

Washington Performing Arts

One of the most honored civic institutions in America, Washington Performing Arts made the difficult decision to transform their 600 person Annual Gala to an online and livestream event in 72 hours.

ONLINE FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

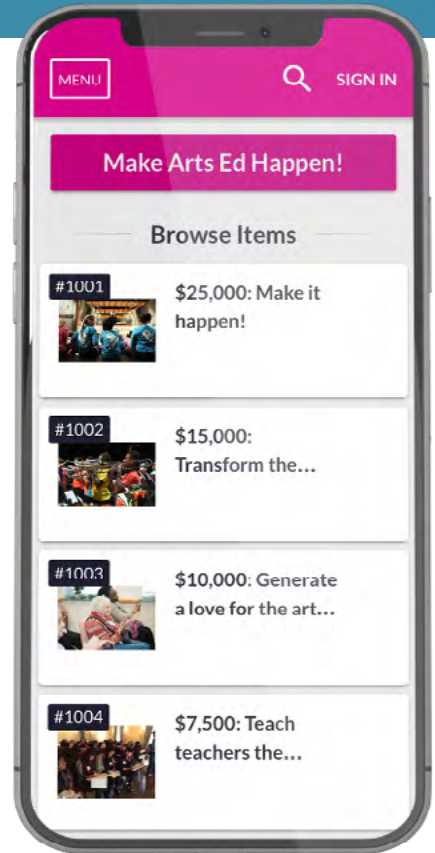
ONLINE AUCTION | ONLINE DONATION APPEAL | LIVE AUCTION

WHAT MADE THIS EVENT UNIQUE?

WPA took their in-person gala format virtual in a matter of 72 hours. Because they could open the “Virtual Gala” to the online public they reached a wider audience.

With the help of RJ Whyte Event Productions, WPA livestreamed the event from Salamander Hotel & Resort. They curated a trimmed down silent auction featuring their best items. Their auctioneer showcased the auction items throughout the virtual program.

For the Live Auction, they had a phone bank with staff so donors could call in live bids. The FundA-Need, they successfully moved their paddle raise to a digital appeal. There was a screen with scrolling donors names, enabling the auctioneer to thank supporters in real time.



VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING STRATEGIES

- Transformed event space into a TV style studio
- Showcased sponsors during program
- Kept auction to facilitate virtual appeal & live auction
- Live performances throughout virtual event
- Selected 100 best auction items to move online
- Included Gala Honoree in virtual program
- Created a gala hotline for live auction bids
- Used real-time scoreboard for live appeal updates
- Embedded links on website
- Linked to livestream, YouTube and auction together

RESULTS

612 Bids | 5.7 Bids Per Item | 1009 Supporters
100% of Items Sold | \$110K Online Donations

Both their live and silent auction exceeded the previous years goals!

BEST PRACTICES/LESSONS LEARNED

- ✓ Keep program short. Attention shorter online.
- ✓ Vary performance. Mix of live and recorded.
- ✓ Have different sets, to keep interest (main stage, interview set, auction area, phone bank).
- ✓ Highlight important information (performers, sponsors, websites, phone numbers, auction info).
- ✓ Do outreach to targeted live auction supporters.
- ✓ Push event out via social media - more the better.
- ✓ Make sponsors feel special! Ship them a bottle of wine and give shout outs.
- ✓ Utilize a pre-show. Get creative (“make a signature drink” with a guest bartender, or video loop of auction items)
- ✓ Provide links to everything in one place.

IN THEIR WORDS

“Making the switch from an in-person to virtual event was something we didn’t expect. But WPA’s virtual gala broadened their reach and overall helped raise vital funds. In the wake of this new reality, this is something that we are bringing to current and future clients.”

Roger Whyte, Principal of RJ Whyte

