

Point of Grace

Wednesday, 01 March 2006

A

“Ladies” Touch:

It

was on the night of January 20th. It was Point of Grace. For just a moment, it reminded me of the movie “The Perfect Storm.” If you remember, in the movie a ‘perfect storm’ destroyed the crew and the ship. It took a “perfect storm” to do that, a storm so unusual, a storm so specifically unique had to occur to destroy that crew, a storm with just the perfect ingredients. That perfect storm happened and the ship was destroyed. Well, how does that relate to the Point of Grace concert? It was the perfect night. Everything was just right, it was a perfect setting for a “great” concert to take place and it all came together for one of the most impressive concert WBVN has ever produced. It was the “perfect concert.” I’m going to share with you why I think that.

I’m going to let you

peek behind the curtain a little bit. Concerts begin with calls to artist agents and conversations about travel expenses to and from the concert, meals, financial considerations, phone numbers to exchange, security, sound systems, light systems, spot lights, load in crews, insurance coverage, maps to the venue, publicity, hotel rooms, ticket prices, road managers, location for the event, the dates that work and general information in what is called ‘a concert rider.’ A ‘rider’ is pages and pages of detail and organization to make sure everyone’s on the same page. That all begins months before the actual event and each item must be agreed to, must be organized, and must ‘come together’ for a successful two-hour performance. Contracts are mailed, signed and exchanged. Tickets are printed and sold. A play list is created at the station of the artist music and ‘spots’ are written, produced and rotated to give the public the information needed.

All

that takes place slowly and particularly for a successful concert. But all that doesn’t make a ‘great concert.’ You need more than that. You need some things that can’t be written into contracts, things that while you hope for and you might have a conversation about with the agent, they are things that for the most part come out of the ‘heart.’ Things that come from the motivation of the producer and things that

you trust will show up when the artist and their management arrive at the venue.

We have a load in crew that volunteers for the event: we have a Phil and a Phil, Danny, Nathan, Bill, Keith and Ann, Aaron, Mike, Seth, John, Chase, Gup and there's a Cindy, Rachel, Barbara, Jane, Laura, Dan and Trina, Brittany, Tammy, Sherry and Tim, Jerry and Linda, Larry, Matt, David and Colleen. I'm not sure that's all of them but it's some of them and they make the concert possible for all of us by helping out. The WBVN staff: Alisha, Andria, Amy and Tom are all involved with the production as well. Chris Parton does the sound and David Schell makes sure the lighting and spots are taken care of. Mike, Bill, Julie and David are our host at the Civic Center and they always do their part to make 'the room' a pleasant place to work. There's petty cash to remember to get, contracts to have on hand. We have an audio recorder to get 'liners' for the station. Alisha scripts those for us. Must remember to have towels on the scene. Water's a must. Then there are the points in time when the load-in happens, sound checks take place at an agreed to time. Food must be in place at exactly the right time so the artists get a warm meal, not a cold 'rice' dish. Must get the CD's, t-shirts, necklaces, rings, caps, song books, pictures all inventoried and on the tables. Need to remember the checks, seems like lots of checks need to be taken. We take the newsletter sign-up book. We take a CD of mixed music to play before the concert, got to entertain that hour you know. Four stools for the stage. Get the piano tuned. Fruit and candy for the dressing rooms. Make sure the hotel rooms are reserved and probably add one room because someone is coming that we didn't know about early in the contract discussions. WOW! That's quite a laundry list. But we have it all in place. People are lined up outside and we're just about ready. You know what, all that can make a good concert, but all that can't make a great concert. Here's what makes a great concert.

At about 2 pm, Cliff Young arrives, POG road manager, and immediately puts everyone at ease with his friendly manner. Matt's with him (Leigh's [POG] husband, by the way, who plays the guitar and works the inventory for the table of CDs, shirts and pictures out in the lobby). The 'girls' get there about 3:30, at least three of them do: Shelly, Denise and Leigh. They immediately greet people with great big smiles and not one ounce of 'pretense.' They make sure we are all comfortable with the plans for the event. At 4:45 Heather arrives, (she's 7 months pregnant) arriving after

driving by herself from Louisville, KY. While we're getting the sound-check ready, Shelly Breen from POG is calling the local hospital. She's taking the time to encourage Amber Farnam; she and her husband had tickets for the concert, but she was in the hospital the night of the event. They work on a play list of songs, making sure they check with us to see what our expectations were for that night. At this point were running about 45 minutes behind most of our schedule. They're all still just as calm and as pleasant as can be! Matt's treating the volunteers at the tables wonderfully and they are actually smiling at me when I walk by. That's a good sign for me of how polite this guy is. Casey travels with POG and operates the sound systems during the concert and Chris Parton is giving me a "thumbs up" for the cooperation, expertise and the attitude that Casey has with him. That doesn't always happen. It's good when I see that happen.

It's now 6:30pm and meals have been served. The "girls" sneaked a birthday cake into the room for Heather and they have a little birthday "thing" for a couple minutes. Everyone is relaxed. They're doing the phone calls to family, etc. Resting before start at 7:30. It's a time I like to leave the artists and their manager alone for the most part. I've found that at peaceful "backstage" creates a peace "on-stage." Many of the artists use this time to pray, many like to read before the concert, some just want "a quiet-time." At 7 pm I remember that the local newspaper has asked for a short interview. Something I should have taken care of hours before. Now I have to interrupt them to make that request. Denise greets me with that friendly smile and tells me to bring the person to the dressing room during John David Webster's opening. What! Yeah, that would be fine; they'll take the time to do the interview then. That sure "blessed" the lady that did the interview. Thought she was going to miss that opportunity because of my bad memory. We still hadn't found time to do WBVN "POG liners" and seemed that might not happen. But again the "girls" asked me to bring Alisha back during the intermission for those. That's the first time in 95 concerts that the artist has been that generous about liners, making sure we get what we need for the station even if it took away from their private time "during the concert."

We're into concert now. The photographer's in place taking pictures for the website and "for the fun of it." The audience and POG have that moment in time I've seen occasionally and rarely. The crowd is responding to the performance and POG is responding to the reception of the crowd. Those are special times and they're vital to a "perfect" concert. I've seen it before, none better than this concert. During the concert Shelly whips out an email to POG from Stephanie Cumbelich (who used to live here) and read it to Amy Graves and Belinda

Keller, both in the audience. That was a little thing that meant a lot to those ladies. Another surprise after intermission: Denise reads a letter from four young ladies that have a vocal group and sing a lot of POG music. Denise called Bonnie Childers, Julie Culbertson, Mary Kim Dothager and Erin Ainscough to the stage for T-shirts. A little thing; a big thing. The girls sang a total of 19 songs! Not because they had to sing that many but because they recognized the unique quality to the evening. One great concert.

It had a ladies touch! Point of Grace and their management never missed one opportunity to encourage, to be positive and to take little things and make them huge for the people in this concert and backstage. It was the perfect concert, many things coming together all at one time: music, thoughtfulness, and ministry, professional, talented and creative. Guys can do one or two things at a time; these ladies did dozens all at one time. To be called perfect the storm in the movie had to possess many unique and powerful ingredients all coming together at one time, to call a concert perfect it must be more than special, more than good, it must be unique and powerful. This concert was both.