

IX - FINANCES

Garnering financial support is commonly a daunting challenge for voluntary, non-profit community organizations. In the absence of a special source of funds or an affluent sponsor, such groups must depend heavily on smaller contributions from many individuals in the community. So it has been with the Denton Bach Society.

But while it has never had a guardian angel, the Denton Bach Society has had some exceptionally devoted individual donors, and it has had several other important sources of funds. In general, support, while limited, has been adequate for the organization's basic needs, and sufficiently stable to assure continuity of function.

The Society's annual budget has fluctuated considerably, depending upon incoming funds--which shape the number and types of concerts that can be presented. In recent years the budget has edged upward to well above the \$10,000 level. This still seems like a modest sum in today's world of soaring salary and budgetary figures, but it is a formidable amount for an organization that stands as one among many in the community competing for funds. In any case, the Bach Society surely represents a cultural and artistic bargain for the Denton community.

Sources of Revenues

Complete financial records of the Denton Bach Society do not exist, but sufficient data are available from which a general picture of the organization's financial status and operations can be drawn.

The major sources of funds for the organization historically can be categorized as follows: membership donations, ticket sales, grants, and Bachfest proceeds. A few miscellaneous sources also deserve mention.

Membership. Individual membership contributions have provided the financial foundation for the Denton Bach Society. Traditionally, membership in the Society has been defined rather loosely to include anyone who "donates time, talent or money." The concept of "contributing member" as here defined is more precise, however. It refers to persons who have made a specific monetary donation. Their names are listed on concert programs.

For the first twelve seasons, there were only two categories for giving: Member up to \$24) and Patron (\$25 or more). Since the 1988-89 season, the membership categories have changed several times. For the twentieth season, these categories have been defined as follows:

Friend (up to \$24)
Member (\$25-\$74)
Benefactor (\$75-\$124)
DBS 100 (\$125 or more)
Angel (\$500 or more)

Inasmuch as program notes for several concerts are no longer available, it is not possible to specify precisely how many people have given money to the Denton Bach Society. However, contributing members' names are listed cumulatively during a given season, with the final concert program providing a complete list of that season's contributors. Hence, it is feasible to calculate quite closely the numbers of persons who have contributed during any given season (so long as at least one program is available), without incurring a serious undercount or egregious inaccuracies.

On the basis of data available for this study, 562 different contributors have appeared on concert programs.

"Contributor" here refers to any name or names in a separate listing. Typically, only one individual's name is listed, but frequently there are two (e.g., married couples). In fact, double entries account for forty percent of the total number of listings. And when these are taken into account, a grand total of 796 individual persons have been recognized as making a financial contribution to the Denton Bach Society since its origin in 1976.

In the last program of the inaugural season, Sunday, March 27, 1977, the following persons were listed as Patrons of the Society:

George J. Basbas
Bruce & Jane Brough
Charles & Nancy Brown
Mr. & Mrs. Cecil Dickinson
Dr. & Mrs. J. Wilgus Eberly
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Estes
Hildegard Froehlich
Harold Heiberg
Hugh & Lina Kirkpatrick
Robert & Carol Lynn Mizell
Herb & Jean Schaake
Peg Bie Shauck
Erwin & Kate Schwegler
Mr. & Mrs. Wesley Smith

Nine of these contributors' names appear also on the last program of the twentieth anniversary season: Robert Estes, Hildegard Froehlich, Harold and Eva Heiberg, Hugh and Lina Kirkpatrick, Herb and Jean Schaake, and Sue Smith.

Nine contributors (single or double) are known to have given during 15 or more seasons. An additional 21 are listed for at least ten seasons, while 43 more have contributed during at least five seasons. Hence, 73 of the 562 donors have given during five or more of the twenty seasons.

For the twentieth anniversary season a new and special support group was established. Membership in this group, called DBS 100, was accorded to any individual or business or professional organization in the Denton area that supported the Society at the Patron level of \$125 or more per year. Thirty-five charter members of DBS 100 were listed in the March 31, 1996, program. Their names are found in Appendix I.

Clearly, there are many people who attend the Denton Bach Society concerts who care enough to make additional financial sacrifices. What has motivated so many of them over the years?

Harold and Eva Heiberg have the distinction of being the only ones to have contributed to the Society for each of its twenty seasons. Says Harold: "A Denton Bach Society? We felt this was something that absolutely should be supported...we are great admirers of Bach and his music, and this was a very worthwhile endeavor." Alton Donsbach has said: "Roberta and I support the Denton Bach Society because [it] has made a real contribution to the Denton cultural scene...and, because we enjoy the music." Other frequent contributors have expressed similar sentiments, and always, it seems, the crucial factor has been "the music."

Admission Fees. The Denton Bach Society has been of two minds about charging admission to concerts. In its beginning, the Society charged nominal admission fees. Single concert tickets were \$2.50 each for the general public, \$1.00 for students and retired persons. Season tickets sold for \$7.50 and \$3.00, respectively.

After the Denton Bach Society's first season, however, and at its first annual meeting in May of 1977, the organization decided to abandon this practice. The issue was that instrumentalists were paid by union trust fund money which prohibited the Society from charging admission to the concerts. This was not an easy financial decision apparently, and a plea for increased member support was soon forthcoming.

In its first newsletter, published in February of 1979, the Society stated as follows:

Two years ago the Denton Bach Society decided to present its programs to the Denton community free of charge, a gift of words and music to enrich our lives. We have been aided in this endeavor by many generous people; you, with your donations and your presence at our concerts...

But:

Still, we find ourselves in need of additional funds to meet the expenses of our next two concerts. Printing, organ tuning, postage, music purchase, and instrumentalists' fees have a way of adding up.

Indeed! But for the next fourteen seasons, there would still be no admission fee.

Then, in 1991, the policy was changed again to bring back ticket sales. In its August issue of Vivace!, the Society stated that the organization's original practice of charging admission "is being reintroduced as a package of financial measures designed to ensure the financial health of the Society, to underwrite its expanding musical program, and to make it eligible for new sources of incomes from trusts and grant-providing bodies."

Tickets were to be \$5 per concert, and \$10 for a season of three concerts. The price was raised to \$7 per concert and \$15 for a season subscription during the 1993-94 season. In the twentieth, 1995-96, season, the price for a season subscription was increased again, to \$21, while individual concert tickets remained at \$7, or \$5 for seniors and students.

Grants. Grants have also been an important source of funds from the beginning. A distinguishing feature of these monies is that they are not offered to the Society's general fund, but are earmarked for specific concerts. Hence, it is essential to assess the cost for each concert individually.

In October, 1977, at the first concert of the second season, the program notes indicate that the "music for this occasion is provided by a grant from the Music Performance Trust Funds, a public service organization created and financed by the Recording Industries under agreements with the American Federation of Musicians. The grant was obtained with the cooperation of Local 72 AFM (Fort Worth Musicians Union)." Dr. Clyde Miller was listed as the Contractor.

One stricture on this particular source of funds was that they could be given only if and when organizations do not charge admission. Eventually, this source of funding was discontinued.

February 22, 1981, marked the beginning of support from a grant from the Greater Denton Arts Council (GDAC). This agency, in turn, is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and The Arts Guild of Denton.

Several other, special grants have been given to the Society for specific concerts. In November, 1983, the Texas Committee for the Humanities, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities, funded part of the cost of the Concert in Celebration of Martin Luther and Johann Sebastian Bach. Also, a program presented on December 12, 1984, at St. Andrew Episcopal Church, Fort Worth, was "under the auspices of the Fort Worth Chapter of the American Guild of Organists." More recently, the Society has received matching grants from GTE and from Mobil Oil.

Bachfest Proceeds. Bachfest, a community festival in Denton, was presented each October by the Denton Bach Society for twelve years. It was the primary fund-raising event for the Bach Society.

Voluntary organizations commonly sponsor such events as a means of getting financial support and of increasing the community's awareness of the organization. The theory seems to be that people are apt to contribute more, and find their contribution less onerous, if they are offered something in return, rather than being asked outright for money.

Bachfest was an elaborate evening of fun, food and drink; of entertainment and socializing for many Dentonites. The theme was German. Food was of the German variety--sausage and sauerkraut, certainly--and libations featured German beer. Entertainment included German folk dancing, Dale Peters and his German Band, Das Froehliche Sing-along, guest performances by the UNT Brass Choir, Dancing with Ron Fink and the Fortnight Five, William Scharnberg and his Alpenhorn, slide and sound shows, raffles, and many other entertainers and novelties. And yes, the Bach Choir sang sometimes.

The first of these galas took place in October, 1982, at the beginning of the Bach Society's seventh season. The first few Bachfests were held in the Woman's Club Building near the Denton Public Library and Civic Center, and then, for most of its history they were held in Denton's Center for Visual Arts on East Hickory Street. Tickets in the beginning were \$8.50 each, but they graduated to the \$15 level during the 1990s. (See Appendix J.)

At its height of success, as many as 255 patrons were served meals at the Bachfest, and hundreds of dollars profits were realized. Dozens of dinner tickets, donated by Denton restaurants, were raffled off, and an incalculable amount of publicity and good will were generated.

However, planning, organizing, and carrying off these elaborate affairs was a major enterprise of varied activity and detailed responsibilities--which fell into the laps of choir members and board members. In the early years, the food was prepared by the members in their homes, brought to the party, and served warm to customers. Eventually, meals were catered, but this still left myriad chores for the volunteers--and reduced the profits.

That the Bachfest was a major part of the Society's financial base for numerous years seems clear, although detailed financial records are not available. That the responsibility for putting on the gala event became an increasing burden to the members also became evident. And hiring out responsibility for this task did not prove to be the answer. Eventually, the margin of profit narrowed, and the enthusiasm and energies of the choir and board members waned, to the point that carrying on the tradition seemed no longer feasible. The last Bachfest (whose name was changed in the last season to Germanfest) was held on October 16, 1993.

Other. Another source of revenues has been corporate and business sponsorship. These include advertisers listed in the programs and the corporate sponsors who donated food, drinks, merchandise, and other amenities to the Bachfests. It was in connection with the Bachfest that T-shirts, mugs, posters, and bumper stickers were sold, but the receipts from these items were minimal.

Altogether, corporate and business contributions have accounted for an irregular, and usually small, portion of the organization's revenues in recent years: less than seven percent in 1993-94, for example, and less than one percent the year before.

Most of the business advertising thus far has occurred in connection with the Bachfest event. Forty eating establishments have contributed to the restaurant raffles held at the Bachfests. Three "major sponsors" of the Bachfests have included Ben E. Keith Co., Metzler's Food & Beverage, and Davis Bakery, while more than a dozen other business "sponsors" have also been listed.

Advertising in concert programs has not been employed as a strategy until quite recently. Eighteen Denton business establishments placed ads in two programs in 1993. By the spring of 1995 and the 1995-96 season, however, program advertising was more extensive. During this time, forty-three advertisements were placed by sixteen establishments in five programs.

This is not to imply that the Bach Society does not have the support of the Denton business community; it is more a reflection on the nature of volunteer organizations. In order for business enterprises to contribute, someone has to solicit their support, and, as has already been noted, this effort has had to come largely from choir members and board members. Because of their love for the music and their desire to share this music with the community, many members

have contributed far more than their musical talents to the Society. Not surprisingly, burnout has sometimes been the result.

All of this brings us back to the basic reality: it is the individual contributor--and the individual volunteer--who are the life-sustaining forces of this organization.

Expenditures

Broadly speaking, the expenditures of the Denton Bach Society have been of two major types: general operating expenses and concert costs. A third category of cost, which developed over the years, has been fund-raising. And for much of the Society's lifetime, fund-raising costs have been associated almost exclusively with the Bachfest enterprise.

Far and away, the largest expenditures have been for the concerts. In recent years, about two-thirds of the total expenses of the Society have been devoted to the production of the programs. In the 1992-93 season, for example, three concerts were presented. The first was the "traditional" concert of Bach Cantatas; this concert was budgeted for \$2,860. The Christmas program cost \$1,120. *Noyes' Fludde* the Chester Miracle Play with music by Benjamin Britten, was presented with The Texas Boys Choir. The budget for this concert was \$4,350. One-half of this last amount covered the expenses of the vocalists and instrumentalists. Another \$660 was for music copies. Fourteen hundred dollars was used for music and artistic directors, and for technical assistance.

This illustration reflects the variation in costs of concerts, and it demonstrates the enormity of putting on certain types of concert. Any misjudgments or unforeseen misfortunes in the revenue-raising plans can create problems; hence, the advantage of dependable, long-range sources of funds is obvious.

At the outset, the founders of the Denton Bach Society envisioned a group of musicians who would sing and play Bach's music as volunteers, for their own and other people's pleasure. This was not to be the case, however, as the organization immediately ran into the reality of musicians' union requirements.

Talented and experienced amateur choral singers have not been especially hard for the Bach Choir to come by. As for vocal soloists, the Choir has been sufficiently blessed with talent to be able frequently to draw upon its own members. And when needed, professional vocalists could be paid nominal fees for special numbers or concerts. But the use of instrumentalists was more of a financial challenge.

Instrumentalists who are union members must be paid, for rehearsal time as well as for performances. To assemble an orchestra, or even a small group of instrumentalists, capable of performing the early classical music at a professional level, often on special Baroque style instruments, immediately involved significant costs for the Denton Bach Society.

The Denton Bach Orchestra has performed in nearly one-half of the Society's 87 concerts. In the others, individual instrumentalists have performed as soloists or in small ensembles. (This is not counting the orchestras or musical groups with which the Denton Bach Society has had collaborative concert arrangements.)

Other concert costs are incurred. The music director is paid. Baroque instruments must be moved to the site of the performance. Fees for rehearsal space are sometimes charged. Advertising, printing of programs, and other, special costs (such as child care) must also be met.

General expenses have included the usual and the mundane: clerical supplies, postal permit, post office box rental, and other incidentals. Publishing the newsletter, Vivace! has been a substantial item, running to well over five hundred dollars a year. A special type of cost for the Society, amounting to several hundred dollars, has been paying the dues to Chorus America and to the Greater Denton Arts Council.

Finally, an adage says it takes money to raise money. However, it is also obvious that fund-raising costs can easily offset much or most of revenues raised. When this happens budgetary distortion can result.

So it was with the Bachfest events. These galas remained profitable largely in proportion to the amount of food, drink, materials, and labor that were donated; any catering or contracting out of services obviously reduced the profit margin. When costs tended to cancel out revenues, the Bachfests were abandoned.