

INSIDE ARTS

SPRING 2018

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PROFESSIONALS



ALL IN!

A LOOK AT WHAT WE LEARNED, SHARED
AND CELEBRATED AT OUR ANNUAL
GATHERING OF PROFESSIONALS

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CULTURAL CHANGE

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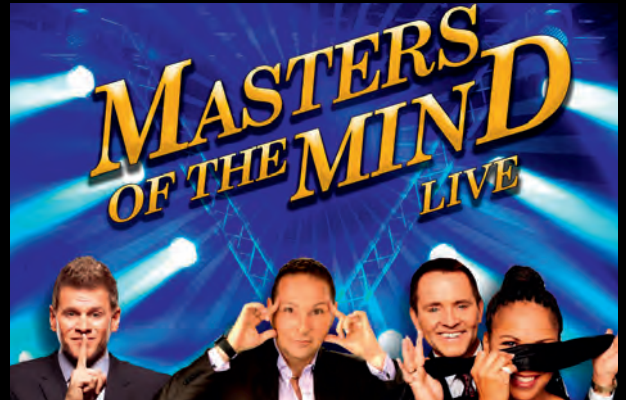
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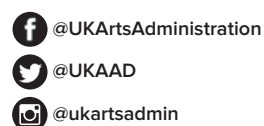
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VOLUME 31, NUMBER 2
SPRING 2018

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PROFESSIONALS

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“We don’t need any more celebrities. We need regular people who are already doing work for their communities to be in office. And artists have an incredible ability to lead and offer a different perspective and creative approach.”

— ART AS THE ACTIVATOR, PAGE 22

THIS PAGE: The Vijay Iyer Sextet at Birdland during APAP | NYC 2018.

COVER: The Brooklyn United Marching Band offered a creative moment at APAP | NYC.



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EDITOR

ALICIA ANSTEAD

ASSISTANT EDITOR

KRISTEN ANDRESEN

COPY EDITOR

SUZANNE G. FOX

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

JENNY THOMAS

EDITORIAL AND CIRCULATION OFFICES

919 19TH ST NW, SUITE 650, WASHINGTON, DC 20006
PH: 202.833.2787 / FAX: 202.833.1543

PUBLISHER

TODAY MEDIA CUSTOM COMMUNICATIONS

ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER

KRISTEN COOPER
kristen.cooper@todaymediacustom.com

PRESIDENT & CEO

MARIO GARCIA DURHAM

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APAP is a national service and advocacy organization with nearly 1,600 members worldwide dedicated to bringing artists and audiences together. Leading the field, APAP works to effect change through professional development, resource sharing and civic engagement.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



We often talk about the role of arts in building community – and it’s a real measure of how our industry works in the world. We build bridges. We close gaps. And we persist, sometimes against the odds.

In fact, you need only turn to any number of stories in this issue for examples of the power of the arts in community. Consider our interview with legendary dancer and choreographer Arthur Mitchell (winner of the 2018 Award of Merit) or our snapshot of Ann Carlson’s inspiring and revealing *Symphonic Body* adapted for APAP members, staff and others.

Other more challenging topics also have an impact on our roles in the arts. You can’t count on anything going perfectly or on progress being uncomplicated. We can think we’re moving ahead, and a policy, politician, cataclysmic event or some other unexpected roadblock occurs. And there we are: fighting the good fight yet again.

ADAM KISSICK/APAP

It didn’t escape my notice that the key issues that surfaced (not for the first time) at APAP|NYC 2018 were about the arts deeply connecting to and being part of communities. We talked about ways to build community. We talked about equity, access and inclusion. We talked about barriers to entry.

How do we solve the challenging issues that are always with us? The better question may be: How can we work together to build on progress, to address and identify inequities and to listen to one another?

For me, this was the gift of this year’s conference: I witnessed nearly 4,000 professionals and emerging leaders come together to talk and to listen, each one of them pushing progress forward in one way or another. I was struck by how encouraging it is to be among peers who embrace commonalities and differences, around staff members who are devoted to our mission and reminded to focus on the work and on each other. It was — if I may steal Carlson’s theme for a moment — symphonic.

Stay strong in your work.

Mario Garcia Durham, PRESIDENT & CEO

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Our annual Knowledge Issue collects stories and excerpts curated by experts in the field. Stay informed about trends, studies and best practices. Summer reading for arts leaders? We’ve got you covered.



- Amjad Ali Khan
- Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino
- Dakh Daughters
- DJ Nickodemus
- Explosion Negra
- GAUDI
- GAUDI ALLSTARS ORCHESTRA
- Hermeto Pascoal
- Huun Huur Tu
- Karsh Kale
- La Bottine Souriante
- Mohsen Namjoo
- Nachito Herrera
- Novalima
- Paris Combo
- Quetzal
- Riyaz Qawwali
- The Manganियar Seduction
- The Mystery of Bulgarian Voices
- Women Who Score
- Yossi Fine & Ben Aylon



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VOICE



Keys to the City

COME SPRING IN LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA, the hills — all seven of them — are alive with the sound of music. If you stroll through downtown on a sunny day, chances are you'll hear a youngster tickling the ivories. Or a senior citizen starting the morning with a song or two. Or an accomplished pianist filling the air with a beautiful melody.

As part of its Hill City Keys initiative, now in its fifth season, APAP member Academy Center for the Arts has embedded itself in the community in a meaningful and musical way. Each spring, the center places artfully painted pianos in public places — on a path overlooking a bluff; under the awning of a downtown merchant; in the lobby of the community health center; in





the center of the airport. While public pianos are nothing new, the residents and merchants of Lynchburg have embraced the initiative in a way that has surprised everyone — including Hill City Keys founder Libby Fitzgerald.

“Everyone I’ve asked to host a piano has never objected over the years. They’ve loved it,” says Fitzgerald. “Every time I think maybe it’s run its course, people say, ‘Don’t do that, we love it.’”

Fitzgerald got the idea for the pianos during a visit to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which bills itself as the “Street Piano Capital of the World.”

“It was just magical,” she recalls. “I thought if they can do it, we can do it. It has been an evolution. At first, the reactions were hysterical.

People would say, ‘You’re going to do what? Put pianos outside?’ They were flabbergasted.”

Five years later, the initiative is going stronger than ever. What started with pianos in five outdoor venues has grown to 11 pianos, including three permanent indoor installations. Most of the outdoor pianos can handle only one season outdoors, so Fitzgerald counts on donations at the beginning of each season: “An amazing number of people want to get rid of their old pianos,” she says. Recently, she received two baby grand pianos, which will be housed at the airport and a new health center in town.

Sometimes the donated pianos require too much repair to be worthwhile, but for the most part, they’re good once they’re tuned.

Local art students adorn the pianos with signature symbols, such as funky patterns or murals depicting local history, and they’re placed outdoors once the weather warms up.

Although the effort involves a lot of logistics — securing used pianos, getting students to decorate them, finding a location sheltered enough to keep them safe — the goodwill is worth it. Hill City Keys aligns well with the Academy Center’s commitment to community outreach, and it has become a beloved part of the city’s cultural fabric.

“It’s a chance to hear wonderful music, to see kids having fun, to sometimes hear real pianists playing beautiful music,” Fitzgerald says. “When they go away at the end of October, it feels empty.”



Michelle Dorrance

A CHANGE WILL DO US GOOD

Artists and cultural leaders are uniquely qualified to drive social change. The arts have the power to transform how people see and understand each other and the world around them — a mission that’s more important in the U.S. now than at any other time in recent history. To that end, the Ford Foundation recently announced 25 recipients of Art for Change fellowships, all of whom have a demonstrated commitment to social justice and reflect a diversity of experiences, ages, backgrounds, geographies and creative voices. “Art is essential in a

free and flourishing society. Artists are the visionaries who can shine light on complexity and possibility and inspire us to make those societies more just and more beautiful,” said Elizabeth Alexander, the Ford Foundation’s director of creativity and free expression. “This fellowship recognizes an extraordinarily diverse group of brilliant artists and innovators whose works embody social justice and enable them to come together and collaborate toward a more just and inclusive future.” The yearlong fellowship comes with unrestricted stipends of \$50,000 for individuals and \$75,000 for collaborative teams to create

VOICE

work exploring questions of freedom and justice. Among the performing arts fellows who will showcase their projects in late 2018 are Mikhail Baryshnikov, considered one of the greatest dancers of our time; Camille A. Brown, a prolific choreographer who has received multiple accolades and awards and was a participant in the 2017 APAP|NYC pecha kucha-style plenary session; P. Carl, director and co-founder of HowlRound and co-artistic director of ArtsEmerson at Emerson College; Ping Chong,

theater director, choreographer and video installation artist — and participant in the 2018 APAP|NYC town hall-style plenary session; Michelle Dorrance, a New York City-based tap dancer, choreographer, director, teacher, performer and founder and artistic director of Dorrance Dance; internationally renowned symphonic and operatic conductor Gustavo Dudamel; Alicia Hall Moran and Jason Moran (a participant in the 2018 APAP|NYC pecha kucha-style plenary session),

musicians who have created work for the Venice Biennale, the Whitney Biennial, the Walker Art Center, and other cultural institutions; Esperanza Spalding, a bassist, singer, and multilingual songwriter; and Carlton Turner, a performing artist, organizer and policy shaper and recipient of the 2018 Sidney R. Yates Award for Outstanding Advocacy on Behalf of the Performing Arts and former lead at Alternate ROOTS. More information and a full list of fellows can be found at fordfoundation.org.



MUSIC WITH A MESSAGE

Music lovers take note: The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has announced the first recipients of its Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions, an \$8 million commissioning initiative in celebration of the foundation's 50th anniversary. Ten nonprofits in the San Francisco Bay area will receive grants of \$150,000 each to commission major new musical compositions from world-class artists in genres including chamber, electronic, jazz, opera and

hip hop. The commissioned projects have themes that speak directly to Bay Area communities including the impact of technology on our culture, humanity's relationship to the natural world and the experiences of immigrants and women in our society. Among the selected projects are *At War with Ourselves*, an evening-length work exploring race relations in America by Grammy Award winners Kronos Quartet and Terence Blanchard; *Indra's Net*, an immersive, multidisciplinary piece by MacArthur "Genius" Award winner Meredith Monk, commissioned

by Mills College; and *Dreamers*, commissioned by Cal Performances at University of California, Berkeley, for which Peruvian composer Jimmy López will collaborate with Nilo Cruz to create an oratorio for orchestra, chorus and soprano that focuses on sanctuary cities and immigration experiences, to be performed by Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Philharmonia Orchestra of London. A creative cohort of the so-called "dreamers" — the name used for undocumented young people brought to the U.S. as children — will serve as members of the artistic team, and their stories



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* Ferron

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* Kofi Baker's Cream Experience

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* Skerryvore

* The Sweet Remains

Surviving Twin

* Terry Riley

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Villalobos Brothers

* Vitaly - An Evening of Wonders

* Windham Hill's Winter Solstice

The Waifs

*** New**



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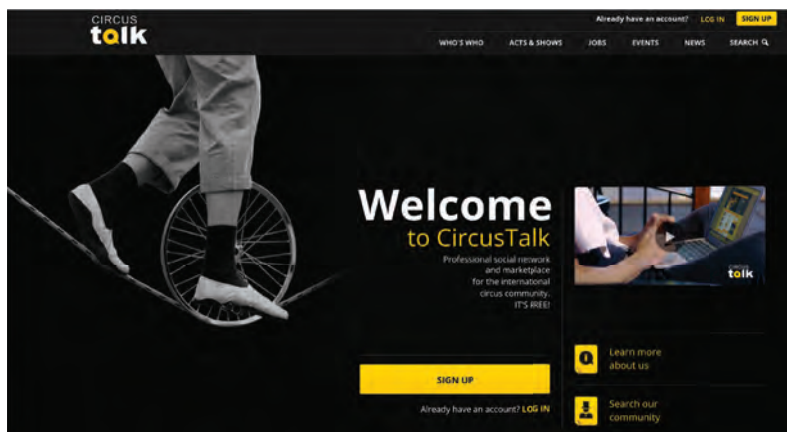
AnneMarie Martins/VP | e: amartins@sroartists.com

John Schimmelman/Agent | e: jschimmelman@sroartists.com

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will help inspire the piece. "Without a doubt, this was the most competitive set of proposals I've seen in almost two decades of working in arts philanthropy," said John McGuirk, director of the Hewlett Foundation's Performing Arts Program. "The works we ultimately selected are of the highest artistic quality and enduring value." Launched in 2017, the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions will award 10 grants to local nonprofits annually in each of five performing arts disciplines through 2021. Future years will focus on theater, dance, traditional arts and film. The new works created with this round of awards will premiere in Bay Area communities over the next three years. A full listing of commissioned work and details about the 2018 grant application process can be found at hewlett.org/50commissions.



CIRCUS NET(WORK)

Circus artists and presenters now have a forum of their own with the introduction of Circus Talk, an international professional social network developed specifically for the circus industry. The searchable database and marketplace includes individual, company and organization profiles and a database of acts and touring shows — along with a special section in which circus presenters can share ideas and information about touring shows. See a related story in the feature section of this magazine, and learn more about the forum initiative at circustalk.com.

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CULTURE AND CAPITAL

As performing arts professionals, we know the intrinsic value that our work brings to our communities. Thanks to a comprehensive effort by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis, regional and local leaders now have access to authoritative federal data on the monetary value of the arts on a state-by-state basis, providing a powerful toolkit for informing and shaping policy. The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account provides an in-depth analysis of arts and cultural employment and compensation by state. The latest ACPSA data — from 2014 — reveals that the arts and cultural sector contributed \$729.6 billion or 4.2 percent to the U.S. economy that year. Between 1998 and 2014, the contribution of arts and culture to the nation's gross domestic product grew by 35.1 percent. The new state data tracking arts and cultural employment and compensation provides illuminating profiles and allows for comparisons among states and regions. "Information from the ACPSA has been invaluable for understanding the role of arts and culture in our economy, demonstrating that the arts are indeed part of our everyday lives," says NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "Now with the new state data, state leaders have a powerful tool to assess and advance arts and culture for the benefit of all their residents." The ACPSA identifies and measures 35 industries that constitute the larger arts and cultural sector. The employment and compensation totals for these industries are represented as national and state-level numbers with the latter relative to the national rate. The relationship of the state numbers to the U.S. average is expressed in the form of percentages and location quotients, which account for the state's overall workforce. A host of resources, including state profiles, research briefs, interactive infographics, and data profiles can be found at arts.gov (search ACPSA). In addition, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies has produced an interactive data dashboard that can be accessed at nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-work-force-state-profiles/. ■■

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Transitions



Celeste Smith

APAP Leadership Fellow
CELESTE SMITH, CEO of 1Hood Media, is among recipients of the 2018 SXSW Community Service

Awards, selected for uniqueness, level of impact, clarity of mission and relationship to Austin and the SXSW community.

APAP board member **MICHAEL BLACHLY** became director of Florida State University's Opening Nights



Michael Blachly

Performing Arts Program in November. Since 2015, Blachly has served as vice president of Arts Consulting Group, Inc., where he led the firm's

facilities and program planning practice. He has a proven track record for managing comprehensive arts presenting programs at five universities, including the University of Florida, UCLA, the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Colorado State University and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. "Michael is highly respected in the performing arts field and brings a wealth of talent and expertise to our program," says FSU president John Thrasher. "We look forward to him building on our tradition of excellence and further distinguishing FSU's Opening Nights

as one of the premier performing arts programs in the country." Blachly's résumé includes administrative management experience in the arts, facilities operation and programming in the public and private sectors. He has expertise in commissioning new works, presenting premiere performances with established and emerging artists, fund-raising and developing educational outreach programs with artists. Having spent the majority of his career in higher education, Blachly has served as a faculty member, supervised student interns, participated in campus administrative leadership teams, chaired institutional events and spearheaded major capital campaigns.



Paul Brohan

PAUL BROHAN is the new programming director for the Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa. He comes to Hancher from

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, where he served as deputy director of programs since 2015. "I am excited by the opportunities and challenges ahead as Hancher Auditorium embarks on its



Chuck Swanson

45th season and continues the inaugural celebrations and programming in its new state-of-the-art facilities," says Brohan. A search for

his successor is underway at MAAF. In other news about Hancher, The Iowa

Cultural Corridor Alliance presented executive director **CHUCK SWANSON** with the 2017 Larry Eckholt Award for arts advocacy in November. The award is the ICCA's highest individual honor. Swanson, who began work at Hancher in 1985 and took over as executive director in 2002, was nominated for the award by John Kenyon, director of the Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature. In his nomination, Kenyon wrote: "Chuck is simply an energizing presence in the corridor arts scene, championing work and enhancing opportunities for artists and patrons of the arts alike."

Congratulations to **CAROLYN DORFMAN DANCE**, which is celebrating its 35th anniversary this season with a world premiere collaboration with Pilobolus and a tour headed to Aventura Arts & Cultural Center in Miami, Florida.

THE ROOTS AGENCY and **IST MARK ARTISTS MANAGEMENT** have formed a partnership to book Arlo Guthrie. "We've been working with Mark Smith for 17 years," says Roots founder Tim Drake. "This new arrangement is just the natural progression of advancing and formalizing that relationship with the goal of better serving our clients."

In another partnership, Starvox Booking LLC and BookSmart Broadway have united to form **GRAND CENTRAL BOOKING**. Veteran agent and talent manager Paul Bongiorno — formerly of Starvox — is sole owner, president and CEO. The executive team is headed by longtime agent and BookSmart Broadway owner/founder Josh Sherman and industry/performing arts center professional Jessica Finkelberg Silver. For more information, visit grandcentralbooking.com.

OMARI RUSH, who recently became executive director of CultureSource,



Omari Rush

has been named chair of the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. Rush succeeds Drew Bucholz of the Interlochen Center for the Arts. He has served as a member of the governor-appointed council since 2010, and as vice chair since 2013. He is on the board of directors

for the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and Arts Midwest. In addition, he is on an advisory committee for the Association of Performing Arts Professionals and is a member of the Next Generation of Philanthropists of the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation.

MICHELLE RAMOS is the new executive director of Alternate ROOTS. Her background includes



Michelle Ramos

working in criminal justice reform as project director of the Vera Institute of Justice, philanthropic work as a program officer at Women's Foundation of California and service organization leadership as board chair of Dance/USA. A licensed attorney, she has significant organizing experience and has

committed her career to serving communities and individuals adversely affected by race, gender, disability, class, socio-economics, inequitable laws and systemic oppression. Ramos, a retired professional ballet dancer, has worked as an executive director for nonprofit arts organizations in many cities across the U.S., and was director of Dance/NYC from 2006-2010. She also serves on the boards of Dancing Grounds and BAR None in New Orleans.

Arts Presenters mourns the loss of **SIDNEY "PEPPER" SMITH III**, who worked at the National Endowment for the Arts since 2006, most recently as a specialist in artist communities and presenting and multidisciplinary works. Smith was known for his dedication to his field and the artists it supports. **IAA**



Follow Spot: MENTORS: THEY GET THE JOB DONE

The New York Foundation for the Arts expands Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program.

BY KRISTEN ANDRESEN

Each immigrant’s journey is unique, just as each artist’s journey is unique. But when you bring together a group of immigrant artists at varying stages of their journeys, common challenges and insights emerge.

In 2007, the New York Foundation for the Arts launched its Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program, pairing immigrant artists from all disciplines with mentors who serve as compasses for the journey. Since then, a vibrant, supportive community



has taken root in New York City, providing support to more than 200 artists who are trying to navigate everything from issues of cultural identity to stress over a visa application to availability of rehearsal space.

“We often hear artists say, ‘You gave me a second home, you became a family to us,’” says NYFA learning director Felicity Hogan, who has headed the program since 2013. “This is a supportive and safe environment.”

A decade later, thanks to a two-year grant from the Ford Foundation, the program will expand to serve 144 multidisciplinary artists in four cities nationwide: Detroit,

Michigan; Newark, New Jersey; Oakland, California; and San Antonio, Texas. NYFA is working in partnership with established arts organizations in each partner city to implement the program and tailor it to the needs of each community.

NYFA brings in experts on entrepreneurship, goal-setting, strategic planning, financial literacy, engagement and advocacy, law, marketing, fundraising and more. The format and focus vary depending on the needs of the participants. In Newark, for instance, cultural identity has become a focus, while discussions in Detroit and Oakland have centered on issues

“We often hear artists say, ‘You gave me a second home, you became a family to us.’”

of gentrification and financial awareness.


“We have to be very adaptable and flexible,” Hogan says. “What might work for one year or one group doesn’t necessarily apply to the next.”

One element is constant: the dedication, guidance and deep sense of purpose that the mentors bring to the program. Some are alumni of the program, and many are immigrant artists who understand the unique challenge of navigating different cultural perspectives in the art world.

“Sometimes we have a former mentor-mentee pair in the room who are now both mentors and it can be very emotional, being reunited, being aware of the impact they’ve had on each other’s lives,” Hogan says.

For many participants, the connections they form with their mentors and fellow artists give them the confidence they need to thrive. One visual artist was so inspired by the program that she assembled a group of immigrant artists and successfully pitched a group exhibition to a New York City curator. She says the program and its network empowered her to pursue her own curatorial practice. A partnership with Lincoln Center has given some of the artists much-needed exposure.

“We want to help artists sustain their practice, but also provide them with a deep network,” she says.

For more information, visit NYFA.org. 

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ALL IN at APAP | NYC

STORY BY LINDA L. NELSON,
MINJI KIM AND MEMIE OSUGA
PHOTOS BY ADAM KISSICK

The overarching theme of the 2018 conference focused on best practices around inclusion and belonging. And asking the question: “Are the arts for everyone?”

The cold January winds were blowing fiercely on the Manhattan streets during APAP|NYC, the annual conference of the Association of Performing Arts Professionals, January 12-16, throughout New York City.

At the New York Hilton Midtown, artists, agents, and presenters huddled at the round tables outside the ballroom doors, in the street-level bar sandwiched between the Hilton’s busy escalators, amid the loud, constant bustle of the EXPO Hall’s three floors. Negotiations — the contracts and agreements, the who-what-where of creating, producing and presenting performing arts events — dominate the annual proceedings that also include star-studded plenary sessions, a thousand showcases and standing room only workshops.

At APAP|NYC, we Trans.ACT.

Trans.ACT — the theme of this year’s conference — is both prompt and disrupter, said conference co-host Simone Eccleston from the podium at the opening plenary: We engage in these transactions — negotiating, booking, contracting — to transform, to transcend, to use the performing arts to make the world new, to make the world a better place for everyone. If we are to celebrate the broad range of communities and artists in our universe, Eccleston charged, we are required to act — in our performing arts field and also in our communities. We are required to actualize our truths — each of us in a global society.

The questions of “Who do we mean when we say ‘the arts are for everyone?’” and “Who does each of us, whether artist, performing arts group or arts organization, serve?” were hot topics on transactional tables, in plenary sessions and workshops. To whom does your space and programming belong?



STREB



Are we developing audiences, developing communities, or both? What if we change our measure of success from number of tickets sold to access? What do we give up to have the equity and social justice, the inclusive community, to which we aspire and which many of the plenary speakers held high as a value? And how do we listen to each other to find the best answers to these questions?

One session took these questions head on. In “Are the Arts for Everyone,” Martin Wollesen and Erica Bondarev Rapach, the directors of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center in Maryland, asked participants if they take the time to get to know the people in their communities, and whether their actions — decisions about how time, money and resources are spent — reflect the audiences to whom they aspire or merely the ones they already have.

“We get so used to presenting and telling our stories, we don’t do a very good job of listening to the people who are right around us,” Wollesen said. “The audience we have is the audience we deserve.”

With many arts centers still operating with boards that look different from those they wish to serve, actions speak louder than words. “Identify some of those things you hold very dear and ask: If I disrupted that, what might change?” Wollesen challenged, noting that no venue can be everything to everyone. He said they have re-created the Clarice around the notion of access, rather than number of tickets sold. “You have to be comfortable letting go of something,” he added.

Andrew Wood is executive director of the San Francisco International Arts Festival. After attending a session on “The Arts Role When Communities Are in Crisis,” he was sitting in the device charging/networking area outside



Ahmed “Knowmadic” Ali



Kyle Abraham



EXPO Hall

the ballroom doors, his business perch for several days during the conference. The escalators delivered riders strategically in front of him, giving him the opportunity to hail colleagues and direct incoming meeting attendees as he typed a grant application on his laptop and awaited his next appointment.

“We learned on the job,” Wood said, referring to the topic raised in the session about the arts’ response to gentrification. “And we learned humility on the job, and we learned

otherness on the job — the idea that a new generation of people is being told that they have to get a high-cost education in order to do this work seems to be perpetuating something of the American myth, as opposed to the American dream.”

Or, as transgender dance artist Sean Dorsey said in Sunday’s “Artists as Activists” plenary session, “Discomfort is the sound of things shifting... Our values are worthless unless we act on them. Our working against racism is worthless unless



Cirque Zuma Zuma



Cirque-Tacular

Boom! Circus Explodes on the APAP Scene

Finnish circus performers create aerial stunts while hanging by their long and twisted hair. Contemporary circuses offer family and adult performances. Juggling isn't just for rings and knives and balls: It now includes ice and wind. Running away to join the circus has never looked so good.

"Circus is to LIVE," exclaimed Nadia Drouin, head of programming at La TOHU in Montreal.

A recent explosion in circus schools in the U.S., reflecting an evolution and re-ignition of the form in Europe and Canada, has increased supply and demand for circus arts. The physicality of circus and the theatricality of the performance tend to draw broader audience demographics than may be common for traditional performance venues.

Acknowledging this boom — and with the inspiration of "A Night at the Circus" at the 2017 Smithsonian Folklife Festival — the APAP | NYC conference held its first-ever

forum for circus presenters, artists, companies, producers, agents and others interested in advancing the circus arts in North America. Additionally, the conference offered two back-to-back sessions devoted to presenting contemporary circus.

"It's time to put our stamp on our own local talent," said James Lemons, executive director at Lake Placid Center for the Arts, as he co-facilitated the three events. Approximately 45 attendees participated in the forum, a large number of them from circus schools. "We have audiences who want circus arts and a generation of artists primed to create circus work, but no connection points between them," Lemons added.

The forum was designed to establish a North American presenter network for the circus arts and to explore ways to support the development and touring of new North American work. The facilitators, Lemons and Adam Wooley, managing director for Circus Now, solicited input on ways to create more opportunities for emerging circus artists; funding for the creation

of new circus work; a network of skilled circus arts technicians and directors; and a pool of circus arts critics with deep historical understanding of the form. They cited possible models including the Midwestern Arts Alliance's Jazz Touring Network and the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater and National Dance Projects.

One of the major challenges contemporary circus arts' expansion faces is venue preparation and marketing. "There are a number of presenters who may be interested in sharing the work with their audiences but feel overwhelmed by the technical requirements, marketing challenges or with simply finding the right artist/company for their organization," Lemons said later. Approximately 120 presenters across the U.S. have expressed an interest in booking circus arts, including the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. "Finding a convenient 'on-ramp' for these presenters will be important to growing the field."

— Linda L. Nelson

we look at the source, which is whiteness.”

Not everyone among the nearly 4,000 attendees might have embraced that point of view, but open debate is the foundation for any organization seeking to stay connected to change and growth.

The one thing on which there was consistent consensus, however, was that the most valuable aspect of APAP|NYC to most attendees is networking.

“It’s amazing to be in a room filled with people with loads of knowledge and different festival backgrounds,” Adam Potrykus, director for the Stockholm and Nordic Fringe Festivals, confirmed after the festival pre-conference. “And regardless of budget — if it’s

a half million or \$50 million — they always share the same issues, have the same questions and try to resolve issues together.”

Many first-timers also noted the collaborative air of the conference and the knowledge colleagues and peers offered. For first-time attendee Amanda Segur, general manager of the Lauderhill Performing Arts Center in Florida, the most notable thing about the conference was “the general warmth and openness from everybody who attends. Everybody wants to share and answer questions and give other people opportunities.”

In addition to networking opportunities, APAP|NYC provided enrichment for those looking to deepen their connections to the fields in which

they work. Shachi Phene had recently launched the Noor Dance Company, focused on classical and contemporary Indian genres, and she was keen on familiarizing herself with the current pulse of New York’s dance scene.

“I wanted to get a wider view of the dance world and what is currently on the forefront of people’s minds,” she said. “I’m very familiar with Indian dance, but I wanted to see beyond that. It’s important to me to research how venues and agents are finding cultural acts and how they approach them so that I can better attract attention [to my studio]. Hopefully, I can do this by absorbing information, but also through connections I’m not expecting.”

Crossing over nimbly

Among the most popular events held annually at APAP | NYC is the pecha kucha-style plenary session on Saturday. This year’s “Transdisciplinary Impact” theme centered on three unlikely but successful cross-sector partnerships. The takeaway? While each industry may have a distinct language, merging and intertwining those languages can produce impressive results.

At Wake Forest University, Christina Hugenschmidt, a neuroscientist working with geriatric communities, and Christina Soriano, a choreographer, collaborated on using improvisational dance to improve neurological conditions. While its impact on diseases such as Parkinson’s has been studied for more than a decade, the effects of dance on Alzheimer’s or dementia had not been explored. Referencing Liz Lerman’s *Hiking*



From left: Will Power, Christina Hugenschmidt, Christina Soriano, Ben Ashworth, Garth Ross and Jason Moran.

the Horizontal, both Hugenschmidt and Soriano — the “Christinas,” as they were quickly dubbed — illustrated how improvisational dance, a series of movements with no planned pattern, can lend insight into understanding dementia and improving memory, and how their work together created understanding and

appreciation between them professionally as well.

“It’s become clear to me how dancers, neurologists and physical therapists all look at movement in different ways,” said Soriano. “We need to be able to cross-pollinate and communicate across disciplines to learn from each other.”

Even for seasoned buyers, agents, managers and performers with a set laundry list of networking meetings, unexpected encounters can play a role.

“There are pleasantly surprising moments that happen at APAP,” said Jim Steen, principal of FSA Marketing Group. “Like when an agent confirmed a show with me in the lobby yesterday. Usually there’s a long, drawn-out process with assistants getting back to each other, but this time, I just happened to run into the agent who told me, ‘Hey, we’re on for the show!’”

Tanaya Winder from the Southern Ute Reservation in Colorado was also attending the conference for the first time, thanks to the First Peoples Fund,



That an unlikely, interdisciplinary dialogue can lead to effective and powerful results was further demonstrated by the second set of presenters, Ahmed “Knowmadic” Ali, spoken word artist, and Dunia Nur, of Edmonton’s Africa Centre. Ali and Nur focus their efforts on social and restorative justice for youth, especially those from difficult backgrounds or those who have experienced trauma.

Both Ali and Nur underlined the importance of communities and artists gathering to support youth, with a nonjudgmental, gentle and accepting attitude.

“This intersection of poetry and social work is based on the idea that we are all impacted by our surroundings – whether it’s artistic, social, et cetera,” said Ali. “We approach pain and trauma by asking, ‘Where are you? Where is the pain coming from?’ rather than ‘We are here to fix you.’”

The final presentation of the plenary was led by Ben Ashworth, a visual artist/designer, builder and skateboarder; Jason Moran, composer and artistic director for jazz at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts; and Garth Ross, vice president of community engagement at the Kennedy Center. The trio talked about how the culture and sport of skateboarding became a platform for innovative interdisciplinary arts at the Kennedy Center, an institution known for opera, symphonies, ballet, musicals and other more “classical” performances.

Ross met Ashworth through a chance visit to an underground skateboarding club, where Ross realized that skaters are often artists in their own right – designing gear, building skatepark structures and producing films to promote skaters. This ecosystem that was so integral to skateboarding culture, he felt, would bolster an essential dialogue

at the Kennedy Center. The two seemingly disparate communities were bridged by Moran, who, in addition to his work in jazz, is an avid skateboarder.

The three highlighted their belief that if large, slower-moving institutions became more nimble, they would be more innovative as thinkers, collaborative in their programming and instrumental in social change. By sharing the risks that spring from improvisation and by sharing knowledge among different disciplines, leaders of cultural institutions can strengthen and unify diverse communities and respond more effectively to cultural problems.

Opening communication and dissolving silos are elemental in any industry for developing new, forward-thinking ideas, and the results are especially powerful, as this session indicated, when partnerships form between disciplines that seem to be worlds apart.

– Minji Kim



From left: Keryl McCord, Ping Chong, Sean Dorsey, Lauren Ruffin and Tanya Selvaratnam.

Art as the activator

The Sunday plenary session, “Transforming Your World: Artist as Activist Town Hall,” opened with choreographer Ann Carlson conducting the APAP commissioned work *The Symphonic Body/APAP*, in which APAP members, staff and board members used their bodies and voices as instruments to recreate an orchestral piece about the movements based on their workdays. Touching at once on the humor, ephemerality, banality and absurdity of day-to-day life, the performance served as a segue to the main session, which emphasized the role of the arts in punctuating the quotidian. (See story on page 32.)

Session moderator Keryl McCord, of the Equity Quotient, opened the session by introducing the speakers: Ping Chong, writer, director of Socially Engaged Theater, Ford Art of Change Fellow and the founder of the Ping Chong Company; Sean Dorsey, artistic director of Sean Dorsey Dance; Lauren Ruffin, chief external relations officer of Fractured Atlas; and Tanya Selvaratnam, author and co-founder of The Federation.

McCord asked panelists to share what motivated them to

go into activism and to elaborate on current projects. In turn, she encouraged the audience to “listen deeply and try not to think about what [their own] story is while listening.”

Chong founded his company in 1975 to create theatrical productions for marginalized communities and spoke about his experiences as an Asian American — in particular his encounters with racism. Despite such ugly incidents, he was inspired by a moment when he witnessed a man whose disdain for the LGBT community was changed after hearing a woman’s spontaneous story of coming out to her parents.

“You can’t change things in a minute, like you can’t move a mountain in a minute,” Chong said. “You have to do it shovel by shovel. Just keep plowing forward day by day.”

Dorsey, a dancer who identifies as transgender, grew up in a highly progressive, accepting family environment, but while he loved dancing from a young age, he never saw a trans person on stage. Dorsey waited until his 20s to pursue formal training. Fighting for equal visibility and fair treatment of performers of all

identities, he said, was a mission of utmost urgency.

At Fractured Atlas, Ruffin works to give artists business tools and any other practical help to succeed in their practice. Most recently, she founded the Artist Campaign School, to give artists the support and resources they need to run for political office.

“We don’t need any more celebrities,” said Ruffin. “We need regular people who are already doing work for their communities to be in office. And artists have an incredible ability to lead and offer a different perspective and creative approach.”

Selvaratnam agreed. As a co-founder of The Federation, a coalition of artists and organizations committed to keeping cultural borders open, Selvaratnam spoke about her deep beliefs in the necessary potential for artistic expression to transcend barriers.

“Free expression is worth dying for,” she said — adding that artists can inspire communities to change the world.

The larger discussion with the artists and the audience touched on pertinent, often personal issues and, although most agreed that inequity and prejudice still exist in the arts, many attendees felt that having such an honest conversation, especially at a large event such as APAP | NYC, was a significant step forward. Overall, the session ended on a note of optimism about the future of the arts in activist endeavors.

“It was really reassuring to see this kind of conversation front and center,” said Celeste Chan, founder of Queer Rebels. “We know that art is an activator and agent of change, but we rarely see it put as a platform in this fashion.”

— Minji Kim

which supports Native artists and culture bearers. Winder runs an Upward Bound program for Native youth as well as Dream Warriors Management for indigenous artists.

Winder was at APAP|NYC to find other people with similar interests and to create more opportunities for Native artists. “Native American artists primarily get booked on reservations and communities or at universities only during Native Heritage Month,” she said. “These artists are so amazing and so talented, I know they can have worldwide reach. I am just trying to find access to the right people who can give us opportunities, so my artists can survive and continue to give their services to the communities that need it most.”

A series of sessions on Monday addressed raising awareness and listening around the topics of inclusion and belonging, themes that wove throughout the five days. “Difference & Description: Power, Politics, and the Words/Images We Use” drew an audience of far-ranging constituencies — members of the acrobatics world and arts institution curators, for instance — all seeking to learn ways in which the arts could be more responsibly presented, with more sensitive cultural understanding.

Discussion ranged from how language could be exclusive, as with APAP’s shift from an association of “presenters” to one of “professionals”

as being both accurate and more broadly encompassing, to questions such as that posed by Ananya Chatterjea, founder and artistic director of Ananya Dance Theatre: How do we infuse the analysis of power into everything?

“Building Audiences through Unconventional Means” combined data-driven and personalized approaches to engaging with listeners. “Say Yes, and: Redefining Community Engagement” offered a rich conversation about increasing understanding about how the arts could and should be integrated into peoples’ lives. While the focus of the conversation was on integrating arts into communities, a theme that seemed just as important was ensuring community partners understood and fully appreciated the value of the arts.

APAP|NYC 2018 closed with a meaningful plenary session featuring Bassem Youssef, an Egyptian surgeon-turned-comedian. Youssef, who lives in California, brought his brand of satire to the stage, landing crowd-pleasing zingers on topics from the American presidency to Tinder to what it means to belong.

He reminded the crowd of the importance of art as a way of “liberating your mind” and for its value in being unpredictable and imaginative. To illustrate, Youssef spoke of using satire to resist

oppression and propaganda in Egypt, especially in the face of being told it was “not the right time” for his ideas and humor.

He urged the audience to question, disrupt and demand better from leaders, demonstrating by example how the arts can have an impact. Throughout his performing career, he has faced off with the question of whether he belongs in comedy or in political dissent — a question that surely had resonance for the audience. Youssef ended with a confident and fitting response to the ambiguity: “I like it.” **///**

Linda L. Nelson is the assistant director for the Maine Arts Commission, the state agency for the arts supported in part by the NEA. She was the founding executive director for Opera House Arts at the 1912 Stonington (Maine) Opera House, on the National Register of Historic Places, for 17 years. Prior to that, she served as the first chief information officer for *The Village Voice*.

Minji Kim is a project manager for design at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and has worked extensively in publishing, journalism and cultural institutions. Although she is formally trained in art history, she is passionate about the arts in all disciplines, genres and time periods, and finds great joy in covering arts news and events.

Memie Osuga is an animator at Harvard College concentrating in Visual and Environmental Studies and an assistant in the Learning from Performers program at the Office for the Arts at Harvard. In her free time, she competes as a black belt in World Taekwondo.



Left: 5 Minutes to Shine participants Cathy Weiss, Megan Pagado Wells, Linsey Bostwick, Ronee Penoi, Katie Ortman and Celeste Smith. Right: Damaras Obi in the stage play *Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom*





DANCE

artist

Arthur Mitchell talks about his career, the hurdles, highlights — high jumps! — and his hope for the field. He is the recipient of the 2018 APAP Award of Merit.

BY JAKE STEPANSKY

At one point during my conversation with legendary ballet dancer and educator Arthur Mitchell, I asked him to explain how and why he took on the immense challenge of founding the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Immediately, I could hear him smiling over the phone.

“Everyone thought I was absolutely insane because I wanted to take classical ballet to Harlem,” he said emphatically. “But I’m an Aries — and an Aries likes a fight.”

And fight he did — until the Dance Theatre, a school and ballet company that provides advanced training in classical ballet to black students in Harlem, defied the odds and became an artistic and educational powerhouse that revolutionized the racial makeup of the ballet world.

For his revolutionary role in the dance world and his work as an artist, Mitchell was the recipient of the APAP Award of Merit for Achievement in the Performing Arts at the APAP|NYC in January. “The

arts ignite the mind, and they give you the possibility to dream and hope. That is the thing everyone needs today: hope,” he said at the ceremony held at the Annual Awards Luncheon in the ballroom of the New York Hilton Midtown in New York City.

There’s no doubt that during his decades-long career Mitchell has had to confront more than his share of roadblocks. Racism regularly reared its ugly head, threatening to derail Mitchell’s professional and artistic ambitions. He chose to pursue a

career in ballet as a reaction to his first experiences with blatant racism in dance casting.

“In my senior year [of high school], I would go to auditions where I thought I was the best dancer there,” he said. “But then I wouldn’t get the part because I was black. I wanted to figure out what I could do that would make me so good that people would use me. That’s what drew me to ballet — that it was so grounded in technique.”

Developing this technical foundation, he said, is the most crucial element of a young artist’s training, regardless of race. After years of study at the School of American Ballet, Mitchell became the first African American principal dancer in a major ballet company. As an educator, he holds his students to the same standards of highest excellence to which he holds himself.

“Your education and technique are everything,” Mitchell said. “You have to become immersed in it — and if you’re not prepared, it doesn’t work out for anyone.”

For Mitchell, artistic growth is a process of continual education. He has tremendous respect for the legends of the ballet world — George Balanchine, Igor Stravinsky and Lincoln Kirstein were grounding influences — not only because of their artistry, but also because of their excellence as dance educators.

And yet remarkably, Mitchell himself did not receive any ballet training until he was 18 years old. That, he explains, is what those in the dance world call “a big no-no.”

“When you’re going up against kids who’ve started dancing at 3 years old,” Mitchell said, “what greater obstacle can you face than starting at 18?”

Despite starting late compared to his peers, Mitchell worked “maniacally” — his word — to achieve and exceed his own expectations for excellence. And

achieve he did: Mitchell has accrued an impressive portfolio of accolades that includes a Kennedy Center Honor, a MacArthur Fellowship, the National Medal of Arts and now the APAP Award.

With a generation-defining career spanning more than six decades, Mitchell has seen the best and the worst that this country — and its arts scene — has to offer. It’s fitting, then, that he offers these words of girding and hope:

“An artist is there because they want to be an artist — and that shouldn’t change from one politician to another. Some years are harder than others, of course. But whatever you believe in, you’ve got to pursue it — no matter what. No matter what.”

An edited version of our conversation follows.

As a young person, what drew you to dance — specifically, ballet?

I did some tap while I was in junior high school at a social dance party, and a guidance counselor told me to try out for the High School of the Performing Arts. That was my first introduction to training in dancing. I liked tap dancing, and when I was growing up, musicals in the movies were the things to go see. I was intrigued by Fred Astaire, Bo Jangles, the Nicholas Brothers. I wanted to do [what they were doing], but I didn’t have any training. I started studying modern dance and tap, but people kept saying to me: You should be doing ballet! One day, I was in the studio when this one girl came in, put on pointe shoes and started moving across the floor. I thought, “That’s *beautiful*” — and I realized then that ballet was something I wanted to pursue. Once I started studying ballet, I fell in love with the discipline, the focus and the technique of it. That’s when I decided to accept my scholarship and begin studying at the School of American Ballet. I was 18 years old, which is amazing because you don’t start

studying ballet or dance at 18. But I was maniacal, and I was driven and I did it. Eventually, I saw the New York City Ballet and said, “That’s the company I want to dance with.” And that’s what put the nail in the coffin for me.

Tell me about the genesis of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. What challenges did you face in starting the company?

I felt that I wanted to go back to Harlem where I was born and teach classical ballet there because I was the only one at that time. I was the first African American to join a major ballet company in America. I had the opportunity there to work with Balanchine, Kirstein, Stravinsky — and I said, my god, this is what I want to do. I decided I would take it back to Harlem. Fifty years ago, racism was as bad as it’s been. Everyone was shocked. And beyond that, people in Harlem didn’t have the money to pay for ballet training and education. But I made it happen.

Why call it the Dance Theatre of Harlem, as opposed to the Ballet Theatre?

I wanted to show an evening of classical dance: ballet, jazz, modern, tap and African. I wanted the people who danced jazz to see classical and people who danced classical to see jazz and maybe they might be inspired to learn a new style. Whatever you want to do, you’ve got to learn the history and the education that comes with learning what happened. How did something come about? It didn’t just start by itself. What were the strong points of learning and doing it? Number one is the money; most young people need to work. These days, technology abounds, so everything is done for you, but you need to learn the history of what you want to achieve. Get an education and develop the technique. Read about it, go see it, become absorbed in it.

What does “diversity” mean to you in the context of dance and the performing arts?

Diversity means mixture. You’re bringing new things into an established technique or culture or thought. Classical ballet started in France and then moved to Italy, and then to Russia, to Germany, to England and finally to America. Every place it goes, you’ll find things were added to the classical technique that make it unique. For example, Balanchine brought his Russian training to America, but adapted it to American dancers. He said, “If I was in another country, I would probably be choreographing differently.” Instead, he adapted his choreography to reflect American eclecticism and the ability to move fast. That all is a simplified explanation of what diversity is.

As organizations work to diversify their programming, what pitfalls might they face?

One of the biggest pitfalls is to take someone because of their color who doesn’t have the technique and training and who can’t meet the standard. If you put them out there onstage, then those who are experts will notice. Make sure your dancers can meet the standard, maintain it and bring something to it. I [particularly admire] New York City Ballet’s School of American Ballet, as well as the American Ballet Theatre. The fact is: There are very, very few black ballerinas — there are black male dancers, but very few women doing the classics. So that’s a major step that the companies have yet to take. Don’t put someone onstage who isn’t trained who will look bad, because those who are against [diversity in casting] will say, “You see what I told you!” Take the best and put them onstage, but make sure to give them the skills training and technique to be excellent. That’s much easier in modern dance,

because modern dance is now developed in America. Classical dance has a tougher time with that, because there’s not a tradition for it in America, which means you don’t see many black performers. When I was at the Dance Theatre of Harlem, it was the one place you’d see black men and black women doing the classics.

What should arts presenters be prioritizing today or always?

Presenters in arts must have the eclecticism to bring in new things, because you’ve got to do something to get new audiences and new people in the seats. Diversity [on the stage] puts people of different colors into the seats. It always goes back to the seats being filled — so if you want more people to buy more seats, you have to put something on the stage that they can relate to. That’s what’s happening with Misty Copeland at the American Ballet Theatre. That theater is now filled with young black kids who are seeing a black ballet dancer — and that is a wonderful thing. Those kids will be inspired to follow her career and become involved in classical dance themselves.

What excites you about the upcoming Arthur Mitchell Project?

I got a grant from the Ford Foundation to travel the country and look for teachers and students who were black and being trained in the classical technique. The idea was that if I could find them, I could tell them to go to the School of American Ballet, which is the school of the New York City Ballet. Misty Copeland came out of the Boys and Girls Club. The idea is to find people that are working in the community and push them towards the classics. If you go to any city park, you’ll see young black men playing basketball, practicing so that they can make it onto a basketball team. They’ll be playing at midnight, even. They

should be putting that energy into working on their technique. Even your top athletes — football, basketball — are studying ballet, because it is the strongest technical base. When I wanted boys to study, I’d ask them “How tall are you?” and they’d say five-eight, and I’d say, “I can teach you to out jump someone who is six-three — you start with a demi plié, a bend in the knees, and so on — and if you do all that, you’ll get a higher jump than someone who is six-three.” That’s what I mean by using classical technique to make them better athletes. Dancers *are* athletes.

What advice do you have for young artists looking to pursue careers in the performing arts?

Instead of just being good at any one style, you’ve got to be a good dance artist that dances all of the styles. You’ve got to sing and talk — things that dancers didn’t have to do many years ago. You should study music. Learn to play an instrument — violin or piano, maybe. Study other forms — tap, jazz, modern — to enhance what you do classically. It’s a continual educational process. Get the education and technique to be able to compete on an international basis. It’s like the Olympics. In the Olympics, only three people are going to win, and you’re going to be competing with so many countries. If you don’t go in trying to win the gold, you’re not going to even win the bronze. Get your training so that you can become the best and win the gold. **!?!**

Jake Stepansky is a theater-maker and arts advocate based in Austin, Texas, where he is the general manager of Forklift Danceworks. During his undergraduate years at Harvard University, Stepansky worked at the American Repertory Theater, directed several productions at ART’s Club OBERON, student-produced the college’s annual ARTS FIRST festival and wrote for the Office for the Arts Harvard Arts Blog.

Honor roll

The APAP Awards are the highlight of the annual Awards Luncheon at APAP | NYC. In January, APAP was delighted to honor the artistry, advocacy and vision of the following recipients. We congratulate the awardees, who are nominated by their peers for having a significant impact on the industry and on communities worldwide. To see a list of previous recipients, please visit awards.apap365.org. — *Alicia Anstead*

SIDNEY R. YATES ADVOCACY

AWARD for outstanding advocacy on behalf of the performing arts by an individual or an organization for a particular advocacy effort or for a sustained advocacy campaign at the national, state or local level that has had a significant impact on the performing arts.

Carlton Turner
Executive Director (formerly)
Alternate ROOTS

FAN TAYLOR DISTINGUISHED

SERVICE AWARD for exemplary service to the field of professional presenting by an individual whose outstanding service, creative thinking and leadership have had a significant impact on the profession of presenting and/or on the Association of Arts Presenters.

Ann Rosenthal and Cathy Zimmerman
MAPP International Productions

WILLIAM DAWSON AWARD FOR PROGRAMMATIC EXCELLENCE

for sustained achievement in programming by an individual or organization for the quality, innovation and vision of program design, audience building and community involvement efforts.

globalFEST
Co-directors Bill Bragin, Isabel Soffer and Shanta Thake

AWARD OF MERIT for achievement in the performing arts by an individual whose genius, energy and excellence have defined or redefined an art form for today's audiences.

Arthur Mitchell
Dancer, Artistic Director,
Choreographer, Educator,
Co-founder of Dance Theatre of Harlem
(See feature on pages 24-26.)

ADDITIONAL AWARDS IN THE FIELD

HALSEY AND ALICE NORTH BOARD ALUMNI AWARD for committed excellence and service to the field of arts presenting by a former APAP board member.
Ivan Sygoda
Founder
Pentacle

NAPAMA AWARDS

NAPAMA AWARD FOR PRESENTER OF THE YEAR

Brett Batterson
President and CEO
Orpheum Theatre Group

NAPAMA LIZ SILVERSTEIN AGENT/MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Pamela M. Green
President and CEO
PMG Arts Management



PASIFIKA ARTISTS NETWORK
Karen A. Fischer; +1 (808) 283-7007
karen@pasifika-artists.com

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Community in Crisis

The performing arts have a role to play in the face of disasters and tragedies. Are you prepared for the unexpected?

BY LINDA L. NELSON

Directly in the wake of mudslides that followed wildfires in California, a community of performing arts professionals gathered for a session called “The Role of the Arts when Communities Are in Crisis” during the APAP|NYC annual conference in January. In a year rife with natural disasters, human-caused tragedies and political and social instability, it is no surprise to find the topics of preparedness and crisis response are top priorities for these arts leaders, whose venues and events draw large

crowds to public spaces. A second session at the conference drilled down to specific logistics: “Transforming Your Venue for Safety and Security.”


“Every community is in continual crisis. We can no longer keep our heads in the sand,” said Ted Berger, a board member for the Joan Mitchell Foundation and former executive director of the New York Foundation for the Arts, sketching out the broad terrain for the conversation. “We are leading this meeting because we are engaged in weekly conference calls with Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.”

It was APAP’s third year spotlighting communities in crisis. While the broad-spectrum definition of “crisis” remains consistent, stretching from a systemic lack of financial support, gentrification and widening social inequity to natural and man-made one-time disasters including hurricanes, floods and mass shooters, the emphasis shifted sharply this year to preparedness, readiness and resilience.

Preparedness can also have a broad-spectrum definition.

The premise of the special three-hour preconference session hosted





by the National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response (NCAPER) was that artists and arts organizations are often the first to step forward to help our communities gather and heal after an event because they are leaders for change and social justice. The session asked: How do we fund, structure and sustain this work?

The panelists, including leaders of the ArtsReady and Performing Arts Readiness projects, sought to present effective models for preparedness and response within this context. They also posited using preparedness work to move arts and culture to the center of broader community conversations.

The more narrow focus of "Transforming Your Venue for Safety and Security" brought to the forefront another question: How do we make sure our performing arts

spaces are inviting and accessible, while also making visitors feel secure? Collectively, the two panels explored the many reasons for living in a state of heightened and constant awareness, including learning to identify and deflect evolving threats.

"The threat is not going away," Mark Herrera, education director of the International Association of Venue Managers, warned. "It is elevated. We have to stay ahead of it."

Mollie Quinlan-Hayes is director of ArtsReady, an online source for readiness resources, including a web application designed "to make disaster planning easy." SouthArts founded the project in 2005 after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Quinlan-Hayes said that the field's biggest concern regarding crises that will impact

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them and their communities is “the unpredictability. Of everything. Regardless of where you’re located, there seem to be situations cropping up more frequently that are unexpected.”

“Crises come in all shapes, sizes and speeds, from storms to the fall of powerful male artists,” said Jan Newcombe, executive director of NCAPER. “The arts need to be front and center in any kind of recovery and response efforts. NCAPER is about how the arts can be part of enlightened leadership in recovery because it is leadership that makes the difference. We’ve got to get out of our rooms, out of the basement, wherever it is we are comfortable and be part of the larger community in a proactive way.”

Preparedness is key because too often, the arts are an afterthought in crisis response, panelists said. There is no mechanism for raising money for the arts in such circumstances, making the participation of artists and arts organizations in cross-sector networks of particular importance.

“Without cross-sector organizing, there is a perception that we as a sector don’t really care about the needs of other people,” Berger said. “Arts are under resourced and under financed, and if we are really going to be a resource, we have to change that power balance.”

The 50-plus attendees had direct experiences from Hurricanes Sandy, Katrina and Harvey and with live shooter episodes. As they told their stories, a broad outline of recommendations for what preparedness within this context might look like began to emerge.

- Seek flexible/transformational funding that allows your organization to be nimble and adaptive.

- Get state and federal arts agencies to the table when FEMA and HUD plans are drafted for how the state will spend disaster recovery funds to fight for the arts sector share of these funds.

- Go to civic meetings and advocate for broader issues, not just money. Be a part of broader civic coalitions around affordable housing, wellness centers, etc. Be sure that in your business plan, there is money to advocate on behalf of your community.

- Vote. “Make every box office a voter registration booth, starting today,” said Quinlan-Hayes.

While there was general agreement among the attendees that no one should “waste a good crisis” but rather leverage the sustainable, lasting lessons from it, the more specific issue of ensuring all visitors feel “safe and secure” raised the question: What kind of world are we helping to prepare for?

One in which our visitors do not balk at or complain about security initiatives such as key cards, metal detectors, bag searches and the extra time they require, said Herrera and Joe Levy, general manager of the Apollo Theater in Harlem. The two brought Department of Homeland Security-style training to APAP in “Transforming Your Venue for Safety and Security.”

“With concealed carry laws in many states, presenters are learning to manage what they cannot see,” Herrera said. He suggested venue owner increase their observational efforts and watch for persons wearing bulky clothing; suspicious or illegally parked vehicles near a gathering; unattended packages; and persons attempting to enter unauthorized areas.

“Recent events only **affirm the need to bring people together**, for a shared experience, and for presenters to help us **understand others and ourselves.**”

Both Levy and Herrera stressed the need for increased awareness and public vigilance. Levy noted that he has a trained crowd manager — a TCM — for every 250 people in his venue.

“It’s a real catch-22 — making people feel safe while barricading our buildings, buying into a ‘cultural common sense’ that perhaps we do not agree with implementing,” he said.

“We’re at the point now where you can’t just blow this off. International artists coming to the U.S. want to be sure they are secure, or feel they are secure, while they are here,” said Erica Zielinski, former general manager

and producer of the Lincoln Center Festival.

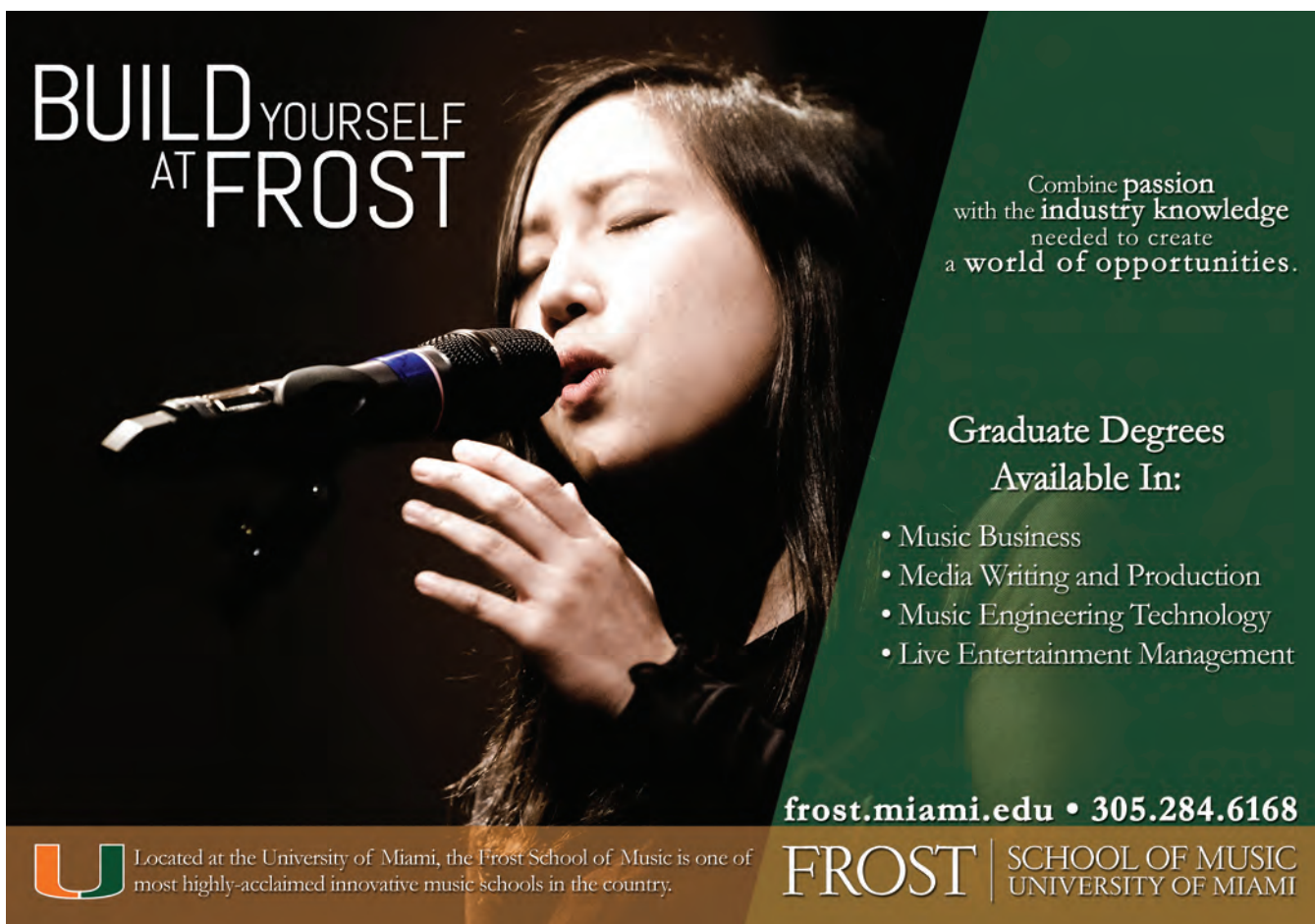
She spoke about booking an Israeli company that was funded in part by Israel’s Ministry of Culture. The support of the Israeli government created a backlash.

“We ended up having to create a whole security plan to keep everybody safe — or give the perception of keeping people safe,” she said. “You still have to be prepared. But at what point do you cut it off? Because experts are going to sell you everything. Institutionally, someone has to make the decision we’re going to do X but not Y. And there is still always a chance someone will have

a handgun in their bag when they come to the symphony.”

“I have not had one conversation with a programmer where they were making artistic choices based on security concerns,” said Quinlan-Hayes. “Yes, they want to ensure that they keep their artists and audiences safe. But, mostly, recent events only affirm the need to bring people together, for a shared experience, and for presenters to help us understand others and ourselves.”

“Whether you call it ‘situational awareness’ or ‘If you see something, say something,’ everyone in the organization needs to have safety in their job description,” she said. **IA**



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Dancer and choreographer Ann Carlson describes her *Symphonic Body* project as ongoing. She has conducted the orchestral expression of people's everyday gestures with folks at UCLA and Stanford University. In January at APAP | NYC, Carlson staged the work again, this time with staff, members and others in the community of the Association of Performing Arts Professionals. It was commissioned in conjunction with the I AM APAP theme, which has marked the organization's change in name — from *Performing Arts Presenters* to *Performing Arts Professionals*. It was a work of quotidian elegance and eruption, the kind arts professionals face every day as they create, present, market, support, imagine and advocate for the performing arts. **IA**

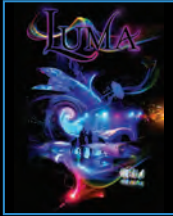




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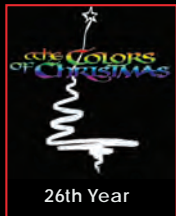
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