



2013 Houston Symphony Maestro's Wine Dinner and Collector's Auction

A project of the Houston Symphony and the Houston Symphony League

Houston Symphony

615 Louisiana Street, Suite 102
Houston, Texas 77002

Orchestra Size: Group 1

MSA Population: 6,313,158

Presenter: Helen Shaffer
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Project Goals:

- Raise funds for the Houston Symphony Ima Hogg Competition and the community activities of the Houston Symphony musicians
- Salute Maestro Graf and his wife Margarita at this final event of his tenure as Music Director

Project Description:

- The Wine Dinner was first introduced in May 2002 as part of Maestro Hans Graf's first season as Music Director
- The event has grown from the 70 people who attended the first event to a sold-out celebration of more than 300 on the Jones Hall stage in 2013
- The 2013 Wine Dinner on May 19, 2013, was the culmination of a season-long salute to Maestro Graf in his final season as the Symphony's longest serving Music Director
- The theme for the evening was "If Music Be The Food Of Love, Play On"
- Tiered pricing structure:
 - Individual Tickets - \$750 and \$1,500
 - Tables - \$7,500, \$10,000, \$15,000, \$25,000 and \$50,000
 - Added incentive for the \$50,000 table
- Event capacity was expanded by building a special stage extension to accommodate 100 additional people
- The 2013 event boasted the largest silent auction in the history of the event with 84 lots
- Auction Source, a professional company, was engaged to streamline the bidding process through the use of iPad bidding
- Gift bags containing an etched, commemorative Reidel wine glass and a print of a poster designed by Hans and Margarita Graf's daughter were distributed to all guests

Timeline:

September 2012 – First meeting of Event Chairs
November 2012 – Save the Dates mailed
January – March 2013 – Event and Auction Donation solicitations mailed
April 2013 – Event invitation mailed four weeks out
April 12, 2013 – Underwriters event at home of Houston Symphony supporter
May 19, 2013 – Day of the Event

Financials:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Gross Revenue: | \$403,000 |
| In-Kind Donations: | \$134,485 |
| Expenses: | \$134,000 |
| Net Revenue: | \$269,000 |

Volunteers:

- Four volunteer Co-Chairmen
- Two volunteer Dinner Wine Chairmen
- Two volunteer Collector's Auction Chairmen
- Approximately 16 volunteer members of the Collector's Auction Committee
- 12 volunteers to assist with gift bag assembly
- Two volunteers to assist Symphony staff the night of the event

Staff support for the event:

- Twelve development staff members
- Eight administrative staff members, including the Executive Director/CEO and orchestra General Manager

Results:

- The goals of the project were achieved by maximizing fundraising potential through tiered ticket pricing, increased event capacity, expanded silent auction and streamlined bidding. Additionally, the entire evening was a special tribute to Hans and Margarita Graf for their meaningful contributions to the Houston Symphony over Hans' 12-year tenure.
- Contributing to the success and growth of the event has been: the event location (Jones Hall stage); event caterer Jackson and Company; and Houston Symphony supporters John and Lindy Rydman, owners of Spec's Wines, Spirits and Finer Foods

Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions:

- The growth of the Maestro's Wine Dinner is part of an overall increase in support of the Houston Symphony's Special Events. This growth is a result of:
 - A focus on raising the quality of special events
 - The fact that Houston is an increasingly event-driven city
 - A core group of donors who support all of the Houston Symphony's special events activity and encourage friends to attend
 - A focus on pre-selling tables and tickets as much as possible by making them available for purchase year round
- The Collector's Auction is also an important component of the event's success, and over the years, we have learned:
 - A significant amount of auction donation activity occurs in the two weeks prior to the event
 - It is important to establish a solid check-out system that ensures the security and safety of all auction items