

The Call Sheet

SFSC PERFORMING ARTS NEWSLETTER

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Box Office Blockbusters

Producing a Broadway musical today can cost producers between \$10 million and \$15 million. Some shows like *Tuck Everlasting*, *Bright Star*, and *Chess* are recent flops, meaning they didn't earn enough ticket revenue to cover production costs.

Some shows like *The Lion King* (grossing \$1.4 billion), *Phantom of the Opera* (grossing \$1.1 billion), and *Wicked* (grossing \$1.06 billion) are huge hits, both in New York and on tour.

According to Ken Davenport of Davenport Theatrical Enterprises which has produced *Kinky Boots* and *Godspell*, "Some 21 percent of musical shows recouped their costs while 79 percent did not."

Recent high grossing performances at SFSC are Jay Leno, Beach Boys, Buddy Holly, and Bill Cosby. "However, the costs of presenting those shows are typically high," said Melissa Lee, SFSC controller. "A show might have a high gross, but a



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Gary Mauer as The Phantom of the Opera.

BLOCKBUSTERS

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narrow profit margin.”

Ticket sales do not cover the full costs of presenting performances. During the 2016 – 2017 season, ticket sales covered 70% of total costs. Sponsorships, donations, grants, advertising, and concession sales are necessary to offset expenses such as artist fees, lodging, hospitality, security, staffing, marketing, transportation, production, utilities, equipment, and other costs.

“SFSC isn’t in the performing arts business to make money,” said Glenn Little, SFSC vice president for business affairs. “Our mission is to offer opportunities for cultural and educational enrichment by providing a



Amazing Grace is a National Broadway tour coming to the Artist Series on Thursday, Feb. 8.

wide array of performances, concerts, presentations, and exhibits. It’s our goal to achieve that mission without losing dollars.”

SFSC’s mission of “providing a wide array of performances, concerts...” explains the rationale for presenting performances

that are not expected to sell out. “Many people in our community enjoy live classical music or ballet and we book shows to reach a diverse group of people,” said Cindy Garren, Director, Cultural Programs. “Some shows are booked to bring in something new and exciting like Black Violin or VoicePlay, so we can reach out to younger members of the community. Some shows sell out in other Florida markets but don’t do well here. On the other hand, shows that do well here, don’t always sell well in other markets. It’s a conundrum!”



The Righteous Brothers bring their biggest hits to the Artist Series on Saturday, March 3.



Good Vibrations

Getting Upgrades To Our Sound System

Gil Carney, technical director for SFSC Performing Arts, supervised a comprehensive upgrade of the sound system this summer. Carney, who attended DeVry Tech for electronics and worked as a sound engineer/technical director for CBS, worked with consultants from Yamaha, Meyer Sound, and ShowPro to enhance the sound systems in the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts and the SFSC University Center.

“When I heard my first concert at the Wildstein Center and read all the audience comments about the sound quality, I knew that my first goal was to repair, rebuild, and re-configure the sound system,” said Carney, who toured as the sound engineer with Barry Manilow, Kris Kristofferson, Oak Ridge Boys, Tommy Tune, and The Bronx Wanderers. “It’s taken us four months to complete the project, and I am thrilled with the results.”

Meyer Sound, considered one of the best sound equipment companies in the world, tuned the Wildstein Center PA system to the building. Tuning deals with feedback issues, sound balance, and frequency



Our Technical Director, Gil Carney, working hard to improve your concert experience at the Wildstein Center.

response.

“We re-configured the main speakers that hang from the ceiling in the auditorium,” said Carney. “They were really misaligned. Each speaker is now specifically and individually tuned to reproduce a flat response to all areas of the seating area resulting in less than 1Db difference anywhere in the auditorium.”

SFSC purchased a brand new digital sound board, a Yamaha CL-5. “A CL-5 provides really efficient sound control and many

touring artists today request it,” Carney added. An on-stage monitor console was also installed which provides a separate sound mix for the performers.

The SFSC University Center also had its entire sound system upgraded to provide better sound control and sound reinforcement.

The sound enhancement project for both venues cost approximately \$70,000 plus labor.



A Triumphant Return

Bringing Back the Kaleidoscope Series in a New Way

SFSC Performing Arts received its first National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant to present a series of free, culturally diverse performances in the SFSC University Center. The project, Engaging Rural Audiences through the Arts, is a new cultural initiative that targets local residents in the rural communities of Highlands, Hardee and DeSoto counties with a series of performances and a new travelling exhibit created by the Museum of Florida Art and Culture (MOFAC).

Underwritten by the city of Avon Park and Sebring Radio Group, SFSC presented four, free concerts in the 250-seat SFSC University Center. Each performance featured a free arts workshop for youth led by Karla Repress and Megan Stepe, SFSC Art Department



Nicole Henry and her band put on an amazing show.

faculty members.

Performances were Partha Bose and Samir Chatterjee (sitar and tabla), Nicole Henry (jazz), Atlantic Children's Theatre presentation of "Florida Treasure," and Orquesta Caribeño Tropical (Latin and Caribbean music.)

This project was supported in part by an award from the NEA.



A child creates her own map of Florida at a pre-show arts workshop before the performance of Florida Treasures.



Comments from Audience Surveys:

"Thank you. A welcome break to get away for a while from dealing with Irma's havoc."

"Had a wonderful time. Brought my daughter who's in fourth grade, and her class is studying Florida history."

"Often hear Highlands County has nothing to offer. Aren't they mistaken? Thank you for offering this concert."

"Please continue these types of cultural programs in our rural community."

Want to get free tickets?

Simply put together a group of 12 friends, co-workers, or family members for any upcoming performance! Group leaders always get a free ticket plus you can save as much as 50 percent on admission. Call the SFSC Box Office for group discount information at 863-784-7178.

Proudly display our "Just See It" bumper sticker and you can win two free tickets to a show. Bumpers stickers are \$3 and available at the



You can win free tickets if we see your car around town with a "Just See It" Bumper Sticker.

concession stand.

Students with a current ID get a free ticket to any jazz performance. Simply

show up at the SFSC University Center on the night of the show, and present your student ID.



Holiday Donations for the Salvation Army

Bring non-perishable food or an unwrapped toy to any performance after Thanksgiving to donate to the Salvation Army. Collection boxes are located in the theater lobby.

Thank you for your donation!

Call for Volunteers

If you'd like to volunteer as an usher, ticket taker, or front of house helper, go online and complete the application form at www.sfscarts.org/volunteer or contact Mitzi Farmer at 863-784-7284. The next volunteer training session is Friday, Jan. 5 at 9:30 a.m.

Secrets of the Box Office

SFSC Performing Arts has been leasing a CRM (customer relations management) system for the past four years for ticket sales, fundraising, volunteer management, and other operational needs. Because of today's technology, our box office staff know the exact minute the ticket was purchased, if a ticket is a duplicate or a fake, and can track names of all customers that opened one of our emails.

Years ago, the best seats were usually available by purchasing them at the box office window, so people would line up early to grab the seats in the first few rows. "That's no longer the case," said Lorrie Smith, SFSC Box Office manager. "A subscriber always gets the best seats because he or she renews during the summer months before the general public. Next, we fill seats for new subscribers and groups, and then we put all available seats up for sale online. By the time we open the box office window in October, a show could be sold at 50 percent or more."

Often we are asked, "Why was someone able to buy front row seats on the night of the



Sponsor Lavon Cobb of L. Cobb Construction and his wife pose with the cast of *So Good For the Soul*.

show?" Every artist's contract requires that the venue holds seats in the first ten rows for their use. If the artist isn't using those seats, the venue releases them on the day of the show. In most cases, those artist seats aren't available.

Another question patrons pose: "If the show is sold out, why are there six empty seats next to me?" Empty seats are common because someone didn't show up for the performance.

Today's box office technology offers many advantages. A few years ago, an artist suffered a health emergency and couldn't perform. Because the system captures phone numbers and emails, our box office staff was able to

contact every ticket holder and alert them to the unexpected cancellation. "Wherever you buy a ticket, it's always best to give a good phone number and email so the venue can reach you," Smith said.

Joining our email list is the best way to get current information. If a new performance is added, an email is sent immediately. "Many people are hesitant to give their email, thinking that we share it with others, but that is not the case," Smith said.

Another advantage of the box office system is snagging people who make copies of tickets or actually create a fake ticket. "Someone once went to a lot of trouble to design a

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SECRETS

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ticket so he could sit next to his girlfriend, but he used the wrong seat number, and we caught the culprit," Smith said. "We gave him the option to actually buy a ticket for the show, but he refused."

The biggest secret in the box office is your credit card

information. It isn't stored anywhere--certainly, not in hard copy files in the box office nor on the college's computer or servers. "SFSC is PCI* compliant, and we are diligent about securing and protecting your credit card information," Smith said.



* Technical and operational standards that businesses are required to adhere to in order to ensure that cardholder data is protected. PCI, or Payment Card Industry, compliance is enforced by the PCI Standards Council, and all businesses that store, process, or transmit credit card data electronically are required to follow the compliance guidelines.

Because You Asked....

(Actual questions from our audience surveys)

Why is it always so cold in the theater?

We agree with you that sometimes it is cold in the theater, particularly upon arrival and when there are several empty seats in the theater. The seating area or house must be extra cool prior to opening the doors due to the infusion of possibly more than 1,400 patrons. The HVAC system isn't large enough to adjust quickly to the addition of so many 98.6 degree bodies, so the air temperature typically warms up several degrees during the show. Further, many artist contracts

stipulate that the stage and backstage is kept at 68, 70, or 72 degrees due to the hot stage lighting. Remember that stage lights and other equipment generate heat requiring the HVAC system to work harder to maintain the onstage temperature.

As our mothers used to say, "Don't forget your sweater."

Why don't you book shows like the Dr. Phillips Center

(or the Straz or Ruth Eckerd)?

SFSC books many shows that also tour to other Florida performing

arts centers. Venues with higher programming budgets can afford to book more expensive artists like Kristen Chenoweth, Steve Martin, or Harry Connick Jr. Sometimes artists do not accept our offers to perform at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center. Other times an artist may only be available during dates that our venue isn't available due to other events or holidays.

Why does Cindy talk so much?

Believe us, everyone on staff asks that same question!



SCENES FROM A PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



Sharion Hudson of All Around Septic and Sewer and her grandchildren with the cast of *Beauty and the Beast*.



Jim and John learn about our new CL-5 console from Technical Director Gil Carney.



Orquesta Caribeno Tropicale perform a touching tribute for Puerto Rico.



Jazz Series sponsors Clem and Betz Newbold rock out at the Reveal Dinner.



One or more performances are funded in part by a grant from South Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts.