



**THINKWELL WRAPS UP 2009 WITH THE PRODUCTION OF THE 23RD ANNUAL
CHARLES DICKENS DINNER
USC Fundraiser Ranks As Highest Grossing Ever**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—JANUARY 5, 2010 (Burbank, CA) – The USC Thornton School of Music celebrated its 125th anniversary in a night filled with celebrity appearances, musical performances, and holiday cheer with the help of Thinkwell. For the annual Charles Dickens Dinner, Thinkwell’s dedicated team transformed the Crystal Ballroom at the downtown Millennium Biltmore Hotel into a wintry landscape befitting the Victorian era. The company’s management of the show and festivities ensured the success of the event, which took place December 11th, 2009.

It was the fourth year in a row that Thinkwell managed and produced Dickens Dinner. The black-tie fundraiser typically pays tribute to music legends and showcases student talent through select performances, and this year was no different as the school honored opera legend Marilyn Horne.

To celebrate this special anniversary, Joanna Jurich, Director of Special Events at Thornton School of Music, wanted a new twist on the 2009 festivities. Knowing Thinkwell’s previous successes with the event, the Thornton School partnered with the company once again to make the night unforgettable.

For the months leading up to the event, Thinkwell worked closely with the school to completely re-envision the look and feel of Dickens Dinner. The changes to the event design included shifting the seating and stage areas within the Crystal Ballroom, incorporating 100 student performers, and accommodating celebrity guests such as Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and California’s First Lady Maria Shriver.

The team took charge of the logistics and technical aspects of the event, handling production and stage management, lighting and audio design, equipment rentals, and vendor management. A core team oversaw everything from rehearsal schedules to security detail for the governor. The planning and set up process was not without its challenges, which included working through the logistics of reinventing a small space.

Courtney Kleinman, Thinkwell’s Project Manager said, “The venue is challenging for audio. It’s an old space, so you have issues with power and poor acoustics. The challenge each year is modifying the sound design to suit each year’s needs.” The Thinkwell team overcame the challenges by working with the venue to tweak the lighting and sound until they developed a combination that fit the space.

On the big night, the nearly 400 guests were transported to the time of Charles Dickens upon entrance to the Crystal Ballroom. The vivid lighting and the holiday performances captured the mood and glamour of holidays past. Opera legend Marilyn Horne was honored for her many achievements in music and the governor presented a medal of honor to retiring USC President Steven Sample and his wife Kathryn for their dedication to the performing arts.

Throughout the festivities, the Thinkwell crew supervised every technical detail and seamlessly transitioned between performances and awards presentations.

The night was deemed a resounding success as the dinner and shows carried on without a hitch. At the end of the night, the dinner guests had raised roughly \$500,000 towards the Thorton School of Music's student scholarships. The landmark anniversary event is the highest grossing Dickens Dinner in all 23 years the fundraiser has been held.

Afterward, Jurich thanked Thinkwell for its production services saying, "Every last detail came together to produce an amazing event. From the front of house to behind the scenes, student performances and production, I'm very grateful to be a part of this team."

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