

Peers from across North America gather in New York City to present “Manager of the Year” Award

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Interview with Ann Summers Dossena Legendary Canadian artist manager.

Ann Summers Dossena of Toronto was recently honoured in New York City by her peers from across North America. She was presented with the first ‘Manager of the Year Award’ at the annual Awards Ceremony and Luncheon of NAPAMA (North American Association of Performing Arts Managers and Agents) and the APAP (Association of Performing Arts Presenters). “I’m very honoured. Napama members work hard to advance our profession in order to service both the artists we represent, and the Presenters who work so hard to produce performances. Artists are always asking and looking for representation. One of the best sources is the list of managers and agents who are members of Napama,” says Ann.



Ann Summers Dossena
V. Tony Hauser Photo

Ann Summers Dossena has been a strong voice and advocate for the arts for more than five decades. Her work in the industry began in 1958 in New York and throughout the years she has worked in Rome from 1968-1977 and in Toronto since 1977. She operates Ann Summers International in Toronto and Rome where she’s represented international artists in their career development, all while maintaining her own successful career as a presenter and producer of concerts, tours and events.

In New York she created the Extended Engagement Plan (later known as the Artists in Residence program). It was funded by the National Endowment of the Arts and Chamber Music America. The program was put in place in order to develop and create full-time employment for chamber music artists and encourage the interest of concert-goers. Ann also produced and presented the first concerts at Carnegie Hall and produced the first concerts at Lincoln Center. It was during this time in New York that Ann also initiated an informal series called Concert Party.

After moving to Italy, she extended the Concert Party concept to Rome, which enabled her to produce and present several high profile arts events and concerts. After returning to Toronto, she established the International Resource Centre for Performing Artists in 1983- a non-profit charitable organization that helps young artists progress in their careers.

The organization includes several programs, coaching sessions, and activities honouring Canadian operatic icons and showcasing young performers.

Tandem had the chance to ask Ann Summers Dossena a few questions about her career and commitment to the arts.

You've been an advocate for the arts for decades. Why are the arts important and why is it vital to keep the arts present in today's society?

Understanding and respecting each other's cultures is the best way to sustaining peace. Arts are the expression of culture for everyone. In our international arts conferences, some countries have stated that the arts have saved their society after major conflicts. The creators will always create and they need interpreters to bring their creations to the public. Without artists to bring these creations, whether its dance, theatre, music or visual arts into our lives, I don't think we could have peaceful coexistence.

On top of managing Ann Summers International you have also maintained a successful career as a presenter and producer for concerts, tours and events. How do you manage to do all this and keep a balance?

These activities are all related. I produced a lot of concerts in New York in all the concert venues, saw audience reactions, became a presenter in order to encourage other presenters to employ my artists, and worked with colleagues in various geographical locations. I was visiting Italian artists that I was touring in the US (including Severino Gazzelloni) when I realized young people were gathered on the Spanish steps in the summer with money to spend and nowhere to go. I brought to Rome a series I produced in New York called Concert Party in the garden of the Accademia Filarmonica Romana in 1968. I subsequently met my late husband, Armando Dossena who was a regista with Raiuno Telegiornale, married and left New York for Rome.

You produced and presented the first concerts at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. How does it feel to be the first to accomplish that and would you say you're a trailblazer for what came afterwards at these prestigious venues?

Until it was saved with the help of Isaac Stern, Carnegie was a rental venue. Because we all thought it was gone, it wasn't booked and the calendar pages were empty. Performances had to be arranged quickly and Mr. Stern asked me to create a series. We created four series, one of which, the visiting orchestra series, still exists. When the theatre and concert hall were built at Lincoln Centre I was asked to produce their first events. I entertained visiting presenters during their yearly conference in New York by giving receptions in each venue as it was completed. When the Metropolitan Opera was ready, they honoured me by giving me the first reception there.

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