

LoAO "Classic" Award • Kansas City Symphony "Royal Gala" 2022



Project Name: "Royal Gala – Let's Have a Ball!"
Organization: Symphony League of Kansas City
Orchestra: Kansas City Symphony
Project Category: Fundraising
Date of Event: September 10, 2022
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Summary & Objectives

The Kansas City Symphony has rocketed to become one of the top 25 orchestras in the United States. With a growing annual operating budget, it relies on numerous funding sources. It also relies on critical support from the **Symphony League of Kansas City and its tremendously successful Symphony Ball.**

The Kansas City Symphony League, formed in 1942, has evolved into a major financial benefactor to the Kansas City Symphony. The fundraising concepts and venue have varied over the years; starting with the successful "Fashion Shows" headlined by celebrated worldwide designers of the day.

In 1983 the **Symphony Ball was born.** Since then, it's been the League's major fundraiser and established itself as one of the Kansas City metropolitan area's premier events. The exquisitely themed "Balls" have included cocktail hour, elegant dinner, silent auction, a performance by the Symphony and often notable guest artists followed by an after-party. **After COVID, 2022 was a pivotal year to update and refresh "The Ball" concept to make it more compelling to a wider demographic.**

2022 Ball Fundraiser Goals:

Our goals were to:

- Expand support for the Symphony
- Raise significant funds
- Be diligent regarding expenses
- Diversify the attendees

Our Strategies were to Attract:

- Past and existing symphony ball supporters.
- Highly involved community activist leaders who have not supported the Symphony in the past.
- A younger audience and next-gen that are potential symphony supporters.

And to expand:

- Board participation
- Key contributors by creating additional giving levels that fund what some particular donors' value.
Examples: "The Michael Stern Guest Artist circle" "The Community Engagement Circle"
- Raise awareness of the Symphony' goals, accomplishments and ability as a catalyst for improving quality of life

Thus, for the 2022 event, **our goal was to create a unique EVENT EXPERIENCE** and update the name: The Kansas City Symphony League presents: "The Royal Gala – Let's Have a Ball!" The "Let's have a ball!" tagline is a fun reference to the 2022 honorary chairs, Marny and John Sherman, the Kansas City Royals' principal owners, as we partnered with our beloved Royals and the historic cultural past of KC – known as a baseball town and a music town!



LoAO “Classic” Award • Kansas City Symphony “Royal Gala” 2022 (cont.)

2022 Ball Execution

Our goal was to appeal to our Symphony League members and typical Symphony supporters who have attended the annual ball in the past. But, like most arts organizations, **it was important to reach out to a more diverse group including a younger demographic.**

By creating a theme that was fresh and fun—with a more relaxed dress recommendation that included cocktail attire and business suits as well as the usual black-tie and ball gowns—we wanted to encourage people who may have never participated before.

Guests were treated to a celebration of Kansas City and its historic, authentic music and entertainers in an era when KC was a baseball town and a music town – a center of the universe for jazz, blues and swing. We delighted guests by involving them in a thematic program that provided a taste of the culture of Kansas City within the walls of the architectural jewel, The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts.

Of course, as the main attraction Michael Stern created a “Royal” Concert that fits the theme, transporting our audience to a time when KC was swinging and hoppin’! While the Symphony concert was the centerpiece of the evening, **we enhanced and expanded the event with additional entertaining and interactive elements to celebrate KC’s musical roots: Jazz, Swing, Bebop and diverse musicians—from both past and present: Count Basie, Charlie Parker, Bobby Watson, and Lonnie McFadden. Further, we contracted Lonnie McFadden, his brother Ronnie and group to entertain for three hours after the concert at our supper club – “The Shutout Room,” where dinner and listening plus dancing music was provided.**

Our audience experienced the “Royal” treatment as we applauded our partnership with our benevolent Kansas City Royals, celebrated other iconic KC royalty including KC music, its diverse musicians, and we honored our KC Symphony Music Director, Michael Stern, for his unprecedented years of transforming the KC Symphony into a world-class orchestra. **A new Gala/Ball sponsorship level was designated to fund renowned star guest artists (as never before) to cap off Michael Stern’s final Kansas City season (23/24) – The Michael Stern Guest Artist Circle. Another unique sponsorship added as the well-received Community Engagement Circle, to sustain and expand educational programs for youth at all socioeconomic levels as well as community outreach symphony performances.**

Results: Goals were met and exceeded

- **Attendance was at capacity** and would have been greater had we had additional space.
- **Low percentage of costs to revenue (17%).**
- **Raised significant funds totaling \$1,381,930.** Largest historical amount as of 2022.