

# INSIDE ARTS

SPRING 2013

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTERS

## A new attitude

Performing arts  
as cultural and  
community catalyst



### ALSO INSIDE

LATINO LEADERS  
TAKE THE STAGE

ARTS EDUCATION  
COMBATS BULLYING

IMAGINING THE FUTURE  
AT APAP|NYC

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



THIS YEAR'S APAP|NYC 2013 was the first conference I had the privilege of creating with our incredible staff, committees and input from you. Seeing such a large turn out of members was fantastic. And your feedback has been terrific. Many of you were pleased with the tone and found value in your experience. Attendance was up. The sold-out EXPO Hall was very active. And the January weather was conducive to strong attendance at showcases. Our professional development sessions had particularly high energy and

participation. The keynotes were all engaging and culminated in a profoundly touching closing by speaker Rosanne Cash.

As I never tire of stating, your presence at APAP|NYC is an option, so we deeply appreciate your loyalty, participation and business. A special thanks goes out to our first timers who made up more than 15 percent of our overall attendance this year. What a wonderful indicator of the vitality of the field. A shout out goes to our long-time members as well. Your loyalty always impresses me. Thank you.

This issue of *Inside Arts* looks at two themes that have been in the public dialogue and consciousness. First, we focus on the burgeoning Latino population of this country, particularly in the arts. In February, I attended the inaugural SphinxCon meeting in Detroit. Organized by APAP board member and National Council on the Arts member Aaron Dworkin and the staff at Sphinx Organization, the national gathering focused on one topic: diversity. Diversity is always important to us at APAP and in the pages of *Inside Arts*. Alicia Anstead, our editor, has created a chap book in conjunction with the SphinxCon team, and our fall issue will report more on SphinxCon 2014.

The second theme for this issue is arts education and the role it plays in defusing the egregious practice of bullying in schools. Our communications and marketing director Lynne Kingsley comes from the arts education world – and we're delighted she's sharing her keen eye for stories in these pages.

Both topics should have as much public and field discussion as possible, and I am happy our publication can be an instrument for increased awareness and knowledge.

Again, thanks to all for a great conference. If you were not able to attend, we hope you can be with us next time: January 10-14, 2014. See you then!

Mario Garcia Durham, PRESIDENT & CEO

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# SPREADING

## a simple truth

BY RAY MARK RINALDI

IF ANYONE REPRESENTS the widespread clout of Latinos in U.S. culture today, it is Roberto Bedoya. As executive director of the Tucson Pima Arts Council, he oversees an influential agency that provides guidance and grants to a large swath of southwest Arizona.

But his profile isn't strictly local. He's a writer, poet and public speaker. He's a noted national authority on the First Amendment and on artistic expression. He's a respected arts consultant who has advised for the Ford Foundation, the Creative Capital Foundation and the Urban Institute.

And he's part of a wave of Latinos from east to west that is realigning the country's arts infrastructure in a way that's more inclusive.

"We do appear to be at a tipping point," said Bedoya, who ran the National Association of Artists' Organizations in the late 1990s when it was co-plaintiff in the landmark *Finley vs. National Endowment for the Arts* lawsuit. "Now, you are seeing arts leaders like Maria De León being appointed to the National Arts Council, and people like Josephine Ramirez at the Irvine Foundation. They are really in positions of leadership."

Positions in leadership such as those held by Olga Garay-English, executive director of the Los

A rise in Latino leadership in the arts begins the work of reflecting national identity.



Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs; Mario Garcia Durham, president and CEO of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters in Washington, D.C.; Tatiana Hernandez, arts program associate at the Knight Foundation in Miami; and Felix Padrón, who heads the San Antonio Department for Culture and Creative Development.

Joining that widening list of administrators and funding leaders in key spots are artists themselves, breaking out of roles defined by their ethnic heritage and taking a place on any stage they choose.

Latino artists have been making important contributions to the arts in the U.S. since before its founding. The offerings of musicians, dancers, writers, actors and singers have helped define the nation's aspirations and challenges. Latino theater in particular has had a shaping hand in culture, including in politics, civil rights and Broadway.

Still, it is meaningful, Bedoya believes, when a Latino poet like Richard Blanco, whose family is from Cuba, recites his work as part of the presidential inaugural, as he did in January, and seals a place in the institutional mainstream.

Blanco, seizing the moment, made his words a reminder of the diversity in the country he was addressing:

*One sun rose on us today, kindled over our shores,  
peeking over the Smokies, greeting the faces  
of the Great Lakes, spreading a simple truth  
across the Great Plains, then charging across the Rockies.  
One light, waking up rooftops, under each one, a story  
told by our silent gestures moving behind windows.*

Fueling the changes for Latinos is an inarguable rise in numbers across all 50 states. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 52 million Hispanics (the term the agency uses) currently reside in the U.S., together making up 17 percent of the total population.

The figures are climbing quickly. By 2050, there will be nearly 133 million Hispanics in the U.S, the bureau projects, accounting for more than a third of all people living here. The federal government defines "Hispanic" as people who claim a background of "Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race."

Not surprisingly, the Latino vote was highly courted in the presidential election last November. National politicians fervently joined the ranks of employers, retailers, manufacturers and others seeking the attention of the country's fastest-growing minority.

It's something of a turnaround for a group that has not always gotten its share of the cultural pie. De León, who

## The new CLOUT of Latinos has opened the door to dialogue – and demands.

also runs the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, says she has seen "growth" in both the amount of art produced by Latinos and the country's reception of it.

But she's quick to caution that "support for Latino arts still lags way behind the support for mainstream organizations."

"We see the same thing across the country where there has not been true support or engagement of Latino culture and artistic expression," she said.

Other Latino leaders echo that point. Grants go disproportionately to arts organizations producing art that is European-centered. It is the symphonies that get to use the big municipal concert halls, the mainstream theater companies that receive large amounts of corporate underwriting. NALAC, which has been around for 24 years, still has work to do.

"In general, the traditional definition of art in this country has been narrow," said Javier Torres, an arts administrator who serves on the board of NALAC. "People tend to point toward one global region and not acknowledge the contributions and traditions and classical art that come from other regions."

But the new clout of Latinos has opened the door to dialogue – and demands – and Torres, who interacts with organizations across the country, sees the conversations ramping up.

### LEADING BY EXAMPLE

A good example arrived in October, when Latino groups, long frustrated over the absence of Latinos chosen for the annual Kennedy Center Honors, joined together publicly to demand that the federally funded organization be more inclusive.

It was a high-profile protest with solid numbers to make its point: There have been only two Latinos among the 170 artists recognized over the award's 35 years. The Kennedy Center has appointed a committee to investigate its selection process.

"Organizations need to look at diversity more than just a few times a year," said De León, who is on the new committee. There is cross-cultural interest, for example, in Cinco de Mayo events, but serious Latino artists are not always taken seriously as contemporary artists.

At least not by outsiders, although within the various communities, art is often a central connector that fundamentally shapes both identity and opinion. And within that, arts leaders make a habit of reminding everyone, there is a mix of traditional and modern forms: mariachi, salsa, murals, Chicano theater, poetry slams.

El Teatro Campesino, for example, got its start in 1965 with actors performing skits on the picket lines of the United Farm

## Demographic SHIFTS have made the time right to start organizing for broader recognition.

Workers' historic Delano Grape strike. A movement that began with short plays in flat-bed trucks and union halls has grown into one of the most important bilingual theater presenters in the U.S. Today, the company hosts year-round programming at its headquarters in San Juan Bautista, Calif.

Kinan Valdez, the company's producing artistic director and the son of its founder Luiz Valdez, said his organization has seen steady growth over the past few years, despite a bad economy that has made life difficult for all arts groups and some reorganization on its own part.

But he agrees demographic shifts have made the time right to start organizing for broader recognition and support. To that end, a group of Latino theater companies, stretching from Los Angeles to Texas to Washington, D.C., is planning a first-ever national meeting in Boston this year to discuss shared strategies.

"This is an opportunity for us to look at everything that is happening and reposition ourselves for the 20<sup>th</sup> century," he said. The new theater alliance got its momentum online, connecting via the Theater Communication Group's website, and Kinan Valdez said embracing technology will be a central focus of the group's efforts.

That is the kind of move NALAC endorses. One of its core goals is to encourage strong, innovative Latino leadership in both culturally specific organizations that serve up Latino culture and in broader agencies, foundations and service associations that work across the board. The group's Leadership Institute identifies and trains promising arts managers.

### LEADING FROM WITHIN

**A**ny alliance within the Latino arts community comes with its own challenges. The participants can be a diverse lot with varied goals and experiences. A Puerto Rican child in the Bronx may have little in common with a second-generation Mexican-American growing up in rural California. Yet, they are both Latino. There's even a division over whether "Latino" or "Hispanic" is the better term to describe the group.

"We haven't made our minds up about who we are," said Alex Alvear, performance and production manager at the Villa Victoria Center for the Arts in Boston's South End and a busy musician himself. "It's a work in progress."

Villa Victoria offers a good example of how Latino arts groups lead within their greater communities. The center is just one part of an overarching mission, started in 1968, that mixes art, education and economic development in a program intended to help low-income residents rise up.

The group has emerged as a force in its neighborhood, presenting scores of successful events to the wider area. Raising awareness about Latino culture among diverse audiences is not easy, Alvear said, especially when non-Latinos get conflicting signals about priorities. One example that hurts the image: Spanish-language television networks that spotlight jiggly talent competitions and silly games shows.

"There are some stupid American game shows, but we take care of making them stupider," he joked. He defends the networks' right to have a little fun, but decries the way they shove culture "into a tiny box."

"We're doing the damage to ourselves," he said.

Bedoya agrees that having talented Latinos in mainstream positions is important because they come with a more genuine "sense of what Latino cultural expression looks like and what our support system needs." He suggests that things are already changing.

He thinks Latino-centric arts are broadening their appeal simply by being more present in the everyday life of American communities, a natural result of having a larger, more visible population in the country. People don't have to go to opera houses or established theater companies to see art anymore because it is all around them.

"Art may be in the music hall, but it's also in the park at a mariachi festival," he said. "It's in the union halls and church basements and school auditoriums."

Audiences are diversifying, he said. Latino art has gone "beyond the politics of recognition to the politics of distribution."

But it's not just about audiences. It's about leadership behind the scenes, too. Mario Garcia Durham reflected back on his own family history. Two generations ago, he said, no one would have imagined an offspring would be leading a national organization.


"I'm very happy about the growing representation of Latino leaders, but much more work must be done to insure leadership in the arts actually reflects the changing face of this country," he said. "The arts field must be ever vigilant to look at who is leading organizations and has the power to make decisions. We must constantly ask the question: Is our leadership reflective of the changing face of this country?"

As communities and organizations broaden their ideas of where art can be found, they find more art. Often, they like it. And increasingly, if slowly, the leadership has expanded the conversation about arts and diversity, about national identity and audience awareness. ■

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Ray Mark Rinaldi is arts and entertainment critic at the *Denver Post*.






**AN EXEMPLARY  
LEADER SHARES  
HIS THOUGHTS  
ABOUT THE ARTS,  
DIVERSITY AND  
WHAT DRIVES HIM.**

# Right for the role

BY ALICIA ANSTEAD



**I**n January, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters awarded Abel Lopez the 2013 Fan Taylor Distinguished Service Award for Exemplary Service to the Field of Professional Presenting. For more than 25 years, Lopez, a former APAP board member, has served as associate producing director of GALA Hispanic Theatre in Washington, D.C. He has produced more than 65 shows and directed more than 25 at GALA and many others in D.C., Atlanta, Miami, San Francisco, San Jose, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Venezuela and Cuba. The list of his administrative service beyond GALA is equally long, and his contributions to the arts have been recognized with many awards. Lopez is a graduate of Harvard Law School, an adjunct professor at George Mason University and on the faculty of the NALAC Leadership Institute. We spoke with Lopez about his life in the arts and about his mission as an arts leader.

#### **What steered you toward the arts?**

I grew up in south Texas, and in my small town, there were not a lot of opportunities to see art. However, I grew up in an artistic home with amateur arts: My stepdad sang, and my mom worked with textiles. So I grew up around those arts, always seeing and enjoying them. In school, the arts were big for me. I was in the band and did poetry and theater. But I never saw it as a career choice. I grew up in the Perry Mason era thinking about public service, so I geared my life toward being a lawyer because I wanted to affect society. That was my career path, but I was always interested in artistic expression. When I moved from law school to Washington, D.C., I asked myself: What do I want to do for personal enjoyment? I took a theater class, which led to enrolling in a full-time theater program. I started auditioning, which led me to GALA and a professional career in the arts. When I look back on it, I still believe I am affecting society, but just not through the law.

#### **What happened when you did theater work in D.C.? Did you get roles?**

I didn't get very many roles. This is what led me to getting involved in issues that are important to me such as diversity in the field. When I started to audition, basically the response was, "Oh, you're just not right for the role." After hearing that for a while, I began to think: "Why am I not right for the role?" Of course, casting is subjective, but what I found was that most of the times I wasn't right for the roles because they weren't perceived to be Latino roles. Whether they were non-Latino or Latino, they were interpreted as the dominant culture. After a while, I realized there was an inequity: People who look like myself and who are other races have the talent to be in theater but weren't being cast because of how roles

**“The issue of diversifying the arts is not just securing access to the stage or museums or concert halls or even the artists we present, but the role of our educational system.”**

were perceived. I started working in theater just when there was a study by Actors Equity that indicated that 95 percent of casts on American stages were white but that didn't reflect the population of the country. Ironically, the very first question I was asked at GALA was: "Do you speak Spanish?" I didn't. I asked: "Why do I have to speak Spanish?" And they said: "Look at who we are? Most of our work is in Spanish or bilingual." That led to a totally different exploration. Even though I didn't have the language, I found a place. And I did

hire a tutor. But the important thing is that I felt comfortable there because people were secure with their cultural identity. I found that very empowering. That led me to getting more involved locally, then regionally and nationally on the issue of equity and reflecting the diversity of the country. Not just as an issue of fairness, but because we've lost so much talent by not recognizing it and not allowing people to express themselves because of what they look like or how their last name sounds.

#### **Why were your colleagues so culturally secure?**

They were from South America, Central America, Spain. They had a basis for assuming their cultural identity. They knew the artists of their history. Unfortunately in this country, if you're Latino or African American, Asian or Native American, you don't get access through the educational system to your cultural history and artists. We don't study them. We study the wonderful European writers, but they don't represent the cultures from which we come. The people at GALA knew their cultural artists because they had been exposed to them. That led to their sense of identity. Here in the U.S., that was not the case. The issue of diversifying the arts is not just securing access to the stage or museums or concert halls or even the artists we present, but it is also an issue for our educational system.

#### **During your time at GALA, has there been something that stands out to you that changed you, encouraged you?**

The whole question of accessibility to the arts became important to me, and through that, presenting became



important to me. I wanted the ability to present diverse art forms that reveal and expose the depth and breadth of what the arts are. Even within culturally specific organizations, there's a breadth of aesthetic forms. You know the trite answer about breaking down barriers. But it really is about breaking down stereotypical barriers and perceptions of who people are and how they express themselves. At GALA, I could experience the full breadth of what it means to be a person and to be aware of diverse aesthetic expressions.

#### **Did you ever practice law?**

I did. I practiced full-time for two years, and then I practiced on a part-time basis for 20 years. That allowed me to work in the arts and not have some of the traditional non-arts job.

#### **Do you still practice law?**

No. Almost 10 years ago, I left that completely. The key question for me was: Do I want to look back at my life and have any regrets, will I say I wish I had done that? In any profession, if it was something of interest to me but I had never really explored it, would I look back and say I wish I had? I didn't want to have that moment of saying it's been great, and I have a comfortable life and a successful career, but I wish I had done something else. And for me, that was the impetus for going into the arts. It's different from what I had hoped it would

be because of what I encountered. But I don't have regrets. When I gave up law, I had been working for an arts organization for 20-something years, but I hadn't fully experienced the life of a nonprofit organization because I had the freedom of leaving to do something else. I always wanted to do this full-time. But when is that going to happen? I realized: I need to do it now.

#### **Has your work in law affected your thinking as an arts person?**

Yes, in both the work as an arts advocate and arts administrator, my legal studies and critical studies have really helped. It's similar to an artist looking at a question, looking at a problem from various perspectives and then providing a particular point of view as a critical thinker trying to solve a problem. It's the same process for a lawyer.

**“People were secure with their cultural identity. I found that very empowering.”**

#### **The Taylor Award is always a surprise to the recipient. Your friend and colleague Ben Cameron of the Doris Duke Charitable Trust announced the award, and you looked very surprised. When did you realize you were the awardee?**

It was interesting because I have such admiration for Ben, and he's such a great speaker. But I wasn't paying that much attention at the beginning. It wasn't until he actually said something about the winner being a board member of the Black Women's Playwrights Group, I thought how many others here are on such a small board? And that's the moment it hit me. It was a total surprise. I think of all the recipients and all their contributions, and I certainly would be the last person to put myself in their company. I admire their work and the impact that they've had on the community, the arts and the organization. I always think I want to be like them. I wasn't thinking I would be perceived to be in their company.

#### **What's the most important quality for an arts leader?**

If you're clear in your own mission and vision, and you believe in that and the role the arts play in your community — and the community writ large — if you listen carefully and thoughtfully to what other people want to bring to that point, then you can achieve what you really want. All players in that world will ultimately be successful. When we are open to listening to different points of view, then we can really work together on behalf of the same goal, which I think we all share: to connect audiences and artists, to connect people with our histories, to how we're dealing with the present and how we want to go into the future.

#### **How do you ask people to think about diversity in the arts?**

It's an opportunity for us to really be committed to the idea that the arts and the community are always evolving. When we have the full participation of people, not only in civic life but also in artistic life, we are in fact keeping our histories and our cultures vibrant. That's what diversity does. It's not just about the inclusion of people who have been marginalized through the political process or social life of the community. It's also the vitality of expression. To me, diversity is the opportunity to really live up to what we believe: We're all equal.

#### **Who has influenced you?**

People who said: Listen to yourself, follow your passion and it will lead you places. Sometimes it's not a direct route, but if you're driven by passion, you'll find your way there. The people I admire, the people who were previous recipients of this award, they all followed their passion. **IAA**