

SCREENING THE SINGING REVOLUTION AS A FUND RAISER: NUTS AND BOLTS

How it works

Basically, “The Singing Revolution” film is screened (open to the public), with a filmmaker Q&A appearance. All direct costs are subtracted from total ticket sales. 75% of net money raised goes to your choir, and 25% to paying off *The Singing Revolution* debt.

Additionally, DVDs, books, and music CDs (all related to the film) are sold on site. 33% of those total proceeds go to your choir, and 67% to *The Singing Revolution*.

Last, a book, movie poster, and DVD signed by the filmmakers are provided for silent auction. 100% of these proceeds go to your choir.

The Singing Revolution was produced and directed by James Tusty and Maureen Castle Tusty, a husband and wife filmmaking team. Depending on schedule and circumstances, either or both might attend a given screening.

Benefits

Money raised is the direct benefit. A secondary, but very significant, benefit is introducing your choir to a new audience. Film buffs, history buffs, people of Baltic descent, and Eastern Europeans in general might come to the film screening even though they have never heard of or seen your choir. These people can be cultivated to enlarge your choir’s following and to find new patrons. By definition, they are all people who attend cultural events or they wouldn’t come to the screening in the first place.

The benefit is far more than the money raised for one movie screening.

Building an Audience for the Screening

The following tools can be used to build buzz for the screening:

1. The filmmakers can help you approach local Baltic organizations (if they exist).
2. The filmmakers have a 30,000 person “friends” list with email addresses sorted by zip code. They will send a generic email of all screenings in a given month to their full mailing list, but also will custom email any “friend” on the list who lives within 100 miles of your event location with specific information about your screening.
3. The filmmakers are available by phone for local talk show radio interviews. The interviews typically include the local choir director along with the filmmakers. This gives the interview a powerful combination of local and national appeal.

4. Send out press releases to your local print and web news sources.
5. The filmmakers will provide you with full-sized movie posters, as well as smaller mini-posters that can be put up on bulletin boards at colleges, coffee shops, and elsewhere.
6. The filmmakers provide you with an editable 8½ x 11 flyer (in WORD) that can be customized for your choir and location, and printed via your own computer. This flyer includes national film review quotes and images.
7. Announce the screening date at choir concerts held in the months before the screening. This is critical.
8. Direct mail and email to your existing choir supporters.
9. Approach local college film programs (both filmmaking and film appreciation), and get them invested in promoting the screening to their students and supporters. Give them a mention in the program if warranted. Coordinate the date with them prior to setting it.
10. Approach local college history programs. Programs that teach the Cold War, Communism, World War II, or Nonviolent Revolution would have particular interest.
11. Approach local college music programs. This is a film that shows music is more than entertainment. It shows the political and cultural power of music.
12. Approach other like-minded local cultural organizations.
13. If you screen the film at a local cinema art theater, leave flyers in the lobby well in advance of the event. You can pick up cinema art film buffs this way.

What might an event look like?

There are many ways to set up such an event. The following is a sample schedule to give you one idea of how this might work:

- 2:00PM Choir director welcomes the audience and introduces the filmmaker
- 2:05 Filmmaker introduces film
- 2:15 Film begins
- 3:15 Intermission
- 3:25 Film continues and finishes
- 4:10 Your choir sings 4 Estonian songs from the film on stage
- 4:25 Screening ends...DVDs, CDs, and books are for sale in the lobby
- 5PM Reception with silent auction items for sale, and with filmmaker present to talk with patrons one-on-one.
- 6:30PM Reception ends, private dinner with filmmaker and 5 or 6 people

Other options include having the choir sing at the reception as well, or sing either before the film starts or during the intermission.

But this is only a suggestion. There are many ways to host a public screening.

What might this cost?

As with many non-profit efforts, the key is how much can be provided “in-kind”. The actual costs will vary market to market and situation to situation, but here are some things to consider:

- Theater rental...figure about \$750.
- Filmmaker travel...the filmmakers live on the East Coast. Airfare might range from \$400 to \$800.
- Filmmaker hotel....this is often provided “in kind”
- Event food and drink..... this is often provided “in kind”

What else might I think of?

1. You want plenty of lead time to build the audience. 6 months or more...
2. A volunteer is needed to sell the DVDs, books and DVDs.
3. The film plays best in a real theater, not an adapted conference room. Because of some subtitles, an inclined floor for a clear view of the screen is critical.

What can I charge?

This depends on your local market. What has worked is a three-tiered price structure: a student ticket price, a basic price for the film screening alone, and a premium price for the reception.

Do I need to have a filmmaker present?

No. We are glad to provide public screening rights for the 25% income share alone. The simple question is whether an appearance will attract more money in additional ticket sales than the cost of filmmaker travel. Keep in mind there is no appearance fee beyond the 25% income share with or without the filmmaker. Your only additional cost is travel.

What if I have more questions?

The filmmakers are available to discuss how to best make this event a success. Email co-producer Maureen Castle Tusty at maureen@singingrevolution.com.