



**Mission San Juan Benefit Gala Raises \$600K for Mission Preservation While Honoring Madeline & James Irvine Swinden**  
*Former America's Got Talent Star Jackie Evancho Featured in Concert*

**San Juan Capistrano, Calif.** (September 17, 2018) – The Mission Preservation Foundation held its spectacular annual *Romance of the Mission* benefit gala on September 14 on the grounds of historic Mission San Juan Capistrano raising approximately \$600K. Madeline and James Irvine Swinden were honored during the celebration for their longtime philanthropic work towards the preservation of Mission San Juan Capistrano. Platinum recording artist and 2010 *America's Got Talent* finalist Jackie Evancho performed a moving concert in the Ruins of The Great Stone Church to a record 500 guests.

After a pre-concert reception in the Mission's scenic front courtyard gardens, Mission San Juan Capistrano Executive Director Mechelle Lawrence Adams welcomed attendees during the opening program saying, "The Mission stands as a testament to the human spirit - a testament to a tradition dating back to the 1812 earthquake which makes it the ruins that we gather in today. Today, the Mission is a vibrant and uplifting place and you are all vibrant and uplifting people who make it all possible."

Mission Preservation Foundation President George O'Connell recognized community leaders and arts advocates Madeline and James Irvine Swinden. Madeline co-founded the *Friends of the Mission* in 1996, is the founding chair of the benefit gala and serves on the Mission Preservation Foundation board. James is a fifth generation Californian, founder of The Irvine Museum and an ardent devotee of California history and art. They are both dedicated to many causes and organizations that benefit Orange County's history, environment and arts.

Upon receiving the recognition Madeline remarked, "We're honored to be recognized and to share the magic of this evening with each of you. Our work here though is far from over and we thank you for your continued dedication and support of this most sacred space."

At just 18 years of age, singer Jackie Evancho delivered a moving concert experience with her soaring renditions of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, *The Prayer*, *The Music of the Night* and *Think of Me* from Phantom of the Opera, *How Great Thou Art* and a concert tradition, *When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano*.

The historic Mission San Juan Capistrano bells were rung by two bell ringers as guests passed through the sacred Resurgam space featuring the artwork *Mission Garden, San Juan Capistrano*. The historic plein air art piece was painted by Arthur Rider (1885-1976) and donated for the evening by The Irvine Museum.

Longtime community partner The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel presented the exquisite four-course plated meal in the Mission's Central Courtyard. The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel's General Manager Bruce Brainerd and his team were met with applause for their stellar service and attention to detail for the evening's 500 guests.

Roger's Gardens Floral Studio, on behalf of Kerry and Gavin Herbert Jr., generously donated the beautiful Mission-inspired table décor for the candlelight dining experience.

An opportunity drawing featured a one-of-a-kind Santa Barbara travel experience which includes a helicopter tour, an ocean front view penthouse suite at The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara and private tour of the Santa Barbara Mission and Presidio. The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel also generously donated a luxurious get-away experience for two while Newport Beach-based Lugano Diamonds specially handcrafted a Mission San Juan Capistrano inspired 18k gold swallow diamond pendant made specially for the 2018 *Romance of the Mission*.

An evening take home gift of *Romance of the Bells, The California Missions in Art* was provided compliments of The Irvine Museum and Madeline and James Irvine Swinden.

The next benefit gala will take place on September 20, 2019. For more information, visit [www.missionsjc.com](http://www.missionsjc.com) or contact Mechelle Lawrence Adams at 949.234.1312 or Barb Beier at 949.234.1323.

### **About Mission San Juan Capistrano**

Known as the “Jewel of the Missions,” Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that boasts of quality permanent exhibits featuring original artifacts as well as traveling and temporary exhibits on a wide variety of topics.

The Mission is also Orange County’s only Mission and is a site of ongoing faith, education, preservation, and cultural event programming. The site includes such original buildings as the Serra Chapel, Great Stone Church, and the original padres’ quarters of the South Wing.

The Mission was founded on November 1, 1776 by Padre Junipero Serra as the seventh in the chain of the twenty-one California missions established by Spain. Over 70,000 fourth grade students visit the Mission as part of their field trip learning about Early California history.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange. Its fundraising entity, the Mission Preservation Foundation, is comprised of business and community leaders committed to ensuring the long-term preservation and viability of Orange County’s only Mission. The Mission receives no funding from either the Church or the State of California and must charge admission funds as a means of providing continued public access.

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