

Category 3b. Special Events and Observances (Seven Days or Fewer)

“Carnegie Mellon University Named First, Exclusive Higher Education Partner of the Tony Awards”

Client: Carnegie Mellon University

Company: Hornercom

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Situation Analysis

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) is a global research university with more than 12,000 students, 95,000 alumni and 5,000 faculty and staff. The university is consistently recognized for its world-class arts and technology programs, collaboration across disciplines and innovative leadership in education. With the Centennial of its School of Drama, CMU had a one-time opportunity to leverage this landmark anniversary and claim 100 years of talent-making. To maximize this occasion, long-time CMU partner, Hornercom, recommended augmenting any planned events with a global entertainment “PR power play.”

In collaboration with CMU’s College of Fine Arts and University Advancement, Hornercom researched, vetted, proposed and secured the opportunity for CMU to become the first, exclusive higher-education partner of the internationally renowned Tony Awards®.

The Tony Awards are presented in partnership by the American Theater Wing and The Broadway League. One of the primary goals of these organizations is supporting theater education—which was not being formally addressed in the current model. Additionally, CMU has more than 30 alumni who have won Tony Awards and hundreds of past nominees. Simply put, there’s no better education partner for the Tony Awards than CMU. CMU’s Tony Awards collaboration also included sole third-party branding of the Tony Awards press room, rights to the Tony Awards logo for CMU’s own marketing, tickets to the private nominees’ luncheon, award-night tickets, web/social exposure and much more.

Strategy

The overarching strategy was to leverage CMU’s association with the Tony Awards to position CMU’s School of Drama as a long-established entertainment industry force, legendary for churning out top talent; while simultaneously promoting CMU’s broader value proposition to a vast, new and influential audience.

Target Audiences

Media

- International media
- National media
- Entertainment media
- Regional media
- Campus media

Campus Community

- Students
 - College of Fine Arts
 - At large
- Deans, faculty and staff
- Parents

VIP/Donors

- Trustees
- Donors/Foundations/Corporations
- High-potential prospects

Alumni

- NY alumni
- LA alumni
- CFA alumni
- At large

Objectives

- Generate worldwide media exposure for CMU’s School of Drama, its value proposition and its Centennial.
- Create opportunities for new donor interaction and donor re-engagement.
- Present CMU’s “intersection of art and technology” brand to high-yield, high-potential donors.
- Provide an opportunity that alumni will proactively embrace and support.
- Create opportunities for current faculty and students.
- Establish head-turning brand associations for CMU’s School of Drama with other premier entertainment institutions and icons.

Research

Hornercom worked with CBS Television to make sure that the ratings analysis for the Tony Awards broadcast was the right fit for the profile of a potential donor at CMU. Using the demographics and household income data from the previous year’s broadcast, Hornercom confirmed that the audience who tuned in to the Tony Awards would be the same audience who had the potential to engage with CMU.

EXECUTION & TACTICS

Tactics

- CMU and the Tony Awards announced the partnership in a news release that was distributed the day before the 2014 Tony Award nominees were announced. Following the nominee announcement, the team quickly leveraged the additional news of CMU's six 2014 nominees.
- Hornercom and CMU attended an exclusive invitation-only nominee press junket in NYC to further introduce the partnership announcement to approximately 150 entertainment reporters and collect branded video/assets of the CMU alumni nominees.
- Hornercom worked closely with the Marketing/Web team to develop all collateral materials. The team used iconic theater imagery to integrate the CMU and Tony Awards logos, while also including the "First, Exclusive Higher Education Partner of the Tony Awards" positioning statement. This theme was used in all communications leading up to the event, including invitations, signage, media kits and materials, advertising, promotional items and on the web.
- To leverage the Tony Awards partnership and School of Drama Centennial with key donors, CMU created a "VIP Tony Experience" package. A customized hospitality package, including tickets to two Broadway shows and talkbacks with CMU alumni performers, as well as tickets to the Tony Awards dress rehearsal, was paid for through a premium donation.
- To reinforce the CMU brand with a global audience, the university negotiated two, 30-second TV spots that would air during the Tony Awards broadcast. The commercial spoke to CMU's cross-disciplinary leadership in the arts and sciences. The commercial was titled "Ideas that Shape Your World Start Here" and was narrated by CMU alum, Tony winner and "Kinky Boots" star, Billy Porter.
- CMU had two on-stage moments during the Tony Awards to commemorate its Drama Centennial and preview the upcoming "Tony Honor for Excellence in Theater Education." The first occurred during the Creative Arts Awards, which took place pre-broadcast and was presented live in Radio City Music Hall. Dan Martin, Dean of the College of Fine Arts; Paula Wagner, CMU alumnae, Board of Trustees member and 2014 Tony nominee; and 2013 Tony winner, Billy Porter—spoke to 6,000+ audience members to reinforce CMU's leadership in theater education. The second on-stage moment came during the live CBS Network Tony Awards broadcast, when CMU alumni Zachary Quinto and Matt Bomer announced that CMU, to commemorate the School of Drama's Centennial, and the Tony Awards will co-create the first "Tony Honor for Excellence in Theater Education" to recognize K-12 arts educators nationwide.
- CMU used press kits and branded signage throughout the Tony Awards press room to reinforce its partnership in the presence of 200 national and global news outlets. Additionally, the university had a team of "CMU Correspondents" in place, including a videographer, photographer and interviewer to capture video of CMU alumni winners.

EVALUATION & RESULTS

- More than 7,000,000 people in seven countries viewed the Tony Awards primetime broadcast on CBS television—including CMU's branded presentations delivered by celebrity alumni.
- With strategic media outreach, more than 1,000 print, online and broadcast stories were published and/or posted about on CMU's new affiliation with the Tony Awards.
- The media coverage generated more than 100,000,000 branded media impressions and approximately \$5,000,000 in advertising equivalency (measured using PRTrak).
 - Media highlights include: *CBS national broadcast, USA Today, Huffington Post, International Business Times, Variety, Playbill, Broadway.com, Broadway World, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, Pittsburgh Business Times and KDKA-TV (Pittsburgh).*
- Fans around the world made the connection over social media—reaching more than 9.3 million on Twitter, increasing CMU followers on Facebook and Twitter by 6.3% and 4.4% respectively, and earning 20,000+ views of CMU's TV commercial on YouTube.
- In its inaugural year, the donor relations team set a goal to sell 10 Tony Experience VIP packages. Even with a very short runway for marketing and execution, the team was able to secure nine packages—generating \$86,000 to help offset costs of the Tony partnership.

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Summary

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