

# SHOW PRODUCTION & PROMOTION

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER  
WHEN PRODUCING A PUBLIC CONCERT



## **A. MOTIVES**

- 1) Why are we having this show?
- 2) Are we really just trying to cover our expenses?
- 3) Are we trying to fund many projects throughout the year with these revenues such as new arrangements, coaching, costumes, risers, sound system, contest travel and charitable contributions?
- 4) Is the show just a round about way to get the chorus to learn some new songs?
- 5) If we put on a first class production, doesn't the show become the single best marketing tool to attract new members and other outside bookings throughout the year?

## **B. THE CUSTOMER**

- 6) Who buys a majority of tickets; family, friends, the general public or other barbershoppers?
- 7) Do our patrons (really) walk away satisfied?

## **C. THE TALENT**

- 8) What are we offering that would urge a patron to buy a ticket?
- 9) Should we hire a professional Master of Ceremonies?
- 10) Will we have just local groups or should we bring in one or more headliner acts?
- 11) Should we seek professional (outside) help in scripting, production and marketing duties or rely on folks that do this sort of thing once a year?
- 12) What show could we produce that would prompt folks to buy a plane ticket to attend and/or have people driving to our town from miles around to attend? Believe me, it happens more than you think.
- 13) If we're a Barbershop Harmony Society chapter, should we consider hiring a top notch Sweet Adelines International or Harmony, Inc. quartet to draw local Sweet Adelines?
- 14) If we're a Sweet Adelines International or Harmony Inc. chapter, should we hire a top notch Barbershop Harmony Society quartet to draw local Society members to the show?

## **D. THE BUDGET**

- 15) What is our budget for the show? (fixed & variable expenses)

16) Do we have a contingency plan? (reserve fund) if sales are poor?

### **WHERE THE REVENUES COME FROM?**

17) Will more of the revenues come from selling ads in the program or from ticket sales?

18) How many tickets do we usually sell?

19) What have we been charging for tickets in the past?

20) What do other organizations in your town charge for their tickets?

21) Will the afterglow be a cast party or will we charge admission and offer another more informal show?

### **WHAT ARE OUR EXPENSES?**

22) What is our advertising budget?

23) What will insurance cost us?

24) What will the ASCAP/BMI copyright fees cost?

25) Do we want the audience to hear us? Should we spend money to rent a professional sound system and engineer or use the “free” antique system that comes with the hall and have some high school kid run it?

26) Who will serve as ushers?

27) Can we trade out advertising in the program with local merchants to reduce out of pocket expenses for things like hotel rooms, ground transportation, and afterglow facility?

28) Do we build our own sets & props or rent them?

29) Will we serve food or drink at the afterglow?

30) Is the lighting in the hall adequate or should we rent equipment and manpower to make it better?

### **E. THE HALL**

31) What venues are available and which one would be best suited to holding our show?

32) How far in advance can we reserve the facility?

33) Is it a union (\$\$) hall?

## **F. MARKETING**

34) Can we get any of the local radio stations to run PSA's (Public Service Announcements) to promote the show or play a cut from a CD of our headliner quartet?

35) Can we get one of the local papers to do a story about the show with photos, profiling the local chapter or the headliner group that will be on the show?

36) Can we get one of the local TV stations to run PSA's about the show or send a camera crew to the show to film a segment to run on the nightly news broadcast?

37) Do we have a mailing list? If so, is the name of every barbershopper, Sweet Adeline and Harmony Inc. member within a 60-mile radius on that list?

38) How accurate is our mailing list? Regular mailings that request forwarding information will help keep you mailing list current.

39) Do we offer a door prize at every show to gather names for our mailing list or to seek potential members?

40) Should we place an ad in the district bulletin to promote the show?

41) Can the headliner quartet provide us with names from their mailing list in our region of the country to add to our list and attract new patrons? ACOUSTIX does this on a regular basis.

## **G. MISCELLANEOUS**

42) Will the show have a theme?

43) Should we have general admission or reserved seating?

44) Is the purpose of the afterglow to give every quartet (good or not so good) within a 60-mile radius an opportunity to perform or to give the chorus members a chance to hear and/or sing with your headliner quartet?

45) Should we have just one show or two?

46) If we've been going with a two show weekend every year, but only filling half the seats of each show, shouldn't we consider having just one show and making it a sellout?

47) Will we save money by holding two shows in one day instead of having a Friday and Saturday evening format?

## CONCLUSION:

In my travels as a member of a show quartet (Class of the 80s & ACOUSTIX) I have sung on all kinds of shows in all kinds of facilities. The ticket prices have ranged anywhere from \$5 to \$50 for special patron seating. I have seen shows where at \$5 a ticket, the chapter sold half the house and the chapters with a \$20 ticket price (with usually a better product) sold every seat in the house.

I know that many chapters say they could never afford the cost of hiring a big name show quartet. Many chapters would disagree with that philosophy. They would tell you they wouldn't risk having a show WITHOUT a big name group. You have to be willing to spend money to make money.

Case in point: Several years ago (the first time we did their show) the Wooster Ohio Chapter hired two International Champ quartets, ACOUSTIX and the BLUEGRASS STUDENT UNION on the same show at \$5 per ticket. They packed the house and covered all the expenses with program ad revenues. The ticket sales were all profit. They did so well; they hired ACOUSTIX again, this time with MARQUIS. It can be done.

The proficiency level of the local choruses I've shared the stage with has ranged from excellent to poor. I'm sad to admit that there have been several over the years where the chorus should have PAID THE AUDIENCE to sit through their set. That cannot possibly be good PR for our Society.

If learning a bunch of songs and getting them to an acceptable level is beyond the capabilities of your chorus, you are better off (from a PR point of view) to get a strong opening and closing number polished and turn over the rest of the performing duties to other more proficient groups and your headliner act. There is no law that says the host chorus is required to sing 30-45 minutes on the show! **10 minutes of quality is better than 30 minutes of mediocrity.**

Aside from exhaustive rehearsals to get the chorus ready, I can tell you from personal experience that show production often involves months of hard work and planning (behind the scenes) and can be the single event that funds an entire year's worth of (much needed) projects. (Charitable or otherwise)

In my opinion, if you're going to work that hard for something, **DO IT RIGHT!** I can't fathom the logic of working many long hours and extremely hard to produce an entertaining show with the aspiration of just covering your expenses.