



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 7/18/2016

Amy Behrens

Marketing and Public Relations Director

Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens

Office: 949-498-2139

behrens@casaromantica.org

TOAST TO THE CASA 2016 IN REVIEW

Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens, San Clemente, CA – Toast to the Casa 2016: *Gran Ballo delle Maschere* was the cultural center's most successful special event to date. The gala, which raises critical funding for Casa Romantica's year-round cultural programs, **netted in excess of \$135,000** from ticket sales, a live auction and a silent auction, a Fund-In-Need campaign, a Wall of Wine, and from sales of the Venetian masks and art photographs on display in the Main Gallery.

"We are proud to be part of a community that values culture, embraces preservation, and supports creativity," said Casa Romantica Executive Director Berenika Schmitz. "Toast to the Casa 2016 is exemplary of the important role that arts and culture play for our well-being and our future."

There were **at least 300 guests in attendance**, many of whom arrived wearing Venetian masks. Additional masks were given as party favors to anyone who did not bring their own. Patrons were greeted by "strolling skirts" (young women bedecked with wide skirts that literally function as tables) who were bearing the gala's signature Venetian Spritz cocktails.

Gran Ballo delle Maschere is also the name of the first Open Casa gallery exhibition in the 2016-2017 Casa Captivating Season. The two-person show features art photography of Florence, Venice, and Carnivale celebrations by celebrated Italian photographer Sandro Santioli, as well as Venetian masks handmade using 17th century techniques from artist Carla Almanza-de Quant. Santioli flew in from his home base of Florence, Italy to attend the gala and exhibition opening.

Just outside of the gallery, guests took photos with two authentic Italian Vespas from the 1960s, provided by Denis Ware and Kim Ware of the San Clemente Scooter Club. Nearby, a Wall of Wine raffled 32 bottles individually valued between \$30 and \$100.

Sir Bruno Serato, the honorary chairman and guest of honor for Toast to the Casa 2016, spoke meaningfully about the importance of philanthropy in the community during the cornerstone talk. He outlined the work that he has undertaken to bring security and wellbeing to the lives of children throughout Orange County, and championed Casa Romantica's commitment to cultural programs which benefit people of all ages. **"I am grateful to Casa Romantica for providing these cultural programs for the people of Orange County," he said. "This is a beautiful and inspiring place to be part of."**

Patrons enjoyed the sunset on the Ocean Terrace, West Terrace, and Casa Courtyard with unlimited fantastic fare from **25 local restaurants, wineries, and breweries**. A new and popular addition to the group was Mangiamo Gelato, whose flavors included creamy tiramisu, pistachio, and strawberry cheesecake, among others. H. H Cottons and Adele's, both from San Clemente, were also new and well-received restaurants. A fine cigar station was perched at the top of the ocean-view property overlooking the San Clemente pier.



CASA ROMANTICA

CULTURAL CENTER AND GARDENS

The silent auction featured **over 100 items and packages** from local and international donors. Silent auction items fetched bids up to \$2,000, and items such as a stay at the Monarch Beach Resort had multiple pages of bids.

The live auction was filled with exotic adventures and experiences such as an African safari trip and tickets to see Andrea Bocelli, and commanded bullish bidding from start to finish. **The live auction was even more special than in years past due to a surprise addition: a book about the history of San Clemente, donated by founding President's Circle member Leo Gibbons, which was signed by Ole Hanson and authenticated by the GSA.** The winning bidder was a private individual who took home the piece of southern California history for nearly \$2,500.

Entertainment was present throughout the historic home and grounds. The Sabras Band played for the majority of the evening on the Mainstage in the Casa Courtyard. Renowned accordionist Nick Ariondo performed on the Ocean Terrace stage, with interludes by classical guitarist Amir Mahfeker. Studio Zanni staged impromptu Commedia Dell'Arte performances on both the Ocean and West Terraces, and DJ Nomis spun contemporary music all evening in the amphitheater. One unique highlight was an opera recital by soprano Amanda Squitieri in the authentic gondola that was stationed in a simulated water canal under two of the property's bridges. Squitieri will return to Casa Romantica for a full-length recital in January 2017. In addition, patrons were thrilled to hear a short piano recital by eight-year-old Alberto DeJesus. The young man was a participant in Casa Romantica's Classical Music Festival and Academy this summer.

"We heard from many patrons that it was our best and most exciting fundraiser yet, and we were proud that so many individuals and businesses came together for a magical Italian evening at Casa Romantica. It is heartening to have the support of our community as we bring more and better cultural programs to them in the year ahead," said Casa Romantica Board President Ruth DeNault.

For more information on Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens events, please call (949) 498-2139, or visit www.casaromantica.org.

TOAST TO THE CASA 2016 SPONSORS

"We are honored by the commitment of these businesses and individuals to support Casa Romantica's mission of providing cultural programs for people of all ages in our community, and particularly for our year-round free Casa Kids programming," says Berenika Schmitz, Executive Director of Casa Romantica.

- *Producer Level* – Fluidmaster, Dr. and Mrs. Ron Redmond
- *Premiere Level* – Casa Romantica Board of Trustees, Cox Communications, Signature Party Rentals
- *Platinum Level* – DeNault's Hardware, Mr. and Mrs. Gavin Herbert, Our Story Creative, San Clemente Times, Starfish Signs & Graphics, Edison International, Farmers & Merchants Bank
- *Cabernet Level* – Best Valet, Bonded Cleaners, Mr. and Mrs. Forrest Reynard, San Clemente Journal, The Bloom of Time
- *Chardonnay Level* – San Diego Gas & Electric, Mrs. Ruth DeNault, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Iorio, Best Best & Krieger, CR&R Environmental Services, Laguna Beach Art Patron Magazine, Mr. and Mrs. Rafik Daher, South Coast Distributing, Mr. Gordon Olson and Dr. Helen Olson, Divel Insurance, Peter Drilling and Contracting, Mr. Standiford Helm and Mrs. Noel Cahan Helm, Mr. and Mrs. David Westendorf, Ms. Jennifer Blake, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Koch, Mr. and Ms. John Wohlfiel, Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Chang, Mr. and Mrs. Greg Stoutenburgh, Mr. and Mrs. Scot Proud, Epic Sound & Lighting
- *Pinot Level* – Cavalia, Outlets at San Clemente, Rainbow Sandals, Mrs. June Yoder, San Clemente Veterinary Hospital, Mr. and Mrs. Garry Nelson

Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens

415 Avenida Granada, San Clemente, CA 92672 | Tel 949.498.2139 | Fax 949.498.2192 | www.casaromantica.org



CASA ROMANTICA

CULTURAL CENTER AND GARDENS

Photography and videography provided by Our Story Creative

Floral arrangements provided by The Bloom of Time

Audio visual effects provided by Epic Sound and Lighting

Tuxedo rentals provided by Friar Tux

LIVE AUCTION DONORS

- Alaska Airlines
- Zulu Nyala
- Monarch Beach Resort
- Cavalia's Odysseo
- Laguna Beach Art Patron Magazine
- Dave Peter's Deep Sea Fishing Trip
- Porsche Newport Beach
- Jennifer Blake

RESTAURANTS, WINERIES, BREWERIES, AND CIGARS

- Selma's Chicago Pizzeria
- Pizza Port
- Avila's El Ranchito
- Rocco's Restaurant
- H. H. Cotton's
- Sundried Tomato Bistro
- Loire Valley Wines
- Mangiamo Gelato
- Red Fox Lounge
- California Classic Wines
- Viva Vino
- Adele's at the San Clemente Inn
- The Cellar
- Iva Lee's
- Stone Brewing Company
- Antoine's Cafe
- Plumeria Cakes
- Fair Oaks Cigars & Spirits
- Dad's Liquor
- Carbonara's Trattoria Italiana
- Bob's Fine Wines
- 24 Carrots Catering
- Beachfire Bar & Grill
- Sonny's Pizza and Pasta
- Left Coast Brewing Company

ABOUT CASA ROMANTICA CULTURAL CENTER AND GARDENS

Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization and is the historic home of the founder of the City of San Clemente. Casa Romantica provides programs for all ages in arts, music, history, and horticulture and is a premier Southern California cultural center.

Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens

415 Avenida Granada, San Clemente, CA 92672 | Tel 949.498.2139 | Fax 949.498.2192 | www.casaromantica.org