



On the dinner tables were custom spun-metal bowls, underlit with halogen and filled with 20 amaryllis blossoms apiece.



Heffernan Morgan showcased the event's 60,000 feather butterflies with blue lighting; as the evening wore on, the hues took on an amber tone to create a warmer ambience.

Butterfly Effect

For its fifth anniversary gala, the Harris Theater for Music and Dance imported ballerinas from San Francisco, design cues from Palm Beach, and 60,000 feather butterflies from China.

ON SEPTEMBER 18, the Harris Theater for Music and Dance celebrated its fifth anniversary with a gala benefit. The evening began with an hour-long performance from the San Francisco Ballet, which was celebrating its own 75th anniversary season with a four-city tour that kicked off in Chicago two days earlier.

"Putting those two moments together is just blockbuster," said Cheryl Shure, Harris Theater's executive vice president of external affairs. "[With this event], we have the opportunity to showcase the oldest ballet company in the country, which hasn't performed in Chicago for almost three decades. [And] launching our own fifth anniversary season really represents a milestone moment for a theater that [initially] had a lot of naysayers."

According to Shure, developing a program for the evening that wouldn't run longer than an hour was necessary to "accomplish goals in a time frame that keeps the energy flowing." Ultimately, speeches were limited to brief remarks from the theater's president and managing director and chairman of the board of trustees before the dance performance began.

Since Chicago's social set has a packed gala schedule in September, Shure and the committee sent out save-the-date cards three months prior to the actual invite. Along with publicizing the event, this measure turned out to be effective from an expense standpoint, bringing in \$50,000 in early revenue from table reservations. For the formal invite, the committee settled on a smoky Lucite rectangle printed with gold ink, which was

presented atop an image of two ballerinas. "We wanted something that people couldn't just toss aside," Shure said.

Two of the event's co-chairs, Caryn and Stephanie Harris, developed the idea for the decor in the tent on Millennium Park's Chase Promenade, where guests headed after the performance for a Blue Plate-catered dinner and dancing to the Gentlemen of Leisure Band. While visiting a store in Palm Beach last year, the mother-daughter team spotted some striking organza butterflies. "They both looked at each other," Shure relayed, "and said, 'these look like they're dancing across the sky in the way that dancers cross the stage.'"

To bring that vision to life, design firm Heffernan Morgan imported 60,000 white-feather butterflies from China. Designer Bill Heffernan led his crew in hanging the butterflies from the roof of the tent, where they were strung up with mirrored disks and illuminated with automated spotlights that gave them a fluttering effect.

The event raised \$1.4 million for the theater, exceeding the \$1.2 million goal.

—Jenny Berg

Harris Theater for Music and Dance Fifth Anniversary Celebration

Catering Blue Plate Catering
Entertainment Gentlemen of Leisure Band

Flowers, Lighting Heffernan Morgan

Lighting Frost

Linens BBJ Linens

Printing Darwill

Production PJH & Associates Inc.

Rentals Hall's Rental

Tenting, Rentals Partytime Productions

Venue Harris Theater for Music and Dance