-4 hours of their time. Challenge is finding people willing to engage in this manner. Her organization did outreach, attracted 28 volunteers, and found it challenging to engage them all. They have a committee chair who sends out text messages or eblasts that identifies the work that needed to be done over a 3-4-hour period. Assigned on a first come first served basis. Very successful. Even bringing refreshments to a gathering can satisfy their commitment. Tiffany asked Cindy if this was part of the membership committee? Yes. Their committee could put together an “ask”. Their office was at times frustrated in relation to creating work for the members to do.

Participant 2 asked about usage in a performance. Cindy noted family concerts can be a means of using One and Done. The formal committee does not always have enough work to do requiring “One and Done.” Each year, each of the committees look at what is needed and how many people will be assigned to support each committee on a first come/first served to engage those interested. The start of this effort was to retain members.

Participant 3 noted how helpful the One and Done model was for her organization as there is no mandatory way to engage their members. One and done is a way to get members to sign up, get them engaged, and integrate them into their volunteer organization. Commits them to do something, have their roles defined, engage with members, know this is a one-time deal, and share in the required workload. **Participant 2** likes the idea of engagement while avoiding fatigue. Cindy encouraged the Participants on the call to contact her if they needed any additional information.

AUCTIONS - TERRY WHITE, AMARILLO SYMPHONY GUILD (TEXAS)

Tiffany asked Terry to speak about auctions as she has had success using both silent and live auctions as good fundraisers. Wine auctions at both high end and not so high-end events have proven successful. Recommended checking out an auction called 'Red Apple Auctions' that works with non-profits and has a unique approach to setting up auctions. The Website is <https://www.redappleauctions.com/>. Widely used by TASO members in Texas.

The company's services include several calls to organize an auction. Helps to set up your auction; determine what works in a live versus silent auction; groups auction items. Will do silent auctions and wait to get last bids in. Their auction house also watches what is going on and can create a live auction as well. The objective is to make the process entertaining; and for a fee of \$10 offers training on how to do auctions. Tiffany pointed out they are not trying to sell this woman to those on the call but the auction house does offer ways to engage a crowd, and not make the process boring. They also look at past auctions, decide what sells/does not sell to determine what works best for your organization. Terry suggested that when doing a live auction, consider who has bid before and who they may have a history of bidding against. Sometimes there is a competition among bidders. Those competing may not spend a lot for their table but generate considerable revenue for your organization if you are strategic on who you place them near to allow for their history of competing against each other during the bidding process.

The auction is typically part of another event. The event is a large event but also works for smaller events. There was also mention of successful auctions with wine or something else that can be found on the League of American Orchestras website that can be tailored to your own orchestras.

Tiffany sought comments from the Participants on the call to also share any great fundraising ideas they may wish to share. **Participant 4** noted that her organization has a new idea being rolled out tonight. Fundraiser at a brewery that will be catering Italian food and a performance by a blue grass band. Expect 65-75 people; priced at \$45 -\$55 a person. The brewery supports non-profits once a month and do not charge for their space. Interesting idea to support a brewery that supports non-profits. Invited their membership and the big board. Looking forward to seeing how this event works. **Participant 5** is interested in knowing how the event works out to share it with her organization.

Participant 3 also noted her interest in the outcome of the event, as they are always looking to attract younger people and men. Something like this that is appealing to men is interesting. Example ... events with meat and drinks that appeal to men versus luncheons and dinners versus style shows.

Tiffany also shared information on successful fundraising events in her community; including pre-parties leading up to their opening concert; e.g. a rock and roll band, dinner, wine tasting, with a James Bond theme and folks dressed like favorite Bond characters. Another example was to show an outdoor movie; doing a small fundraiser in same week. Tiffany dressed differently every day of the week leading up to their opening concert. Peaked curiosity and was used as a way to promote their event. Objective is to bring in a little more money and create public interest, an

opportunity to go to a bar, drink martinis. Agreed with **Participant 3** that it is important to have fun and attract men and broader audience. **Participant 4** commented on events like cooking demonstrations can also attract broader audiences and men/couples.

Tiffany also shared their use of the downtown to hold progressive dinners and assign venues to travel to that may include opportunities to shop that bring people together and have music. Locations would be close together where people can easily walk from one place to another.

WAYS TO PRESENT OUTSIDE IDEAS – TIFFANY AMMERMAN

Tiffany addressed the matter of members who have been involved for some time.

If you have new ideas to present and have more experienced groups on board, it is key to give everyone jobs to do; and ask those who are being asked to take on the roles to share the benefit of their view/ideas on what works with the newer folks. The objective is to find a way to include all and not get into “we always have done things this way.” Key is to get everyone into the discussions early on to engage and get them on board.

COMPETING WITH OUTSIDE ORCHESTRAS AND OTHER ENTERTAINMENT - DEREK WEAGLE, LEAGUE OF AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS

Tiffany commented that Derek could share great ideas based on his experiences in NYC given the many events occurring there. Had an emergency arise and was unable to remain on the call. Tiffany will have Derek send good information to everyone on competing with orchestras and other entertainment groups.

She went on to identify Las Vegas as a location with so much going on. Sometime wonders how they survive, yet they do and have won a lot of awards. Their symphony does a lot. Have had designers come in. Also had successful wine auctions, designer homes, and dinners. Sharon commented on the great job that Las Vegas did to engage the consul general of Romania and members of their culture to do an event. Was very successful and other consul general wish to have their own countries featured to showcase their country and culture.

Participant 3 shared information on the collaboration between the symphony hall and opera house who are next to each other. Successfully draw audiences from their respective supporters.

When competing with other groups like in Texas, Tiffany shared how Marshall TX has become very creative to get people to come to downtown Marshall TX versus Shreveport LA by using rock and roll as well as Country western notables to draw audiences away from events in Shreveport.

Participant 4 noted that her organization also has music events at museums where they serve wine/cheese. She shared an example of an event held at the museum of Russian art, a collaboration among their respective members and their huge success as a result of the

collaboration. Tiffany agreed on the value of collaboration and how it benefits the arts all around.

CONTINUE PRIORITIZING TOPICS & DISCUSSION OF TOPICS

On the next call, Tiffany noted that we will move to leadership techniques, managing the politics; and dealing with those resistant to change.