

Thinking on Their Feet

Chamber music presenters are nothing if not resourceful. Just as they have worked to build vibrant new audiences, many are now forging innovative relationships with nongovernment funders.

Ken Fischer of the University Musical Society (UMS), a presenting organization loosely affiliated with the University of Michigan, has the imagination of a marketing pro. In exchange for corporate contributions of at least \$5,000, he prints the pictures of the CEOs of the donor companies in the front of the seasonal program book, along with the corporate logo and a testimonial quotation. The winter 1996 book displays twenty-seven such pictures, each a not-so-subtle reproach to those CEOs in the Detroit-Ann Arbor area who have yet to contribute.

Fischer has struck up a relationship with a local restaurant that gives a 20 percent discount on dinners the night of a concert, and then provides transportation to and from the event. Attendees often linger at the restaurant for a post-concert drink, boosting business even more. "The restaurant is always packed on concert nights, and this helps us fill our hall," Fischer says. Toward the entertainment of artists and key chamber music patrons, the restaurant kicks in an additional \$4,000 in food and service.

When Fischer discovered that a local law firm did significant business in St. Petersburg, Russia, he asked the firm to underwrite a performance of a chamber group from that city, which it did.

Finally, friends and supporters of UMS host Delicious Experiences, a variety of benefit dining events during the season. Proceeds go to the organization.

The Chamber Music Society of St. Cloud, Minnesota, builds an event called Musical Chairs around a visiting chamber group. For the price of a ticket (between \$25 and \$100), patrons dine on extravagant desserts, participate in a silent auction of the work of local artists, and listen to the visiting pros perform. Local amateurs can also bid for the right to join the professionals for some music-making. Among the groups to have participated in these fund raisers are the Cavani, Muir, and Miami string quartets.

Musicorda in South Hadley, Massachusetts, kicks off its season with a barbecue. For \$12.50, supporters feast on barbecued chicken, served next to the Lower Lake on the Mount Holyoke College campus, where they can rub shoulders with the summer's student and professional players.

The Sarasota Music Festival gift shop, a project of the Friends of the Festival, sells seasonal posters (at \$25), notecards (\$10 for 8), and paper note cubes (\$8 each). These items are available at the gift shop and through the mail and can be ordered on the same form as tickets to the musical events.

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are going to need much more than that," he predicts. Cole urges presenters to recognize that the audience for chamber music is not declining, it's just shifting its interests. Concert-goers may not want to hear traditional groups like string quartets, but they do want to hear gamba playing and chant. "Sales of CDs confirm this," he says. "Presenters have to take a broader view of the musical landscape."

Chamber Music Society of Detroit. As executive director of the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, Maury Okun doesn't worry too much about cuts in NEA funding. That's because the society, with a budget of \$260,000, has never received any NEA money. In fact, the organization never received any government funds until this year, when the Michigan State Council for the Arts presented it with a \$5,000 grant. The secret of Detroit's independence, says Okun, has been "a very strong audience willing to pay to go to concerts, and a very strong volunteer leadership group." Okun plans to look more aggressively for corporate and individual donors "to diversify where we get our funding and to guard against hard times." Okun oversees another group in Detroit, the Chamber Winds En-

semble, that has not been so fortunate. State support for the ensemble declined from \$27,000 to \$21,000 in 1996, and federal support of \$4,000 disappeared entirely.

Da Camera Society. Los Angeles' Da Camera Society receives nearly 25 percent of its \$500,000 budget from government funding, according to executive director MaryAnn Bonino. But the city of Los Angeles, not the federal government, is the primary source. Da Camera's relationship with the city is healthy, says Bonino, and she does not anticipate a funding cut. She is, however, worried about a trickle-down effect from cuts at the NEA. "The whole thing is so volatile that it's difficult to say how secure our funding really is," she says. "The city has been good to us, but if federal funding for the state is cut, and the state in turn cuts the city's arts budget, we might be affected."

Dallas Chamber Music Society. "We will not scale back what we offer because of cuts," asserts Dorothea Kelley, executive director of the Dallas Chamber Music Society for the past thirty-nine years. "I am dead set against that." But Dallas faces an uncertain future. The society's \$50,000 budget has lost \$5,700 in state grant money since 1994-95; it now receives only \$1,300.