Entertainment Extravaganza 2015 Report

Please see the Parents’ Weekend Talent Liaison Position Description for an overview of the job and timetable, and the report from the 2014 event. Here are some additional comments from the 2015 event.

Primary contacts this year were Ruth Mikusko and Jody Nyberg from the Stanford Office of Special Events and Protocol.

Identifying performance groups: This year several parents went to the Activities Fair at the end of September. This is a great opportunity to identify new groups and to see who is actively recruiting and promoting themselves. We also went to the Party on the Edge at the Cantor Center on October 2. Several parents volunteered and were able to observe the performances on the two outdoor stages—one devoted to vocal and one to instrumental and dance. In this way were we able to preview a number of groups that we wanted to ask to audition.

Auditioning performance groups: There is a very narrow window of time to audition groups so that the groups have settled in with their new members, and still identify and confirm the lineup before Thanksgiving. I would recommend that at the beginning of October, an email be sent to 9 or 10 groups of interest, and let them know that auditions will be taking place right after midterms. Find out their practice schedule and let them give you two or three possibilities for audition times.

Communication with the performers:

A contract was again used this year and worked well. We asked groups for photos and group description at the same time. These were used by Stanford to create the
Extravaganza web page. All of this was accomplished before Winter Break.

**The Master/Mistress of Ceremonies:** We again used someone from Robber Barons/Simps a MC. This worked very well. This year we sent out a short email to the groups asking them for input for the script and the MC wrote the script.

–Submitted by Kathleen Christman and Marcia Hansen 4/15

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**Entertainment Extravaganza 2014 Report**

Please see the Parents’ Weekend Talent Liaison Position Description for an overview of the job and timetable. Here are some comments regarding the 2014 event.

Primary contact for this position is Ruth Mikusko from the Stanford Office of Special Events and Protocol.

**Identifying performance groups:** This year we did not solicit broad input from Parent Club members regarding performance groups, as this activity in the past few years has had a low response. We did put together a list based upon prior years performances and input we received, along with information from the Stanford Arts page. We looked at the student performance for the October “Party on the Edge” at the Cantor for ideas. Other areas to find groups with be O show at NSO, although these groups might be overused. It would make sense to see who attends the activities fair at the end of September.
It is important to have general agreement on the type of show that we want to stage: e.g. classic v contemporary; instrumental, vocal, dance. In general, we want to include groups that are student run, composed of undergraduates, have not performed in the last three years, and perform at a very high level.

Beginning in October, we started contacting groups, asking if they would like to audition. In general this was met with an enthusiastic response. Several groups already had commitments on our performance date or other commitments that would make Parents’ Weekend difficult. It was particularly difficult to find a vocal group. Therefore, when we discovered that the Mendicants were available, we committed to them without an audition.

Beginning in November we started auditioning groups by attending their normal rehearsals. We had a core group of Parents’ Club members who attending these auditions. Marcia gave an enthusiastic pitch on the opportunity and all groups were excited to be considered.

Before Christmas break we decided on the groups and sent out notices. It is important to get this out before the end of winter quarter. Before Thanksgiving would be ideal.

We decided to use 6 groups this year, which caused the stage management to be very critical, but created a nice fast paced performance. In this case, the groups needed to perform at 8 minutes or under, rather than the traditional 10 minutes.

Communication with the performers: This year we used a “contract” (attached) to confirm the groups’ participation and outline expectations. This worked extremely well. This provided us with all the contact information and the groups knew that performance/rehearsal times and payment. ($200) I would recommend adding a backup or second contact to the form.
I also sent out a questionnaire via Survey Monkey to collect information from the groups. Unfortunately, because the survey included background information we traditionally have used for the script, it delayed receiving the information we needed right away, such as:

-2 line description of the group
-Their winter quarter rehearsal schedule
-A high res picture (not necessary to have the full group in the picture, as this delayed some groups in responding)
I would not recommend using a long survey in the future.

**Ticket Sales and Promotion:** Ticket prices were agreed upon at the summer meeting, and Stanford Office of Special Events and Protocol handled the ticketing process along with Parents’ Weekend registration.

Stanford included a special page for the Entertainment Extravaganza on the Parents’ Weekend website, and ticket sales were integrated with the registration for Parents’ Weekend. Having a web page up so early greatly helped the ticket sales, even though it initially had only basic information. As the groups became known the page was updated with group description and pictures. The Parents’ Club promoted the event through constant contact and Facebook page.

The process worked extremely well and ticket sales were very brisk. Since tickets needed to be included in registration packets, Stanford restricted sales to registered parents until the registration close date, January 31. By then, tickets were almost sold out.

If we are fortunate to have this same situation again, I recommend advising the performing groups in January to make sure their parents have tickets. We were left scrambling for several performers whose parents had failed to buy tickets.

**The Master/Mistress of Ceremonies:** The Club has used a variety of MC’s in the past, student government president, actors from the drama department, etc. Since a member of the SIMPS, the improvisational
team, had been such a success in 2013, I again contacted them, by emailing a coach, Dan Klein, who happily introduced me to several candidates. We chose someone from the Robber Barons that Dan had recommended. I sent her the script in February, and reviewed it with her the day of the event, going over any places where we might need her to ad-lib. She was very good, both in delivering the written script (with some challenging pronunciations) in a very tight timetable, and in ad-libing to entertain and fill time when necessary. The MC was paid $50. Although this year the MC was only asked to attend the day of the performance, it might make sense for the to come to the Mem Aud rehearsal as well.

Rehearsals: Once we knew the winter quarter rehearsal schedules for the groups, Stanford set up rehearsal time in Memorial Auditorium. Unfortunately, since Mem Aud was tightly booked, we only had the Auditorium on Sundays. We rehearsed 4 groups on a Sunday, 2 weeks before the performance and went to the regular weekday rehearsals for 2 groups to see their selection and time them. It is ideal that all groups rehearse in Memorial Auditorium, but in this case it worked fine.

Stage Management: We were fortunate to have Meredith Charlton, who was the Assistant Stage Manager in 2013, available and willing to work with Ruth Mikusko again this year to stage-manage the show. This worked extremely well. Ruth is a professional and Meredith is very experienced and worked very well with the student groups. I would recommend that a student again be hired to perform this function. We paid Meredith $75 for day of performance plus her attending part of the rehearsals 2 weeks earlier.

Programs: We continued to use the half page, two-sided layout that has been used in years past. (attached) It is a good size and cost effective. However, to keep the type at 12 point, we only had room for the short description of the groups, and not a full program with the names of their selections. The names of the selections were announced during the
performance. I had the program proofed and approved by Stanford and sent it to the groups as well. Stanford asked us to be sure to have 1800 programs, since the house was sold out at 1700.

**Day of Event:** I arrived at 1:00 on the day of the event, 15 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal. I brought refreshments and water jugs/cups for the green room, but am not sure if this is necessary. One jug of water, perhaps. I worked with the MC and directed performance groups as they arrived to check in with Stage Managers. Ushers arrived at 3 to be briefed by Stanford. See Parents’ Weekend Chair report for this. I would recommend that we have a preproduction meeting with the Chairs and Stanford the week before the event to discuss any outstanding issues: Last minute ticket sales, Auditorium Access before and during performance, level of house lights, timing on the show, etc.

This is a great event to work on. I had superior support from the Parents’ Club President, Committee, and Stanford Office of Special Events and Protocol. -Submitted by Kathleen Christman 6/14