

Donor Event Showcase: Carrying Forward Lessons from Digital

As we begin to think about what reopening means for our donors, it will be important to leverage what we learned while in closure. Here are a few examples from the many innovative approaches our members took to cultivate and retain their donor bases during the pandemic – and what we suggest continuing.

Fully Digital Events



RICHMOND BALLET

Richmond Ballet created **virtual events** to engage both new and existing donors during the pandemic and found a scalable way to deepen their donors' understanding of what it takes to put on a ballet.

SDOPERA

The digital content San Diego Opera created during the pandemic has led them to think creatively about how to **continue these offerings** – both digitally and live – after they are able to reopen once again.

Hybrid Event

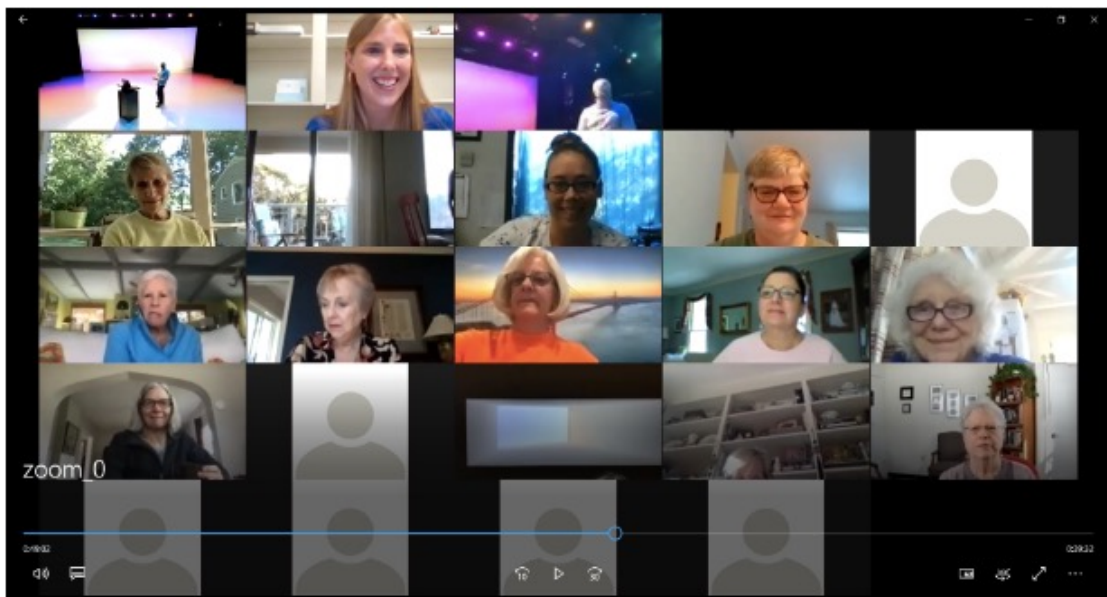


When their production of *Christmas Carol* went virtual, Ford's Theatre found a way to still connect donors to their past family cookie-decorating event held after the live show: sponsored **at-home cookie decorating kits**.



Richmond Ballet: A Scalable Backstage Tour

Donors of all levels were invited to attend a series of four Zoom events, where they could hear from members of the Richmond Ballet production team and ask questions.

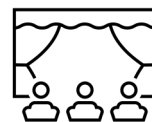


A range of **40-90 attendees** attended each session, including existing core donors, new-to-file givers, and employees of their corporate sponsor for the event.

Why It Works



Getting closer to the art: new donors are given an early deep understanding of the many people and intense work that goes into the ballet – and can also begin to **see the impact** that donating more can have.



Creating insider value: donors of all types who attend the events can feel closer to the organization by getting this **insider look** behind the scenes.

Element To Continue

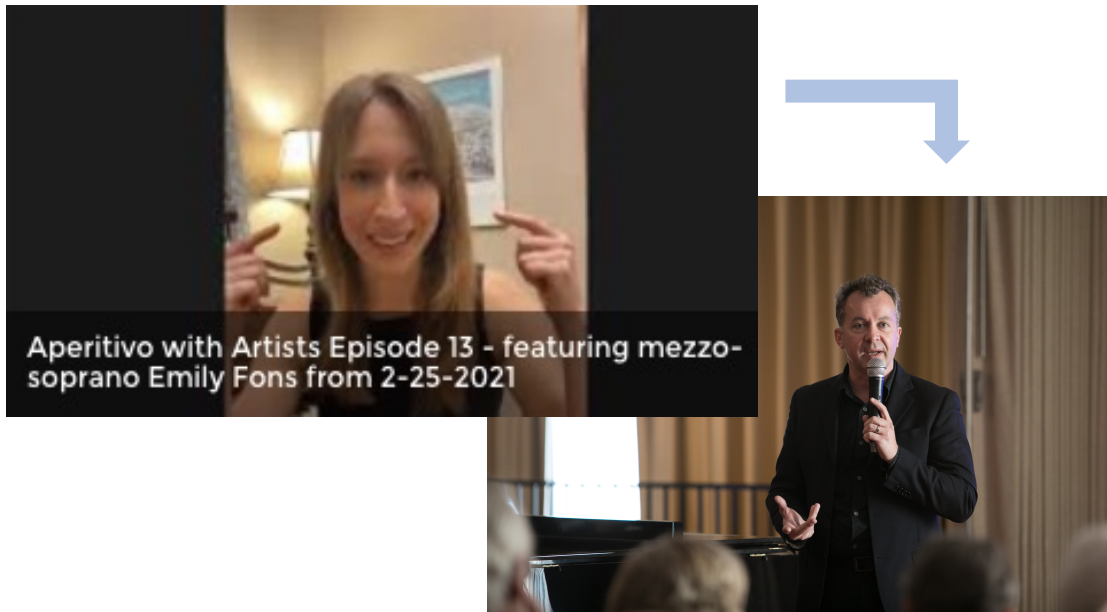
Scaling at Low Cost

Richmond Ballet's events brought compelling content to their donors without a large resource lift. **Building virtual tracks into future galas and events** can allow for greater reach while keeping costs stable and connecting with a variety of donor motivations.

San Diego Opera: Events Inspired By Digital Content

SDOPERA

Highlighting their artists and production staff in digital content during the pandemic has given the development team at San Diego Opera inspiration for donor events of the future.



Aperitivo with Artists Episode 13 - featuring mezzo-soprano Emily Fons from 2-25-2021

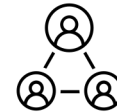


The Opera has already hosted a **live, outdoor version** of their *Opera en tu sofá* series, giving patrons an exciting chance to meet in person – some for the first time!

Why It Works



Testing interest: the digital space is a helpful (and lower-stakes) arena for seeing what resonates with donors. Views are useful data to track, along with direct feedback from donors who participate.



Fostering connection: creating opportunities to interact with artists in more intimate or direct settings can appeal both to your donors who love the art and those who seek a sense of community.

Element To Continue

Pulling From What Works in Digital

Even if not all digital content is exclusive to donors, it can be a great opportunity to **understand what clicks with your audience base**. This can inform your future digital, hybrid, and live offerings, both for existing givers and new prospects in your community.

Ford's Theatre: Classic Events, New Formats



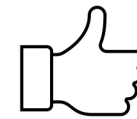
Unable to host their traditional holiday reception for families after the VIP matinee for *A Christmas Carol*, Ford's Theatre found a way to carry the tradition on, sending cookie decorating kits home to donors.



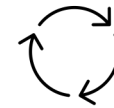
Corporate sponsor GM had a similar idea in mind and fully covered the initiative.

The resulting delivery was an engaging reminder of the traditions families have built around Ford's – and at no cost to the theatre.

Why It Works



Maintaining confidence: by having clear messaging on the kits that this was a sponsored effort, **donors can be confident** that the Theatre is using money towards impactful programs.



Circular donor value: **GM gets value** by getting their brand out to people and having it tied to a moment of emotion. **Donors get value** by having a great experience, exclusively offered to them.

Element To Continue

Reimagining Traditions

Digital or hybrid events can be a great opportunity to increase accessibility to donors from all walks of life – but they can still tie back to the ritual of attending live by **creating tangible connections to meaningful donor traditions.**