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#GIVINGTUESDAY
December 1, 2015

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Social Music Making and Social Media Amplify the Voice of Chicagoans



[Rush Hour Concerts](#) (RHC) is focusing its #GivingTuesday campaign on inviting the thousands of Chicagoans who participate in its universally accessible music events to also participate in the global celebration of generosity. “#GivingTuesday isn’t about feeling obligated to donate, it’s about feeling connected, included and powerful,” says Deirdre Harrison, director of communications & development. “Legions of fans are helping us by making small donations and spreading the word through their social networks.” One of the ways RHC is mobilizing this support is

with [givn—the app for spreading generosity](#). “Social media is a place where everyone, including people who wouldn’t set foot in a gala, can make their voice heard and bring it into the public sphere.”

Social media campaigns are a natural next step for the 15-year-old organization that has become a city and community powerhouse of positive energy. While fundraising and donor recognition efforts have until recently been along more traditional lines, RHC’s music programs have always been intensely social.

The organization produces an expanding roster of always-free events. They include the beloved flagship Rush Hour Concerts Summer Concert Series, “Great Music for Busy Lives.” It offers Chicagoans the opportunity to pause at an easy-access location for a half-hour of chamber music masterworks performed by world-class artists—and even meet performers at pre-concert receptions.

RHC also produces Make Music Chicago, part of the Fête de la Musique involving 700 cities around the world in a day-long celebration of everyone’s ability to make music. The Chicago version of the event is inclusive and innovative. Harrison says they’ve assembled 300-piece orchestras that bring together military veterans, members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and seventh-grade musicians-in-the-making. Through RHC, groups who haven’t yet won public recognition may find themselves giving performances in major venues like the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago or Millennium Park. But music also happens in neighborhood places, like the 7 community parks where RHC put pianos for a month, inviting residents to sit down and play. And, indeed, people not only played the pianos, they took care of them, even bringing out tarps for protection against Chicago’s occasional summer downpours.

Rush Hour Concerts is also now scaling its community engagement impact. The organization is sponsoring unique professional ensemble residencies with young music students in under-resourced neighborhoods on the south, west and north sides of Chicago.

“Social is in the DNA of Rush Hour Concerts, which is why social media campaigns are ideal for us,” says Harrison. “We need tools like [givn](#) to help us not only expand support but spread our stories of the human impact of making music with others. The real ROI for all of Rush Hour Concerts programs is joy, laughter, recall of happy memories, improved brain function and state of mind, feeling connected to others, and the pride and positive energy that helps us all move forward together even in the midst of challenges.”

By karen winston

Sort





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