

Seattle Symphony Volunteer Usher Program

History and Goals:

- Seattle Symphony Volunteers has ~250 members
- Program requested by the Seattle Symphony in September, 2012
- **Goal = To reduce direct expenses to the Seattle Symphony Orchestra beginning in 2012-2013 Season**
- Target = 10 volunteer ushers per Seattle Symphony sponsored concert
- Prior to 2012-2013 Season all ushers for SSO-sponsored programs were paid part-time staff of the Benaroya Hall, the management organization for SSO concerts

Process

- Recruit and train volunteer ushers in same basic skills as paid staff
- Introduce the new program to the paid staff with goal of integrating volunteers
 - Paid staff attrition would not be filled as volunteer program started
 - Enlist paid staff to willingly train and integrate volunteer ushers on site
- Set up training classes, develop training materials (by Head House Manager)
- Define and revise volunteer usher dress code (Black & white only)

Incentives

- Attendance during ½ of any concert for which a volunteer is ushering
- Comp ticket toward a future, available SSO performance
- Reduced parking in Benaroya Hall parking garage while ushering.

Specific Status (Sept., 2013 through May, 2014)

- 121 Volunteer Ushers trained and on active on volunteer usher list
- 109 or 90% actively volunteering during 2013-2014 season
- 8 usher Orientation sessions held in 2013-2014 season for 65 new volunteers
- 1155 volunteer ushers requested for 2013-2014 season, ~ 100-120 per month
- 80% fulfillment rate to date
- Some volunteers sign up for 6-8 concerts per month
- Difficult to fill POPS concerts and concerts for children

Overall Program Status

- Basically successful but goals not optimally reached. More volunteer ushers constantly needed.
- Paid ushers for Benaroya Hall have been very supportive, despite some initial reservations
- No specific commitment nor requirements have been set re number of concerts required per month
- Attrition requires continual recruitment and training in order to move toward meeting the needs
- Goal needs to be 150 trained volunteer ushers, if 90% active & usher requests remain at same level
- **Estimated savings for SSO through for 2013-2014 season (@ 80% fulfillment) = ~\$41,500.**
- **Could be ~\$52,000 at 100% fulfillment rate.**

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