A Finding Aid to the
Greater Chicago Jewish Folk Arts Festival
(Chicago, Ill.) Records

Manuscript Collection No. 737
Collection Summary

Title: Greater Chicago Jewish Folk Arts Festival (Chicago, Ill.) Records
Dates: 1980-2004
Collection Number: MS-737
Repository: The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator: Greater Chicago Jewish Folk Arts Festival (Chicago, Ill.)
Extent: 4.8 linear feet (12 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material: English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

The Greater Chicago Jewish Folk Arts Festival is organized every other year by the Jewish Production Organization for Cultural Events and Theatre (P.O.C.E.T.), a production group comprised of professionals in the fields of art, music, theater, dance, radio, television, communications, community relations, graphic arts, education, engineering, finance and law. The brainchild of Michael Lorge, it has been produced biennially wholly by volunteers since 1980. The festival draws more than 40,000 attendees, and requires planning a year in advance. The event's prospectus lists the following rationale for producing the festival:

- Bringing together the best of the community’s professional and amateur performers and artists.
- Demonstrating to Jewish children and the larger community that the Jewish community does not just gather in time of crisis.
- Educating the Jewish community about its multi-faceted culture.
- Reaching out to the general community to show the breadth and depth of the Jewish community.
- Providing an avenue for Jewish artists and performers to develop and present their work and encourage them to work on Jewish themes within their fields.
- Encouraging tolerance by bringing the entire Jewish community together to celebrate our culture, identity and diversity.

The festival includes continuous music on two stages, a family stage, a story telling/dance tent, a juried art fair, a hands-on activity area, a book sale, a craft tent, an ethnic food fair and organization information booths. It is one of the largest and longest-running Jewish festivals in the United States. The festival's organizers refer to it as The Heart and Soul of Jewish Chicago.

Publicity is another area of tremendous importance to the festival. Festival planners' increasing sophistication where advertising is concerned can be seen as each year’s documents include more and more newspaper clippings, the bulk of which are ads. The use of billboards necessitates deciding the most advantageous locations; ordering caps and t-shirts raises the obvious question, “How many?” The timing of such orders is critical, as is the design of the items. The advantage of an attractive festival logo becomes obvious! Appearances on local television by the festival's founder, Michael Lorge, also serve to promote awareness of the festival.

Production, the actual nuts and bolts of making a festival happen, requires endless arrangements. If there is one thing that cannot fail to impress, it is the attention to details, both large and small. Nothing is left to chance. Michael Lorge and his co-chairs are never too busy to write a thank-you note; they are never disinterested, never disorganized.

Scope and Content

The Greater Chicago Jewish Folk Arts Festival consist of correspondence, advertising, contracts, meeting agendas, applications, permits, prospectuses, budgets, insurance policies, and other documents. Each year of the festival, with the exception of the first, 1980, is represented by documentation about art and artists, the festival budget, kosher food vendors, insurance, performers (some from overseas), post-festival correspondence, a yearly prospectus, publicity, sponsors/fundraising, and volunteers. While sponsors and fundraising may be heavily represented one year, and performers the next, a very complete picture of what it takes to produce a festival attended by 40,000 people is created.

The collection is arranged into one chronological series, with the same subjects arising in planning and producing each year’s festival. Certainly the researcher who is interested in learning about finding sponsors, corresponding with them, writing a prospectus to tell them what they can underwrite and the “opportunities” that exist for them to communicate their name to a particular community, the Jewish community in this case, can find examples of all of these in this collection.
The collection includes one audiocassette. One compact disc recording of music from the 2000 festival has been removed to the AJA disc collection and has been cataloged as CD-769. The American Jewish Archives owns the records for Festivals through 2004. The GCJFAF is ongoing. For more information about the Festival, go to www.pocet.org.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged in one (1) series: A. General.

Terms of Access
The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

Preferred Citation
Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Greater Chicago Jewish Folk Arts Festival (Chicago, Ill.) Records and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-737. Greater Chicago Jewish Folk Arts Festival (Chicago, Ill.) Records. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance
Received from Michael Lorge, Skokie, Ill., 2006.

Processing Information
Processed by Vicki Lipski, November 2006.

Index Terms
Subjects
- Ethnic festivals / Folk art / Jewish Production Organization for Cultural Events and Theatre / Jews -- Illinois -- Chicago

Corporate Names
- Greater Chicago Jewish Folk Arts Festival (Chicago, Ill.)

Series A. General, 1980-2004

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