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A fish-like acrobat entertains diners while she dangles from the ceiling at "A Pacific FantaSea" gala celebrating the Pacific Symphony's 30th anniversary season held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Irvine on Saturday.

JOSHUA SUDOCK, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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Pacific Symphony's "A Pacific FantaSea"

Saint Joseph Ballet's 26th Annual Concert "From Here...", and the Salvation Army's Spirit Awards Civic Dinner

BY **DONNA BUNCE**, Register Columnist

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PEOPLE WATCH

The 370 guests attending Pacific Symphony's 30th Anniversary Gala, "A Pacific FantaSea," *boarded* the S.S. Pacific for an evening of celebration and fun at the Hyatt Regency Irvine Saturday night. Greeted by a crusty old sea captain singing sea chanteys, a darling mermaid, and a number of humans dressed as colorful crabs, lobsters, fish, jellyfish, and sea horses brought smiles all-round. Some, like **Bill Podlich**, got into the spirit of the evening dressed as the Love Boat Captain, with wife **Pat**, gowned in green, joking, "I'm the souvenir seaweed!"

According to gala producers **Kate Peters** and **Doug Simao**, there actually was a S.S. Pacific, which sank in 1875 with \$5 million (today's value) of gold on board, never to be found again. Peters, joking about the water theme, said, "Our concept was since everybody's portfolios are under water, we thought we should just go there!" The evening's fantasy entertainment took place under water on board the S.S. Pacific with guests looking on as treasure hunter Fernando looks for the ship with groups of divers suspended from the ceiling and moving across the ballroom as if "swimming" and human sea creatures "swimming" among guests' tables. While the divers are searching, they talk about the coincidence of ABBA, the famous Swedish pop band, releasing its very successful "Fernando" album in 1975, exactly 100 years almost to the day the ship sank. As the ship is found and raised and its treasure vault revealed on stage, the singing group Bjorn Again breaks into song, singing, appropriately, ABBA's "Fernando." Fernando steps forward (really **Jeff Stokes**, the auctioneer) to wrestle with the contents of the vault and pulls out symphony maestro, **Carl St.Clair**. "We have before us the real treasure of the Pacific," Fernando said, "Carl St. Clair and the musicians of the Pacific Symphony. Congratulations on 30 years of service to this community."

The fun didn't stop there. As a takeoff on the S.S. Pacific sinking, Hyatt Chef **Greg Grohowski** served guests a duplicate of the final meal served on the Titanic the night it sank.

Sinking portfolios or not, the symphony supporters rose to the occasion to net \$1.1 million for the evening. Among the generous live auction bidders were **Betty** and **S.L. Huang** and **Jane** and **Jim Driscoll**, who together spent \$50,000 for a luxury trip to Berlin with St. Clair as host. The Driscolls and **Cindy** and **Steve Fry** are sharing a luxury suite at an Anaheim Ducks game for \$40,000, and **Sandy** and **John Daniels**, gala chair and board chairman, respectively, won the Hurray for Hollywood package for \$17,500. And, gala chairs **Lynn Freeman** and **Elie Gordan**, with husbands **Doug** and **Michael**, respectively, paid \$30,000 for a luncheon for 10 with piano virtuoso **Andre Watts**. All in all, it was a swimmingly lovely evening!

Saint Joseph Ballet has helped 62,000 low-income youth in its 26 years, and by "help," I mean not only its innovative arts-based dance program, but also its academic and family services. This year the non-profit company is graduating 21 seniors and all of them are going to college. At the award-winning company's 26th annual concert last week, one of those slated for college this fall spoke at the opening night patron reception for 164 guests at the Irvine Barclay Theatre. **Jessica Camacho**, 17, who will be attending Wellesley College on full scholarship, said, "Without the encouragement of the Saint Joseph Ballet staff and my fellow students, I may not have had the confidence and support to reach my full potential."

Melanie Rios Glaser, SBJ's executive and artistic director, thanked the firm Haskell and White for underwriting the reception and **Elizabeth Baldwin** and **Ryan Botev** from Pickle Design for their four years of help with the company's printed materials, including the concert program. Thanks were also extended to the board of directors, concert underwriters (who contributed \$200,000) and student sponsors. In a special tribute to **Marge Sutton** and her late husband **Larry**, Rios Glaser said, "For the decade that Saint Joseph Ballet was at the Fourth Street Studio, Marge and Larry kept our struggling mission alive." Longtime supporter **Jack Glaser** accepted the honor for Marge, who was ill and unable to attend, "on behalf of the thousands of students whose lives have been transformed," he said.

SJB board chairman **Damien Jordan** announced the newly established Keep the Promise Fund, funded by a number of board members to the tune of \$100,000, "to sustain Saint Joseph Ballet though challenging times," he said.

The guests joined the nearly packed house for the first of five concerts. "From Here..." showcased 125 of the school's 400 dancers in three remarkable pieces choreographed by three renowned modern and contemporary dance choreographers. **Jeff Slayton's** "Tribute" and **Nami Yamamoto's** "Flying with My Shooting Stars" were premiere commissions for the company. Four-time Saint Joseph Ballet concert veteran, **Mark Heim** reprised his "What Is Too Strong for Breaking," an audience favorite at last year's 25th anniversary concert. Based on Ravel's "Bolero," lead dancer **Rocio Cruz**, a graduating senior who will be studying dance at Cal St. Fullerton this fall, was a standout.

"I love the Salvation Army. I love what it stands for. I love it for the services it renders to people in need," **Gaddi Vasquez**, recipient of the Salvation Army Orange County's "Others" award Friday night at The Grove in Anaheim, said as he accepted the recognition. He further stated that in his recent travels as United States Ambassador to the United Nations Organizations in Rome, Italy, "Wherever I saw that beautiful red shield, my spirits were lifted because I saw hope, faith and opportunity."

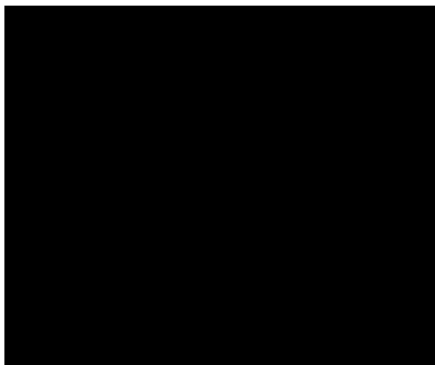
The other Spirit Awards presented at the Salvation Army's annual civic dinner were given to **Janet Zaugg** as "Volunteer of the Year" for her work as community leader and President of the Salvation Army's Orange County Women's Auxiliary, and to **Lois** and **Don Verleur** as "Spirit of the Army" recipients for their work as co-founders of Olive Crest, the 35-year-old non-profit that provides homes and services for abused children. The Salvation Army Advisory Board members introducing the award winners included **Sharon Morrison**, CEO of Dynamic Air; **Robert Alvarado**, Vice President of Marketing and Sales for the Los Angeles Angels; and **Larry Buster**, Vice President of First American Title. Incoming Advisory Board Chairwoman **Wanda Castillo-Cou** welcomed the 520 guests, and KOCE-TV anchor and managing editor **Ed Arnold** served as an engaging master of ceremonies.

The evening was made even more enjoyable by some wonderful performances. The Tustin Ranch Band, directed by bandmaster **Edward Freeman**, entertained throughout the evening, and The Tustin Ranch Pioneer School of Music String Ensemble performed Bach's "Concerto for Two Violins and Orchestra." The ensemble's string instructor, **Sarah Koo**, performed a cello and piano duet with **David Dunford**, who also tickled the ivories with a crowd-pleasing "Rhapsody in Blue" by George Gershwin. The Korean Celebration Dancers delighted guests performing a traditional Korean dance dressed in bright-colored costumes with whimsical fans.

The powerful "I Am the Salvation Army" video highlighted the ministries of the army in Orange County in a heartwarming way, and Major **Lee Lescano**, the army's Orange County Coordinator, closed with sincere words of appreciation.

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