



A Gala Career

Robin (Severn) Fischette and husband David used their theatre and music training to build one of the top event companies in the U.S. Today, their GO West Events & Multimedia puts on million-dollar galas and corporate conventions for companies like WellPoint, Amgen and Countrywide. The events go well beyond party favors and flowers to include eye-popping spectacles and dazzling multi-media experiences.

And it all started with a DJ service in the 1980s.

“Our goal is, how can we blow people away? What’s something they’ve never seen or done and would never forget?” Robin says. “It takes big vision.”

This year Robin and GO West Events have been nominated for the industry’s highest honors. But, after building GO West into an industry leader, Robin is now getting back to her first loves, singing and acting, which were a major part of her life at VU. Robin, the daughter of VU alums **Bill Severn ’61** and **Barbara (Severn) McNutt ’61**, enrolled at VU in 1981, undecided about whether or not she would stay.

“I wanted to go to arts school, but I ended up loving Vanguard after the first year,” Robin says. “I have huge respect for the professors. I learned a lot from them, learned many life lessons while there and grew to love many friends. I appreciate those years a lot.”

She immersed herself in the theatre program and became a double major in cultural anthropology due to Vince Gil’s influence. Under Morris Pike she acted in many plays and musicals including “Fiddler On the Roof” and “Man of La Mancha” in which she played the lead role. She also started a band, the Late Arrivals.

But her father died unexpectedly during her sophomore year. Robin continued through her junior year, but then quit school in 1984 to pursue singing and acting. She moved to Studio City with sister **Belinda ’84** and met David Fischette, who was deejaying at Universal Studios. She saw promise in his mobile disc jockey business, and in their relationship, and she helped him build the company into the number two DJ service in the Los Angeles area, producing events for major record release parties and Hollywood premieres. Robin and David married in 1990.

At the same time, Robin’s music career was taking off. She had a top manager and her groovy R&B-influenced demo had earned an offer from music magnate Jimmy Iovine. MCA Records was interested in her original song “Kiss Me With Fidelity.”

But Robin struggled to reconcile her commitment to the gospel with her secular music career.

“At that time it wasn’t as easy to find a career as a Christian without defining yourself as in or out of the Christian market,” she says. “My heart was pushing me to be something so much more, and to present the message of the gospel underneath everything I do. I didn’t know how to make these colliding worlds come together.”

She was on the verge of signing a contract with a producer who wanted to turn her into a disco diva in Germany. But the day before signing, she and David visited their pastor’s house and she glimpsed what her future might become.

“I would have been stuck in a contract in Germany being a disco queen. It would have pulled me away from my marriage, my Christianity. I felt this icky sense inside that



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GO West Events & Multimedia, which she and David had moved into and incorporated in 1992. Their goal was to produce full-scale corporate events. They began with video walls, theme décor and centerpieces but soon graduated to elaborate custom décor, multi-media saturation and jaw-dropping spectacles.

“We brought our collective backgrounds in music, technology and theater together to build a top-quality production company,” she says. “Our curiosity kept pulling us to the next level.”

With each event, GO West set a higher bar for the “wow” factor. At a corporate event headlined by Pat Benetar, the Fischettes’ production followed a “Fire and Ice” theme. An ice sculptor carved a 20-foot Gibson guitar from a block of ice while plumes of fire leaped around him.

At another event an unchained giraffe and elephant, and a caged lion, occupied the center of the ballroom. Top executives petted the animals.

But GO West’s approach was more than just pizzazz. They wanted to tell a fun, even meaningful story through the entire experience.

“David and I both had theatre training, so that’s how we approach it,” she says. “We tell stories from every aspect of what we’re doing — every piece of décor and media. We even do subtle stuff that people probably don’t notice.”

As the events became more complex, Robin exercised new aspects of her creativity, from set design to singing to utilizing digital motion environments. Soon they were handling huge \$1.5 million expos, the Staples

it was wrong,” she says.

She turned it down and her pursuit of a secular music career abruptly ended. Within months she became pregnant with twins and “my life changed completely,” she says. Daughters Chalice and Brianna, now 12, played “Belle” on “Days of Our Lives” while they were infants. Two years later Victoria was born, now 10, who also did studio vocal work and productions.

Robin still sang and wrote musicals for her church of 5,000, but her energies shifted to

Robin Fischette, continued from page 3

Center grand opening and “incredibly posh events” that required actors, fragrance machines, indoor waterfalls and custom chandeliers.

Their proudest moment was the event industry’s own annual awards meeting in 2004 at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. The Fischettes produced the award gala, pairing baroque elements with new technology for their theme, “The Reinvention.” They hung a 360-degree curtain around the entire room and projected video onto it throughout the event. There was even a Benjamin Franklin impersonator. That night Robin sang with Sean McDermott of Broadway fame and David was named producer of the year. The following year Robin received a nomination for designer of the year.

“GO West Events stands out as an event industry company because they have fabulous technology and multi-media, and they can create all the décor and entertainment necessary to deliver the theme and message of the event,” says Carolyn Baragona, vice president for Event Solutions, a trade magazine covering meeting and event planners. “Robin brings this extra sense of style to the room and creates an ambience. ... Not only

is she visionary, she’s multi-talented and grasps every element it takes to produce a spectacular event.”

GO West has won many industry awards. But just as important to Robin is the warmth they have been able to inject into their events.

“We try to be light and salt in what can be a dark industry,” she says. “We don’t take jobs from companies we don’t agree with. We don’t provide fortune tellers. We try to bring love and light into what we do because it can be really cold and indifferent. We said, ‘Okay, God, you show us, because you’re the one who walked among everybody.’ That’s our goal in life.”

For instance, at one event the Fischettes wanted to include a prayer, so Robin sang “The Prayer” as an invocation before the meal.

Still, for Robin, her success in the event industry has felt, at least in part, like a departure from her real purpose.

“I never thought I’d be doing this,” she says. “My plan was music, but it ended up being producing. Music is where I started. It was my passion. The beauty is that God has taken me and re-molded me into what he

wants. He’s changed me a million times. I’ve done incredible things along the way.”

She has incorporated music into what she does, writing corporate songs and singing them for thousands of people, writing musicals and jingles, performing voice-over work for Blue Shield’s online training program and for Gospel Light Sunday school curriculum and video training series.

But now she is determined to re-launch her careers in music and acting before it’s too late. Now that GO West is thriving and has attracted a host of creative people, Robin has stepped out of day-to-day production to spend time with her three children and develop her album and television projects. She remains active as chairperson.

This year GO West Events (www.gowest-events.com) is nominated for event company of the year, and for five Tellys (a separate award). During a tour of the company’s offices in Westlake Village, the sparkle that marks their productions is evident in their interior design. The offices are boldly and tastefully decorated; the hallways are lined with framed magazine spreads about the company.

We step into Robin’s office where two letters from the event industry’s awards committee have just arrived. Robin opens the nomination for GO West Events as company of the year — it is expected. But the second letter is a surprise, and Robin discovers she has been nominated for designer of the year.

“You’re witnessing it,” she says.

She’ll find out if she won this fall. It’s yet another welcome surprise in an unexpected but rewarding career.

Planning the ‘wow’: Robin and David Fischette at a meeting at the GO West Events offices in Westlake Village.

