

Symphony Fine Arts Lunch Breaks - Highland Community News: Entertainment

 highlandnews.net/entertainment/symphony-fine-arts-lunch-breaks/article_62ea81f8-0a68-11e7-a5e1-07654aa2fe68.html

By Dr. Ann Viricel Executive Director San Bernardino Symphony

The San Bernardino Symphony presents three Fine Arts Lunch Breaks from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. each month (one at the Superior Court Plaza, one at the breezeway at the city hall complex, and one at the Third Thursdays Food Truck Fest).

Participating musicians include both Symphony musicians and others from the local area, many contracted through The Arts Connection. The Fine Arts Lunch Breaks are funded through a two-year grant from the James Irvine Foundation.

The project is designed to be a social experiment to test whether public perception about our area can be improved through the arts. As such, these are not "marketed" concerts; they are, instead, designed to be "serendipitous surprises" for the people working and transact business in downtown San Bernardino.

For instance, someone who is serving jury duty may stop at the facility Superior Court cafe on their lunch break then go outside to eat under the trees and would happily discover the musicians performing. This would, we hope, be an uplifting experience for them... one which makes them feel more positive about being in San Bernardino that day.

The venues place shaded tables and chairs for passers by to enjoy the music. The Symphony places promotional materials, signage, and has volunteers to greet attendees and explain the project, as needed.

To test the efficacy of the project, Symphony box office staff always asks about and notes how a new ticket buyer has heard about the Symphony. In addition, the number of first time on-line ticket purchasers is also tracked for change as most people who work in downtown San Bernardino live elsewhere.

The Irvine Foundation also requires tabulation of number of attendees, their relative level of engagement, and some demographic information and that is also collected by the volunteers. This information addresses the grantors requirement to provide arts experiences to under-served populations.

Overall, the Symphony has seen a positive uptick in new ticket sales but, more importantly, they are providing a positive experience which very well could change public perception about a city not regularly recognized as a place for the arts... and that benefits everyone.