

AZ Insider: Marvin Hamlisch at Private Phoenix Party

Written by Written by Kathy Shayna Shocket

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Kathy Shayna Shocket has the inside scoop on Arizona's social scene.



Behind the scenes with Marvin Hamlisch in Phoenix.

Early Sunday morning I was chatting with **Marvin Hamlisch** as he was headed to an intimate brunch in a beautiful home in north Phoenix. He had performed with the Phoenix Symphony the evening prior and had yet another performance Sunday afternoon. As he hopped into Phoenix Symphony's **Maryellen Gleason's** car, he told me that although he had to go back and forth from downtown Phoenix's Symphony Hall (a half hour drive each way) to please let the guests know he was on his way and determined to play for them. Yes, the superstar composer was on a demanding schedule.

But **Marvin**, the mensch with a modest demeanor, strolled into **Sheila Schwartz's** home as if the group of awaiting strangers were his only engagement that day. About 50 guests gathered in **Sheila's** living room around the Steinway grand piano for the morning mini-salon performance to benefit the Jewish Day School Scholarship Endowment Fund. **Marvin** and **Sheila** are pictured above chatting, as I snapped away to capture the memorable event.



(I captured this classic moment of Sheila Schwartz thanking Marvin for donating his time.)

The ticket price for the once in a life time opportunity to experience Marvin's music in the intimate setting of a living room? It was \$500 per person. Marvin, (the incredible talent who gave us "The Way We Were," the score of "Ice Castles", Sophie's Choice," "Chorus Line" and much much more) - - - donated his time.

It was an unique chance to experience Marvin's music and story telling - up close and personal in an intimate setting and a unique way of supporting an endowment fund and the Jewish Community Foundation (JCF). The Fund provides financial aid over and above what the Jewish Tuition Organization (JTO) provides, awarding annual scholarships in amounts up to \$500 per student or \$1,000 per family.

Sheila Schwartz who graciously opened her home for the event (her late husband was **Jess Schwartz** for which the Jewish community's high school is named) is a major supporter of JCF. Phoenix attorney and board member of the JCF **Neal Kurn** had the chance to tell Marvin about the the success of the organization's endowment fund.



From the living room to the GREEN Room . . .

In the Green Room of Symphony Hall, just prior to **Marvin's** performance- he joined a roomful of lawyers for a special meet and greet. The private reception was one of the membership benefits of the Lawyers for Phoenix Symphony support group.

I captured one of the exciting highlights on camera- when attorney **Ruth Landau** surprised **Marvin** with some nostalgia. You see, **Ruth** attended Camp Geneva- a primarily Jewish girl's camp in upstate Pennsylvania from 1965-68. **Marvin** and his friend **Richard** were the camp music counselors - who wrote and produced from scratch several camp musical shows.

Ruth showed **Marvin** - the album of camp songs he wrote - which she has cherished all these years. And even better - here's a copy of the picture she has of **Marvin** posing with the camp staff in 1965. Marvin is the first one in the first row in the lower left hand corner.

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Ruth was excited to have the chance to mingle with **Marvin** as an adult. "Those were wonderful years, who knew what was to come," says **Ruth**. **William Michals**, who **Marvin** invited to join him for the Phoenix Symphony performance, was also at the reception for the Lawyers' group.



William Michals is pictured above at the reception with his friend from New York, a documentary film maker.

Thanks Marvin for another unforgettable musical experience! !



Kathy Shayna Shocket is a freelance **Reporter, Photographer** and **TV-Field Producer** based in Phoenix. She has written and reported for prestigious publications such as **TIME** magazine, **PEOPLE** magazine, **MONEY** magazine, the **Hollywood Reporter** and the **New York Times**. You can reach her at redcarpetgirl@aol.com