

# INSIDE ARTS

SUMMER 2016

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTERS

## The KNOWLEDGE Issue

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**INSIDE ARTS**  
THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTERS

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 3

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“The APAP editorial team has created this special summer issue with a collection of excerpts and reprints of the best current trends and thought pieces from the performing arts field.”

— MARIO GARCIA DURHAM

ADAM KISSICK/APAP

# INSIDE ARTS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTERS



Association of  
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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. INSIDE ARTS (ISSN 1069-2029) is available through APAP membership and by subscription. Copyright ©2016, Association of Performing Arts Presenters. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Additional copies, back issues and copies of articles can be purchased by contacting the circulation office. Inside Arts values and is committed to excellence in all of its content. Advertisers are encouraged to honor that commitment and assume all responsibility for verifying the accuracy of their advertising content. The publication of paid display or profile advertising does not imply endorsement by Inside Arts or APAP. Editorial email: editor@artspresenters.org; website: www.insidearts.org.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Welcome to the inaugural Knowledge Issue of the APAP member magazine *Inside Arts*. Our publication has consistently been positioned as one of the values of membership at APAP because of its coverage of trends in the field, leading influencers and APAP initiatives. With this issue, we expand that reach out to others in the arts whose knowledge base also contributes to the vital discussions and information sharing in our industry. I want to extend

a personal thanks to our guest editors. (See page 14.)

In these pages, the APAP editorial team has created this special summer issue with a collection of excerpts and reprints of the best current trends and thought pieces from the performing arts field. Consider adding it to your summer reading list. We dive into critical and relevant topics such as leadership, diversity and audience research. We hope you will be inspired to engage with others and share your responses and ideas on our APAP|Community site at [community.apap365.org](http://community.apap365.org) or perhaps use this issue to launch discussions with your board and staff.

Additionally, as we face challenging times politically, it seems apt to re-affirm here the enduring values that are at the core of our industry, communities and membership. Included on this page, you will see a statement we released earlier this year in response to legislation in North Carolina and Mississippi. We hope you will join us in the ongoing work we have to preserve the rights and inclusion of all people.

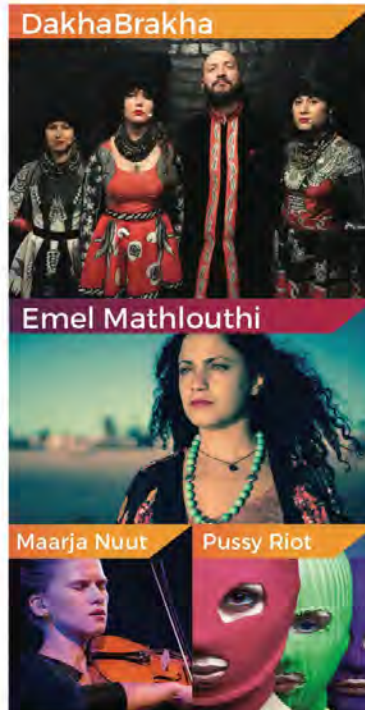
Have a great summer.

Mario Garcia Durham, PRESIDENT & CEO

APAP supports the rights, integrity and dignity of all individuals who comprise our audiences, our staffs and the artists and attractions that we represent and present on our stages across the world, regardless of one's age, ability, gender identity, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, economic status and/or sexual orientation. We affirm the efforts of our members and colleagues in promoting these values on the ground in their communities. As demonstrated by the unique talents, temperaments and convictions of those in our field, the values of both individuality and community in our society and culture make us stronger.

## IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Lessons of 5 Minutes to Shine  
 On the regionals road with members  
 Leadership in action with APAP fellows  
 APAP|NYC committee considers FLOW



DakhaBrakha

Emel Mathlouthi

Maarja Nuut

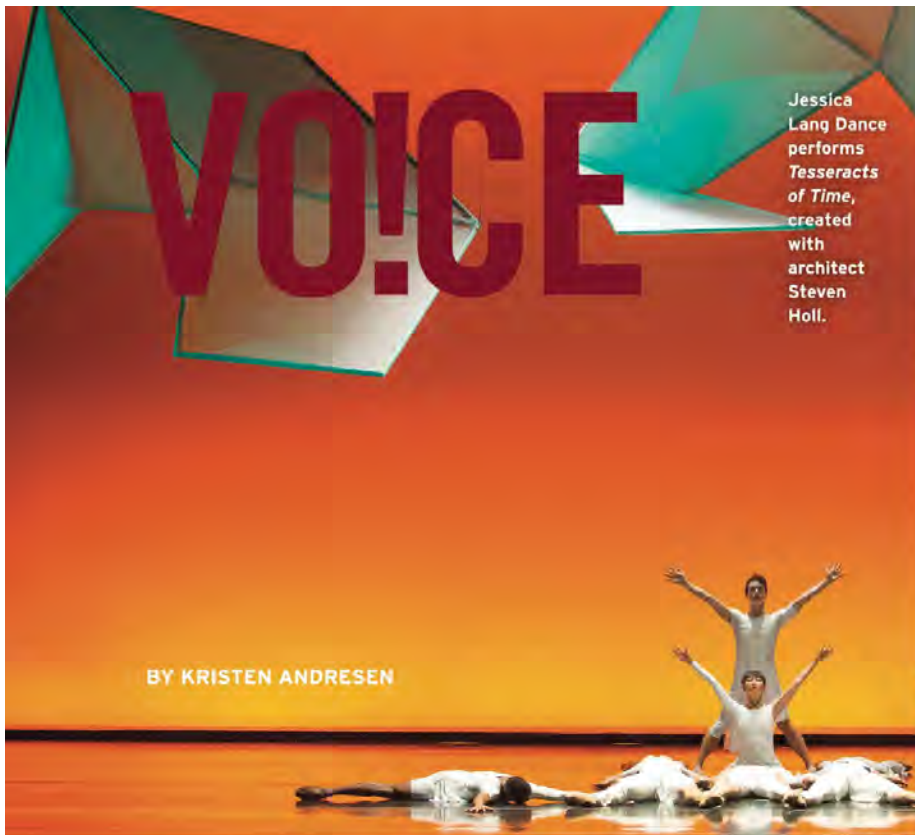
Pussy Riot

- Amaan & Ayaan Ali Khan
- Amjad Ali Khan
- Belem
- Betty Bonifassi
- Cambalache
- Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino
- Cimarrón
- East Gipsy Band featuring Tim Ries
- Hermeto Pascoal
- Huun Huur Tu
- King Sunny Ade
- La Bottine Souriante
- Lautari
- Le Mystere des Voix Bulgares
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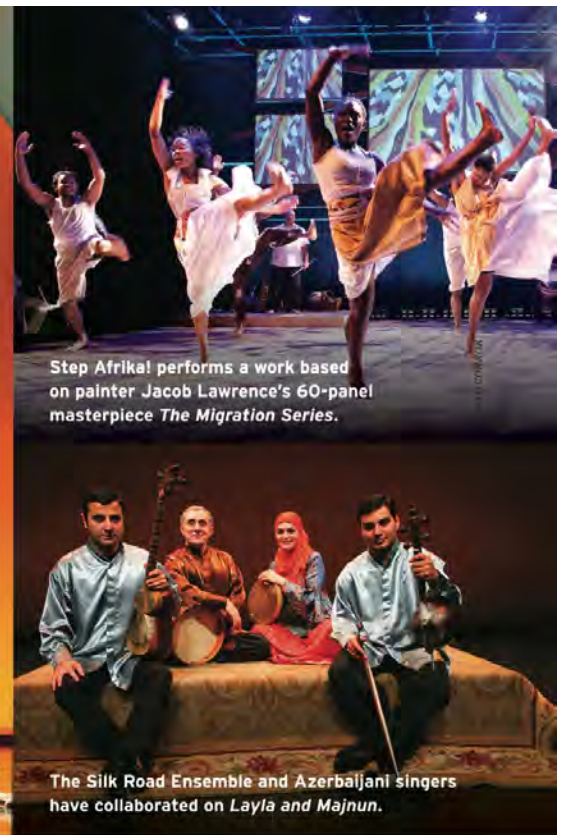
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Jessica Lang Dance performs *Tesseract of Time*, created with architect Steven Holl.

BY KRISTEN ANDRESEN



Step Afrika! performs a work based on painter Jacob Lawrence's 60-panel masterpiece *The Migration Series*.

The Silk Road Ensemble and Azerbaijani singers have collaborated on *Layla and Majnun*.

**T**hirty-seven years of presenting. Hundreds of performances. Thousands of engaged audience members.

And one big conclusion for arts leaders at the University of Washington: It was time to rebrand.

After nearly four decades, the UW World Series had become more than just a series. And it had nothing to do with baseball. Board members, employees and stakeholders on and off campus sought a name and a value proposition that not only reflected the breadth of UW programming, but also its unique approach to working with artists and building relationships with audiences, the campus and the surrounding community. That's how the Meany Center for the Performing Arts – which made its debut in a February gala – took shape.

“The idea of a center had much more of a feeling of a hub where innovation happens,” recalls Michelle Witt, Meany Center executive director.

Witt and her colleagues envision the Meany Center as a national model for

interdisciplinary, intensive explorations that capitalize on shared resources and expertise. The model is exemplified by the center's recent retrospective of Trisha Brown, a seminal figure in American contemporary dance. This exploration included a performance of Brown's *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* on Meany's exterior wall; a new, site-reactive piece at the Seattle Art Museum; a performance at Trisha Brown Dance Company's opening night party by So Percussion, a film series, lectures, a photo exhibit and other workshops and events.

For the 2016-2017 season, the center will feature *Layla and Majnun*, a collaboration between Mark Morris Dance Group and Silk Road Ensemble that will catalyze a cross-campus exploration of Muslim identity and culture. Another highlight is a dance performance by Step Afrika! based on the painter Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series. The project will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Lawrence's work with a presentation of his films and lectures about his work by faculty members who knew Lawrence.

“That's the kind of thing you can do uniquely at a university,” Witt says.

Honing in on that unique value was central to the Meany Center's branding process. Witt and her colleagues focused on the qualities and experiences that people knew and loved and, equally important, identified what they could let go.

“We tried to get to the core and essence of who we are and let everything else fall away,” Witt says. “Our brand equity was in the name Meany. We have an extraordinary hall, and people come to the Meany to have a really exceptional experience. In the community, people just say, ‘Let's go to Meany.’”

Witt would urge any presenting organization that's considering a rebrand to identify its signature programs, spaces or people; do the necessary research; and, perhaps most important, not lose sight of what artists need.

“The process became clearer and clearer because we spent so much time on it,” Witt says. “We had to distill, distill, distill – not only our vision, but what we really believed in.”



## WILL POWER

Where there's a Will, there's a phrase. In a hurry? Feeling fashionable? Have too much of a good thing? You can thank William Shakespeare for these and many, many, many more bon mots. The Bard certainly knew how to turn a phrase, and many of his sayings have endured. Fans of Shakespeare – and the English language – will appreciate the 2016 book *Will's Words: How William Shakespeare Changed the Way You Talk*, an entertaining take on etymology by Jane Sutcliffe, richly illustrated by John Shelley. As Sutcliffe writes,

“William Shakespeare loved words. He picked up phrases in playhouses and taverns and on London street corners. He made up brand-new words. Then he put them together in extraordinary ways and used them in his plays. Four hundred years later, Will's words are everywhere. They're bumping into our words all the time, and we don't even know it!” You might even find that they liven up your arts speeches, newsletters and correspondences with the board. As Shakespeare might say: You'll get your money's worth. And that's the long and short of it. **1/1**



## IN THE LANE

Six nonprofits are leading a new phase of the Leveraging A Network for Equity initiative to address sustainability challenges created by financial inequalities within national arts and cultural infrastructures. LANE is a partnership between the National Performance Network/ Visual Artists Network and Nonprofit Finance Fund and is supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Its goal is an expansive multi-year, multi-million dollar effort to build the financial and organizational health of the NPN/VAN network and bolster arts organizations that have often been overlooked by mainstream funding.

Organizations participating in the current phase include Carpetbag Theatre (Knoxville, TN), Central District Forum for Arts & Ideas (Seattle, WA), Junebug Productions (New Orleans, LA), Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (San Jose, CA), The Myrna Loy Center (Helena, MT) and Su Teatro (Denver, CO). Over the next four years, these groups will receive assistance and access to significant capital investments to strengthen their business models and fundraising strategies, with the goal of also informing shifts in the sector at large. For information about LANE, visit [npnweb.org/whatwedo/programs/lane](http://npnweb.org/whatwedo/programs/lane). **1/1**

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Issue	Ad reservation deadline	Ad materials deadline	Mail date
<b>Fall 2016</b> Bonus distribution at regional conferences	June 24, 2016	July 5, 2016	August 2016
<b>Conference 2017</b> Bonus distribution at APAP NYC registration	Oct. 14, 2016	Oct. 21, 2016	Dec. 2016
<b>Spring 2017</b>	Jan. 27, 2017	Feb. 3, 2017	March 2017
<b>Summer 2017</b> ("The Knowledge Issue") Showcasing the year's best analysis and ideas from the field	April 13, 2017	April 20, 2017	June 2017

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Association of  
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Bryn Terfel and Emma Thompson in the New York Philharmonic production of *Sweeney Todd*.

### LOCAL WRIT LARGE

Lincoln Center has grown its reach from the Atlantic to the Pacific with the expansion of its "Lincoln Center Local: Free Screenings" series, which provides free access to Lincoln Center's digital collection of video performances. Created by Lincoln Center Education, the education and community outreach division of Lincoln Center, "Free Screenings" brings the stages of Lincoln Center to libraries, schools and community centers for free as part of Lincoln Center's mission to bring high quality resources and programing options to communities beyond its New York campus. The series, launched in 2014 with partner libraries in Brooklyn

and Queens, now has 85 partners across the country from Connecticut to Washington state. Participating partners are granted online access to content through a proprietary and secure digital system created specifically for browsing content options and streaming high-definition quality video. Program partners also receive support and training from Lincoln Center staff on how to use the new technology, host a screening event, create accompanying live programming and develop audience engagement strategies. For more information about presenting a Lincoln Center Local: Free Screenings event, contact Kami Morasco at [kmorasco@lincolncenter.org](mailto:kmorasco@lincolncenter.org).

### THE SOUND OF ADVOCACY

There's no doubt that America's nonprofit orchestras add tremendous value to the communities they serve, but communicating that value to donors and public policymakers can be a challenge. Thanks to the League of American Orchestras, that challenge has become a little easier. The service organization






has created a Public Value Toolkit, which is accessible to league members at [League360.org](http://League360.org). In addition, a selection of publicly available advocacy resources, including a policy primer, a guide to congressional gift rules and other articles of note, can be accessed at [americanorchestras.org](http://americanorchestras.org) (click on the "advocacy and government" tab). These articles and guides will be music to any executive director's ears.

CHRIS LEE/NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC





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## VOICE

### Transitions

**ANNA GLASS** has become executive director of Dance Theater of Harlem, a role in which she has served on an interim basis since 2015.



Australian arts leader **JOSEPHINE RIDGE** has been named artistic director of Luminato Festival. She succeeds Jorn Weisbrodt, who spent five

successful years with the Toronto-based festival. Ridge brings to the role three decades of experience in management and artistic roles in theater, opera, classical music, ballet and presenting. She most recently served as artistic director of the Melbourne Festival.



The National Performance Network, including the Visual Artists Network, has named **CAITLIN STROKOSCH** as its new president and CEO, effective in

July. Since 2002, she has worked with the Alliance of Artists Communities, an international association of artist residency programs, and most recently served as the organization's executive director. Previously, she managed several nonprofit music ensembles in Chicago, including the chamber choir Bella Voce and the new music group CUBE. She succeeds MK Wegmann, who is retiring after 15 years of leading NPN/VAN. Abe Rybeck and Abel Lopez, outgoing and incoming board chair respectively, and members of the

search committee expressed enthusiasm about Strokosch's appointment in a group statement: "We are very excited to welcome Caitlin to NPN/VAN. She is an internationally recognized advocate for artists and has strong business acumen. In addition, she has demonstrated commitment to advancing equity and social change through artistic expression and dialogue. Her inspired leadership will ensure that NPN/VAN remains at the forefront of efforts that promote the practice and public experience of the arts in the U.S."

The 2016 Jacob's Pillow Dance Award recipient is **CAMILLE A. BROWN**, choreographer, dancer and artistic director of Camille A. Brown & Dancers. Incoming Jacob's Pillow director Pamela Tatge will present the award to Brown at the season opening gala in June. For the 10th anniversary of the award, the Pillow has expanded the scope of the honor to include a Creative Development Residency, a future festival engagement and a \$25,000 unrestricted cash prize.

For the second year, APAP member **AMERICAN REPERTORY BALLET** has been named New Jersey's favorite dance company in the Jersey Arts People's Choice Awards.



**JULIE KENT** will become artistic director of the Washington Ballet in July. Kent, a retired principal dancer with American Ballet Theatre and artistic director of the ABT Summer Intensive program, succeeds Septime Webre, who will step down at the end of his contract after his 17-year tenure. Kent began her dance training at the

Academy of the Maryland Youth Ballet and received additional training at the School of American Ballet and American Ballet Theatre II summer sessions. At the age of 16, she joined ABT as an apprentice at the invitation of Mikhail Baryshnikov. She progressed through the corps de ballet to soloist in 1990, and to principal dancer in 1993. She is the longest-serving dancer at ABT, having danced with the company for 29 years. She is the recipient of the Prix de Lausanne (1986), the Erik Bruhn Prize (1993), the Prix de la Danse (2000), an honorary doctorate of Performing Arts from North Carolina School of the Arts (2012) and a Lifetime Achievement Award from *Dance Magazine*. Her film appearances include starring roles in *Dancers* opposite Mikhail Baryshnikov. "I am excited to return to the D.C. area and to have this opportunity to share my experience to train and nurture dancers so that they can develop to their full potential," says Kent. "A wonderful part about being a dancer is that tradition and knowledge are handed down from one era to the next, and I look forward to sharing my perspective with this talented company."



The Reno Chamber Orchestra has selected **GERARD GIBBS** as executive director. He comes to Reno from Key City Theatre in British Columbia, where he served as managing director. He previously worked as director of artistic planning for the Akron Symphony Orchestra in Ohio. As executive director of the Empress Theatre in Alberta, Canada for eight years, he established the Fort Macleod International Festival of chamber music.



As a result, he earned the Rozsa Foundation Award for Excellence in Arts Management in 2009. A trained oboist, Gibbs has performed with the Duluth Superior Symphony and Baroque Orchestras of Los Angeles, Seattle, and Portland, as well as Vancouver's Pacific Baroque Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Edmonton Symphony.

**ASHLEY MAGNUS** is Chicago Opera Theater's new director of development. She comes to Chicago from Utah Symphony/Utah Opera, where she spent more than seven years in development, most recently as director of corporate partnerships.

Instant Encore Inc., a provider of mobile solutions for arts organizations, has appointed **CHRIS MONTGOMERY** as chief executive officer. Montgomery brings a wealth of experience across the mobile, digital media and the performing arts sectors to the role. Prior to joining InstantEncore, Montgomery held leadership positions at across a number of music and technology related companies, including the Royal Conservatory and EMI Classics.



**TOBY TUMARKIN** has been named senior vice president of artists and attractions for IMG Artists. In this new role, Tumarkin will work with IMG

teams to create and produce new projects and shows, further develop the international scope of the attractions roster and provide artistic insights and strategic savvy to the careers of musicians from multiple genres. Tumarkin joins IMG from CAMI Music, where he served as

executive vice president for the past six years. He began his career in 1999 at Columbia Artists Management as a regional booking agent, later serving as national sales director and vice president.



The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation has appointed **MAURINE KNIGHTON** as program director of its Performing Arts Program.

Knighton most recently served as vice president of the Nathan Cummings Foundation. She brings a wealth of experience and perspective from her work with artists, arts organizations and communities in prior roles, including executive producer and president of 651 Arts, senior vice president at the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, program manager at the Nonprofit Finance Fund and managing director of Penumbra Theatre Company. She has served on the boards of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters and Grantmakers in the Arts.

Congratulations to the **NATIONAL DANCE INSTITUTE**, which is celebrating its 40th year.

We mourn the loss of several colleagues in the field: avant-garde opera composer and electronic music innovator **JOHN EATON**; a change-leading member of the Grantmakers in the Arts board **CLAUDINE BROWN**; award-winning artist manager and beloved mentor **LIZ SILVERSTEIN**, a partner at Siegel Artist Management; architect **ZAHA HADID**, who, with Patrik Schumacher, designed the Abu Dhabi Performing Arts Center in UAE. **IF:1**



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## VOICE

# Follow Spot: CREATIVE ACCOUNTING

Arts management expert shares budget tips.

BY KRISTEN ANDRESEN

Some people look at a budget and see a problem that needs to be solved. Not Andrew Taylor.

"I always come back to the idea that whatever you think the problem is, your work is the solution to someone else's problem. You're the answer," Taylor says. "Your budget is not the problem. It's a tool. Your organization is not the problem. In fact, your organization is the answer to someone else's problem. Keep your eyes up."

Taylor is an expert in the business of the arts. A professor at the American University Arts Management Program in Washington, D.C., he also writes, lectures, consults and conducts research on a range of arts management issues. His blog *The Artful Manager* is a standing feature on *ArtsJournal.com*.

"Most creative people I know think about resources all the time and are extraordinarily resourceful," he says. "They're thinking more broadly about resources – not just looking at the money, but exploring what's free, what can be discounted, borrowing, begging, building."

That said, the business of the arts is still a business. In a recent blog post, Taylor highlights the "thoughtful and simple approach" to financial management put forth by the software company *You Need A Budget*. Though the company focuses on personal finance, Taylor says its principles are applicable to the arts. His suggestion? Read the following excerpts from *The Artful Manager* and let your creative accounting begin.

## RULE 1: GIVE EVERY DOLLAR A JOB

Every dollar flowing into your enterprise needs to be assigned a specific purpose. YNAB encourages you to ask: "What does this money need to do before I get paid again?" That's a cash-accounting-based question, so an organizational

### ANDREW TAYLOR

On knowledge: "The people I admire most read and learn broadly. They're voraciously curious. It's easy to get stuck in a narrow circle - reading and thinking only about the performing arts, but if you widen your focus, you'll better understand what's going on around you."

On successful leadership: "People who are relentlessly reflective at doing their job now and reflecting on what's next at the same time make successful leaders."

form might be: "What does this money need to do?"

## RULE 2: EMBRACE YOUR TRUE EXPENSES

YNAB considers "true expenses" as including all monthly, infrequent, and big-ticket future costs, normalized over time. So, considering your future holiday purchases and dividing them by 12 will smooth your cash flow and ease your anxiety. This rule shouldn't be confused with "true costs," which tends to mean capturing fixed and overhead costs related to any project. But the idea of normalizing all recurring, occasional, and infrequent expenses makes a lot of sense.

## RULE 3: ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES

The YNAB team recognizes the tendency to consider a budget, once constructed, as an ever-fixed mark inducing guilt and panic whenever it turns out to be inaccurate or inapplicable. Their response is: get over it. You can't know the future when you make your budget, so accept and adapt it as you

discover new things.

## RULE 4: AGE YOUR MONEY

This one is actually an elegant bundle of many financial issues for individuals and organizations. In the nonprofit world, we talk about "cash reserves" and "liquidity," and use a bunch of scary ratios to figure out how quickly we'd run out of cash in a crisis. The YNAB approach is to encourage people to develop a time cushion between when they get a dollar and when they spend it. They used to call this "living on last month's income," but that proved to be too rigid and mechanical for people with variable income. This is a friendly and flexible approach to building slack into your financial plan. **173**



## SPRING 2017 Dates Still Available

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a tribute to elton john and billy joel  
two pianos...  
...one unforgettable night

STARRING  
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Broadway veterans Craig A. Meyer and Donnie Kehr along with the Rocket Band bring these amazing Piano Men to life in an unbelievable concert featuring the legendary music of Elton John and Billy Joel!

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# THE KNOWLEDGE ISSUE

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the inaugural Knowledge Issue of *Inside Arts*. For its contents, we looked to leaders in the field to find the most compelling publications to reprint or excerpt in these pages. Along the way, we benefitted from their experience, insight and dedication to the field of performing arts presenting. Our guest advisors for this issue include Janet Brown, Ken Foster, Sunil Iyengar and Claire Rice. In the APAP offices, our committee consisted of Mario Garcia Durham, Scott Stoner, Sue Noseworthy, Jenny Thomas, Sarah Martin and me. In the course of our time together – combing through publications in print and online, reading documents and discussing themes – we found ourselves wondering: What should we be thinking about right now as arts professionals? This issue is our answer to that question. We also asked our guest advisors to answer the question. Their responses follow. We know this compendium of knowledge is not comprehensive. In fact, it is by design a collection of (mostly) excerpts that we hope will propel you to seek the full story at the source. Our goal is to deepen knowledge, spark conversation and, ultimately, contribute to the meaningfulness of our work. We hope you enjoy this first Knowledge Issue.

–Alicia Anstead, Editor, *Inside Arts* magazine

*“APAP members should be thinking about relevancy. How relevant is your organization and programming to the general population? Does the community see your space and your organization as a convener to*

*discuss issues, an entertainment center, an educational center, or all three? How involved are we in the community beyond the walls of our presenting hall? Support will continue to grow for organizations that are relevant and active in the well-being of their communities.”*



**JANET BROWN** is president and CEO of Grantmakers in the Arts, the only national association for private and public funders making grants to artists and arts organizations. She is a nationally known consultant, speaker and teacher with 40 years of experience in nonprofit arts administration.





*"Now more than ever, those of us working in the arts need to pay attention to and understand what's happening in the world around us. Political, technological, ecological, demographic and social changes are transforming the external environment at a remarkable speed. It's vital that we devote our energy and efforts to grasping the contours of this change and that we work to ensure that art, artists and arts organizations remain engaged in and meaningful to the contemporary world."*



After more than 30 years of working as a performing arts presenter, **KEN FOSTER** is the director of ARTL@USC, a graduate arts leadership program at the University of Southern California. He also co-directs the Leadership Fellows Program for mid-career leaders at APAP.

*"Not only knowledge, but faith. Knowledge of the diverse, often mutually reinforcing ways through which people from different backgrounds come to an arts experience. (Sample query: How can social media, and digital deployments in general, offer a seamless continuum with live arts-going?) Knowledge of individuals and organizations who have earned the trust of people in their communities - of people who otherwise might not believe that your art has the power to speak for them. (These should be your partners!) And faith that an artistic vision, even for a limited spell of time, can erase socio-demographic lines and create a shared vocabulary."*



**SUNIL IYENGAR** is the director of the Office of Research & Analysis at the National Endowment for the Arts, where his staff examines the value and impact of the arts in American life and oversees program evaluations and performance measurement for the agency.

*"I can certainly share what's on my mind these days, which is relevance. What role do presenters play in their communities? How integral are our organizations to the fabric of the community, to the public sector, and how do we know? What measures can support our impact and relevance? Data (which can support the development of knowledge) that address these questions are of great importance, especially in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion."*



**CLAIRE RICE** is the national director of the Sustain Arts project, an effort to provide easy-to-use and beautiful data visualizations on arts funding, audiences and organizations to cultural leaders in communities around the U.S. Rice comes to this work after eight years in presenting at the University Musical Society at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. [IFA](#)



## INTRODUCTION

BY KEN FOSTER

You might be surprised to see the vast amount of literature that exists related to leadership in the arts.

As a Baby Boomer who, in 1982, began my career as the executive director of an arts organization with no formal training, I, like most of my peers, learned leadership on the job. Mostly through trial and error, Boomers pretty much built the nonprofit arts field as we know it today. It was an exciting time of growth and development as we created institutions “built to last.”

Fast forward, and as *Moving Arts Leadership Forward* points out, it is another exciting time, but one that is radically different from those halcyon Boomer years. Optimism and possibility have been replaced by hard realities. Sustainability is a wistful goal, not the promise of unending

growth. And leadership? The chance to single-handedly “lead” – to build an institution – seems neither possible nor desirable.

This is an era of distributed leadership, of consensus building, of horizontal rather than vertical leadership structures. Failure is a sign of innovation, a recognition that we went big and went bold, even if we crashed and burned. Stability seems no longer with us.

In this radically changed environment, the Hewlett Foundation ventured early into arts leadership territory with its Next Generation Arts Leadership Initiative programs, often dismissed by us Boomers as irrelevant. New leaders would emerge. We did; so will they.

Turns out, as this report shows, we were both right. The field needed to nurture young leaders for whom opportunity seemed blocked by the

backlog of Boomers unwilling to exit their positions. But the constrained opportunities also produced innovative leaders from the Gen X and Millennial generations who worked around us and who changed the very concept of arts leadership in response to the changing world.

With this review of its own Next Gen Initiative program, the foundation sees that a holistic, cross-generational approach to leadership development is what is now required. The author notes how the world has changed and that our approach to leadership development must change as well.

This report is not the definitive statement on arts leadership for the 21st century. How could it be? But it does provide us with the opportunity to rethink for ourselves what arts leadership means.

It is a welcome addition to the literature of arts leadership.

Since 2009, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's Performing Arts Program has been making grants to help emerging arts leaders develop satisfying and successful careers through the Next Generation Arts Leadership Initiative. The first phase of that work, which ended in 2015, was funded in partnership with the James Irvine Foundation. It focused on training and retaining emerging arts leaders – defined as 18 to 35-year-olds with 10 years or less of arts experience – in anticipation of a widely predicted wave of retirements.

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Hewlett Foundation  
To access the entire publication, visit  
[Hewlett.org](http://Hewlett.org).

The Initiative made grants totaling \$1.9 million to five leadership networks across California, and to statewide regranting programs, managed by the Center for Cultural Innovation to support professional development for individuals and innovative organizational practices. While an assessment conducted in 2011 showed that the Initiative was successful in achieving its early

goals of building infrastructure and opportunities for younger arts leaders, the Performing Arts Program and our partners continued to grapple with a few persistent questions: What were we preparing up-and-coming leaders to do? To what degree did we aim to sustain the field as it exists or spur its transformation? Were we adequately preparing leaders for the challenges to come?

To help answer these questions, in late 2014 we commissioned Michael Courville of Open Mind Consulting to reassess the arts leadership landscape in California and explore opportunities for future investments in arts leadership. The research was conducted in collaboration with a cross-section of local, regional and national arts leaders, and with the Initiative's partners. It reveals that the arts landscape is in a state of flux and that there is a timely opportunity to reimagine how the nonprofit arts field defines and practices leadership.

### THE GENERATIONS DEFINED

MILLENNIALS\* / Born 1981 to 1997 / Age of adults in 2016: 18-35

GEN X / Born 1965 to 1980 / Age of adults in 2016: 36-51

Baby Boomers / Born 1946 to 1964 / Age of adults in 2016: 52-70

SILENT GENERATION / Born 1925 to 1945 / Age of adults in 2016: 71-88

\*The youngest Millennials are in their teens.

SOURCE: PEW RESEARCH CENTER





# Moving Arts Leadership Forward

BY EMIKO M. ONO

The following represent three key findings from the research outlined in *Moving Arts Leadership Forward*.

## 1. CROSS-GENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP MODEL

Today's workforce largely comprises three generations spanning more than fifty years of experience – older Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. While people of the same generation differ in countless ways, it is also true that each generation is shaped by its own social, political, economic and technological environments. Even when people share a common commitment to the arts, each generation brings significantly different expectations to the workplace and their careers. Within arts organizations today, multiple generations are working shoulder-to-shoulder with too little understanding of how generational diversity affects organizational effectiveness and culture. There is great potential for organizations to establish new forms of leadership that foster stronger connections among colleagues and distribute leadership across generations. Distributed leadership – defined as maximizing

all of the human resources in an organization and empowering individuals to take leadership positions in their areas of expertise – is a practice that holds particular promise.

Redeploying leadership, so it is better dispersed across all levels of an organization, could address a striking finding: executive directors feel enormously burdened, senior staff feel simultaneously overstretched and underutilized on questions that matter most to their organizations and the field, and younger professionals feel undervalued. Balanced against this rather bleak assessment is strong evidence that emerging arts leaders prefer to lead alongside others and that late-career leaders acquire a deeper appreciation for different generational values and approaches to leadership when they work alongside younger leaders. Most executive leaders express a desire to change organizational culture to be more inclusive of generational expectations but feel they lack models and the support for doing so. Increasing cross-generational leadership across the field would help it better reflect – and maintain relevance in – a continually diversifying environment.

For example, cross-generational leadership could help organizations respond to changes that are themselves related to generational change, such as changing consumer expectations regarding audience participation.

Rethinking how leadership works could enable leaders of all kinds to bring their unique perspectives and skills forward, while simultaneously addressing the needs of people at different career stages. Fully empowering leaders at all levels, however, requires going beyond teamwork models, which are useful but insufficient when it comes to cross-generational leadership. Meaningful cross-generational leadership must be reflected in both organizational structures and cultures. It must diffuse problem solving, decision making, accountability, and critical reflection about leadership and behavior across all levels of an organization. Though distributed leadership can exist within a number of leadership models, its practices would need to be reconciled with the more hierarchical leadership structures that the vast majority of nonprofit arts organizations and arts funders currently maintain.

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## 2. INNOVATION AND CHANGE: PROMISING PRACTICES AND EVOLVING VALUES

Emerging arts leaders are interested in doing things differently. Experimentation, change, and entrepreneurial spirit rank high among their workplace values. Innovation – defined as shifting underlying assumptions, moving away from previous practices, and finding new pathways to achieving goals – is understood to be a key mechanism for overcoming obstacles and achieving new successes. While innovation is also an important value to arts leaders over the age of forty, and some lead prominently with this value, early-career leaders in particular recognize that new systems, models, and ways of thinking are essential if the arts are to adapt to a rapidly changing society.

Emerging arts leaders see experimentation and innovation as a means to help the field better address many of its most pressing concerns, such as how the arts can be more accessible and what can be done to improve work/life balance and fundraising. The thinking of younger arts leaders, many of them digital natives, has been influenced by the availability and ways of technology. Many see an opportunity to advance change and are ready to build on their generations' experience using approaches that can demand less organizational infrastructure for implementation – using social media to push across conventional community or geographic borders to reach more diverse audiences, for example. But technology is not the only tool in their toolbox. Younger generations are more racially and ethnically diverse than preceding generations and tend to be more socially connected as well.

## 3. EXTERNALLY FACING LEADERSHIP: LEADERSHIP BEYOND ORGANIZATIONS

The data revealed that emerging arts leaders distinguish between two types of leadership: internally facing and externally facing. "Internally facing" leadership includes the skills and knowledge that are needed to develop and align the resources (including people) within an organization to advance its goals. Professional

The final pages of *Moving Arts Leadership Forward* suggest that the changing landscape of leadership is one of opportunity. The report makes three recommendations, which you can read here. The full report, however, also offers target results and concrete activities for achieving these goals.

1. Support individual career pathways through investments of time, money, and training. Coming from both funders and within the organization, this support would expand leadership skills and opportunities for early and mid-career leaders. It would also prepare late-career leaders to make transitions that are both timely and sensible, and encourage leaders at all levels to share responsibility.

2. Build capacity for leadership to be distributed across generations to encourage leaders of all ages – who likely have varying levels of experience, formal training, values, and work styles – to engage in leading together.

3. Support for fostering the shared values of diversity and innovation would help the sector as a whole to remain competitive today and in the future.

development for internally facing leadership involves traditional opportunities, such as attending a conference dedicated to one's field or bolstering one's fundraising skills. "Externally facing" leadership extends beyond the walls of a single organization. It often focuses on field-level or cross-sector leadership, and embraces working for the good of something larger than one's own organization.

The concept of externally facing leadership often revolves around exploring new models and practices in the arts, and is closely tied to influencing the larger arts field or addressing broader social concerns – what emerging arts leaders shorthand

as "vision." Emerging leaders in particular have an appetite for practicing externally facing leadership and experimenting with what it means to try to put their vision into practice. Part of the appeal of externally facing leadership is that it inherently requires leading alongside others. It also addresses the growing sense that it is no longer feasible for one leader alone to manage and respond to the increasingly complex and changing environment that arts organizations face. This is a different environment than what most late-career leaders experienced in the early stages of their careers, when they effectively built their own organizations based on their distinct visions and leadership, and essentially created the nonprofit arts field as we know it today.

The categories of internally and externally facing leadership are not mutually exclusive – the best leaders are skilled at both. However, the distinction is useful when considering what skills individual leaders, organizations and the field need to achieve their goals. In addition, externally facing leadership can provide early and mid-career leaders with opportunities to exercise more responsibility and grow professionally – especially in cases where opportunities to do so within their own organizations may be limited – while fostering stronger organization-to-organization and cross-sector ties.

## THE CHANGING ARTS LEADERSHIP LANDSCAPE

The research behind *Moving Arts Leadership Forward* reveals five key aspects of the arts leadership landscape that present the arts sector with critical challenges and important opportunities. They follow here.

### ECONOMIC PRESSURES

Higher educational attainment among emerging arts leaders, coupled with the high cost of education, results in greater student debt. Along with increases in the cost of living, this creates demand earlier in individuals' careers for sustainable compensation and benefits.

Late-career leaders are postponing retirement and facing more financial insecurity as a result of the most recent economic recession.



Increased competition for funding creates economic pressures that result in smaller, flatter organizations with fewer mid-level positions for emerging leaders to step into.

#### PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE FIELD

Degree programs and certifications in arts administration and non-profit management now produce more specialized, formally trained arts leaders earlier in their careers, in step with a broader trend toward professionalization across the nonprofit sector.

Increased training is highly valued by employees and employers, but also creates greater demand – and increased competition – for positions of increased responsibility and authority among the credentialed.

Although emerging leaders embrace the opportunities that professional development provides, they recognize that the leadership skills acquired “in the classroom” cannot substitute for formal leadership experience. Emerging leaders are eager to apply the skills they have gained in the field.

#### CROSS-GENERATIONAL WORKPLACES

Late-career leaders are staying in their organizations longer. Workplaces are confronting a wider range of career development needs and grappling with distinct generational work styles, including differing ideas about what individuals expect to give and gain from their work.

Many late-career leaders are seeking to transfer their knowledge and relationships to the next generation of board and staff leaders, and donors. However, they do not assume that they have relevant knowledge just by virtue of their long experience and note that incoming leaders ought to be trusted based on their own experiences.

Generational leadership preferences can create friction in the workplace. Hierarchical and measured leadership styles, which are often associated with Baby Boomers, can leave more collaborative Gen Xers feeling stymied and innovation-minded Millennials feeling ambivalent about their long-term fit in the sector.

Emerging arts leaders express they are “ready to lead,” but often feel overlooked for advancement because their style of leadership contrasts with more traditional management practices.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Today’s workforce is more diverse by age than ever before. Emerging leaders are larger in number than those of preceding generations, and Millennials are projected to comprise nearly 75 percent of the workforce by 2025.

California communities are more diverse by race and ethnicity than a generation ago, but this diversity is not yet reflected in the executive and board leadership of the nonprofit arts sector.

#### GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP, DIVERSITY, AND INNOVATION

Emerging arts leaders highly value the practices that come with distributed leadership. They want to work with a deep sense of connection and collaboration with colleagues while carrying out complex leadership activities.

Diversity and inclusion are values shared across generations. Younger generations, however, see diversity as a crucial tool to improving arts organizations and the field, and are eager to advance the field’s efforts to make the arts more accessible and relevant to diverse communities.

Emerging leaders’ perspectives are imbued with a sense of doing things differently; change and entrepreneurial spirit rank high amongst this group. They see innovation as a means to move the field forward.

Increased availability and use of technology has influenced how emerging leaders think about leadership, fundraising, and community engagement, and it provides avenues for more self-directed endeavors that are often less dependent on organizations for implementation. *1/1*

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## How are you sharing responsibility and authority?

*Moving Arts Leadership Forward* includes an extensive quiz for assessing the practice and structure of leadership in your organization. Here’s a sample question. You can mark as many answers as are true for your work. Go to [Hewlett.org](http://Hewlett.org) to take the entire quiz.

#### ADAPTABILITY

Think about your organization’s current leadership structure and practices. Are there signs that your organization is open to adjusting its approach to leadership? What might already be in place to stimulate distributed leadership?

- A. There are regular, structured opportunities for staff to engage in cross-generational dialogue.
- B. Important decisions are delegated to various people or groups based on who is in the best position to make the decision, rather than repeatedly deferred to the same person or group.
- C. My organization is willing to learn and change as a result of experiences.
- D. Senior staff value higher up-front investments in training and planning that often results in greater efficiency and engagement over the long-term.
- E. Early and mid-career leaders are given responsibility to represent the organization externally, such as attending community meetings or making presentations at conferences.



# DIVERSITY

INTRO BY MARIO GARCIA DURHAM AND ALICIA ANSTEAD

When we were putting together this issue of *Inside Arts*, we knew conversations about diversity would be a key component. Literature, articles, op-eds and new studies keep surfacing, but we kept returning to the need for personal stories about inclusion and best practices. We also have to acknowledge that these discussions are not new. These stories continue to resonate and find new iterations with each generation – and they are much needed in our times to mitigate the volatile discourse of the upcoming presidential election and unsettling national events. The reach for equity, equality and inclusion is bound to be ongoing rather than fully achieved, but like all great movements, it will move forward. Ultimately, we maintain hope that the transformative power of diversity will achieve a sense of belonging and identity in all communities.

This section of the KNOWLEDGE ISSUE is, in and of itself, broad in its scope. David Dower's piece on programming has challenged many arts presenters where they live regarding the responsibilities of their decision-making and their accountability. Vu Le takes us into additional territory of responsibility when he challenges notions of equity and equality, particularly when it comes to funding. Both writers offer concrete tool kits for approaching issues we all face – or fail to face – and therefore fail to tap into the richness of the conversation we can have on stages, with audiences, among work mates and in our community service.

*Funding for Indigenous Peoples*, the opening story in this section, is about indigenous cultures and strategies for supporting those communities, understanding their traditions and getting to know people and their work. Even if indigenous people are not a part of your region, the findings and suggestions here serve as a guide to asking thoughtful questions and finding important answers.

As artists and arts professionals, we can work to remove the walls that are barriers to greater understanding, outreach and penetration into our own communities. That's why these stories are in this issue. At the personal, organizational, policy or global level, most of us have witnessed the impact of injustice and inequity. It can seem hopelessly overwhelming and disempowering, but we encourage you to be involved in the conversations. That is why we have chosen to share some of the knowledge being generated by careful, passionate and expert thinkers.

We hope these essays and excerpts bring inspiration, strength and action to your thinking about what we believe are among the most pressing issues of our field and of our times.



## Funding for Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Support

This guide was developed through a collaboration between GrantCraft, a service of Foundation Center, and International Funders for Indigenous Peoples. It was written by Jenn Tierney, edited by Jen Bokoff and published in 2015.

### INTRODUCTION

*Funding for Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Support* is a compelling and instructive guide to a topic that may be flying under the radar of many presenters. Who are indigenous peoples? What are their issues? What strategies, programs, tools, definitions and partnerships do funders need to know about? The guide looks at how collaborations can bring support to indigenous communities around the world. Through examples from a diverse range of foundations, it explores how grantmakers work with indigenous peoples, the approaches they take and the practices they find effective. The guide relies on information from more than 25 interviews, a GrantCraft survey and existing resources. Here we excerpt a segment called "Tools for Partnering with Indigenous Communities." To read the entire guide, please visit: [grantcraft.org](http://grantcraft.org).

### TOOLS FOR PARTNERING WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

We asked foundations with experience in funding indigenous peoples for their top recommendations on where to start. Establishing trust over time was the most offered advice. Try simply getting to know the indigenous communities you're looking to fund by reading about their traditions and lands. Attend meetings and conferences that bring donors and indigenous leaders together and get to know others who are already doing this work.

#### BUILD KNOWLEDGE WITH PEOPLE

Many funders who have collaborated with indigenous communities also seek their input on day-to-day processes. "Bringing indigenous people onto the boards of foundations can transform their capacity to adapt to the needs of the people that they're trying to work with," said Ken Wilson, former executive director of The Christensen Fund. Working closely with someone with an indigenous worldview can offer entirely different insights on goals and grantmaking practices.

Ken admits that it may not be feasible for some foundations, particularly small family foundations, to bring in non-family board members. In that case, he advises steady, incremental changes in operations, such as diversifying staff with indigenous expertise. "The important thing is to make sure that you don't

do one small thing and then stop," he advised. "Bringing on one minority person into a majority-dominated institution and then saying, 'we've handled the problem,' does not make you diverse."

If a foundation doesn't have indigenous staff or opportunities for board service, it can still host an advisory board with grassroots indigenous champions. "We are trying to change the paradigm that indigenous women can only be beneficiaries and grantees, and not donors giving the grants," explained Mariana Lopez, advisor at the International Indigenous Women's Forum, which uses indigenous-led advisory boards to review proposals.

#### GET ADVICE FROM YOUR PEERS

Given that indigenous peoples, particularly those located in remote areas, are often not connected to international networks, it's especially important for funders to reach out to donor groups. Learning from those with experience and linking to the growing network of indigenous funders will build connections, partnerships, and best practices. "We follow an approach of talking with other activists and funders; they put us in touch with others. We build our network that way," said Katrin Wilde, executive director of the Channel Foundation.

Wilde recommends going to events where there are other donors who fund indigenous communities with key questions in mind: Where are the

needs? Where are the funding gaps? Where can our size and types of grants make a difference?

#### CONDUCT A LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

A successful landscape assessment results in improved and holistic knowledge about a given issue, geography, population, and/or approach. When Anne Henshaw, of Oak Foundation, started working in Alaska, her experience was in Canada. As an anthropologist, she knew she needed to learn about the social networks, the communities and work of other organizations in the area. "First, I had a colleague who knew a lot of people and indigenous leaders, and I asked him to do a landscape assessment," said Henshaw. "His assessment laid out the politics, the active NGOs, and indigenous groups, along with their missions and budgets. Oak's theory of change in Alaska was largely informed by what I learned through this study."

#### BROADEN ACCESS

There are several ways to make your funding programs more accessible to indigenous groups. But the most common response among funders we interviewed was "simplify."

"Look at your system to see where it is limiting access to indigenous groups," said Peter Kostishack, of Global Greengrants Fund. He advises taking a long, hard look at standard practices. "Ask, is your application process accessible? How can you



simplify paperwork required for the grant? What languages are acceptable for applications and reporting?"

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has an open proposal process. "Anyone can apply and we have a dialogue about the work they are proposing and their capacity on the ground," said Alvin Warren. "Ultimately, we want to make sure the project is successful and sustainable."

#### EDUCATE YOUR STAFF

Louis Delgado, board member emeritus of the affinity group Native Americans in Philanthropy, recommends a cross-program learning process. He recalled how the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation educated all foundation staff on issues facing indigenous communities. The training ultimately led to a special grant initiative, as well as additional, sustained grantmaking for indigenous peoples in particular programs. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation undertook a similar program when it explored educational funding to Native communities.

"For large foundations, this approach should be replicated because it gets the entire foundation behind an effort to support indigenous peoples, and does not leave it to one particular staff person to get informed and push for change," said Delgado.

#### EXAMINE YOUR CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS

Kostishack suggested that when foundations analyze both their institutional and personal cultural assumptions, it improves the chances of effective collaboration with indigenous peoples. Thinking about double standards, communication style, and approaches to work can offer new insights. **17**

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## Why Equality is actively harmful to Equity

BY VU LE

In this essay, Vu Le proposes an argument about the distinctions and interactions of equality and equity in philanthropy and grantmaking. Le is the executive director of Rainier Valley Corps, a nonprofit that develops and supports leaders of color to strengthen the capacity of communities-of-color-led nonprofits and foster collaboration between diverse communities to effect systemic change. He is also the author of the humor blog Nonprofit With Balls. Online, this piece is sourced with many links.

Not long ago, I gave a keynote speech to a large group of youth involved in philanthropy, along with a few of their parents and mentors. My topic was "The Role of Equity in Philanthropy." It was awesome that we had kids ages 8 to 24 engaged in grantmaking and other aspects of philanthropy. They were smart and hungry and full of hope and possibilities, bright minds not yet beaten down to a haggard shell haunted by endless grant rejections and complex community dynamics and the sudden dawning realization of the ephemerality of existence, cowering in the supply closet on a fold-out cot, cradling a stuffed unicorn while Green Day's "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" plays softly from a phone.

(What, like your Friday nights are soooo much more exciting.)

"As budding philanthropists," I said to the youth, "you have probably seen the illustration of the difference between Equality and Equity. You know, the drawing of those kids standing on those boxes looking over a fence at people playing baseball."

As if on cue, two kids came up to the stage with a drawing they had done earlier of the iconic image on easel paper. I stuck it to the lectern. "Get used to this image," I said, "Have it burned into your mind. Because you will not be able to avoid it. It will haunt your dreams."

Equality and Equity are frequently brought up in our field, oftentimes with colorful metaphors

like "Equality is making sure everyone gets a pair of shoes, but Equity is ensuring that everyone's shoes actually fits them." A female colleague of mine once said, "Think about bathrooms. Equality is about men and women both having bathrooms. But Equity is ensuring that...uh...there's more toilet paper in the women's bathroom, because we need it more..."

Whatever the metaphor, there seems to be this general belief that Equity is an advanced version of Equality, or that they both are great but in different ways. But in the past few years, I've seen more and more evidence that Equality actually *prevents* Equity from succeeding. Equality is a strong force, and we are drawn to its sexy and hypnotic, but ultimately destructive power. Here are a few areas, some discussed in previous posts, where Equality's gravity pulls us into its deadly orbit.

**Our hiring system**, where Equality brainwashed us to solicit resumes and covers, toss out any applications with typos, and reject applicants who are not charismatic interviewees. Everyone gets an equal chance. Screw the fact that many people, like me, do not have English as their first language, so they may make a few mistakes. Or that some applicants are hard workers but they just suck at interviews.

**Our grant application process** is entirely framed around Equality: The same equal process, equally accessible to all, where the best written applications score the most points and win. This





disregards, for example, the fact that grassroots organizations, especially those led by communities of color, may not have the staff support or resources to write the best applications, even for funding designed to support these communities.

**The challenges facing single-ethnicity organizations.** Nonprofits that are focused on a particular ethnic community face having to constantly defend themselves. When I was ED of my previous organization, the Vietnamese Friendship Association, I remember one person I met being incredibly offended after finding out where I worked. “Why can’t you serve everyone?” she asked, visibly indignant. Being multicultural is more in line with our ideas of Equality, which explains why it is often easier to find funding when you “serve everyone” versus doing a really good job serving one particular community.

In society, we see examples of how compelling and harmful Equality is.

**Colorblindness.** People who insist they don’t see color have bought into the concept of Equality. But we in this sector know that when we don’t see color, we also don’t see institutionalized racism and oppression and the role we may be playing in perpetuating it. The insistence on the Equality of not seeing color actively prevents all of us from addressing these entrenched challenges.

**All lives matter.** Same goes with those who insist that “all lives matter” in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. They are indignant, as if the focus on Black lives somehow negates the importance of other lives. All lives matter is about Equality, while Black

Lives Matter is about Equity. And just like with colorblindness, when we fall into this trap of Equality, it becomes much harder to effectively see and tackle systemic injustice.

The bias toward Equality has led to all sorts of harmful philosophies and practices, from bootstrapping to trickle-down economics to taking away food stamps from families where kids don’t make good grades.

The last few years, Equity has been everywhere. You can’t avoid it. Funders are putting it on their websites and RFPs. We have summits on it. We put up images of those three kids and the boxes and the baseball game, and everyone goes, “Yeah, that totally makes sense! Equity is awesome! All those kids can now see the game!”

But what I have observed, after talking to organizations led by communities that are of color, LGBTQ, disabled, rural, or some combination of the above, is that we are all still frustratingly governed by Equality. The concept of Equality is compelling because it is easier to understand, less messy, and less risky than Equity. Equality requires less effort to grasp. True Equity takes time, energy, and thoughtfulness. It requires us to reexamine everything we know and change systems and practices that we have been using for hundreds of years. This is often painful and uncomfortable. So we openly flirt with Equity while still staying firmly in the arms of Equality. The boxes are rarely moved. The little kid still struggles to see over the fence.

So, what do we do about it?

The youth I talked to were thoughtful as we dissected the image of the kids on the boxes. What is so wrong

about being “short”? Why are the kids only looking at a game and not playing in it? Why is there a fence there in the first place? Who are the owners and coaches for the game?

Encouraging our youth leaders to think differently is critical. But all of us have a lot to do to render the abstract into actual practices. I have brought up some potential solutions in previous posts (change hiring practices, change grantmaking processes, invest in ethnic organizations, support leaders of color, take more risks, etc.). But the important thing is that we in the nonprofit sector, a sector whose primary reason for existing is to help correct the injustices in the world, need to recognize the true nature of Equality and move away from it. It is not just a harmless, less sophisticated cousin of Equity. It is a comforting but destructive illusion.

In an ideal world, Equality would be a great outcome to aspire to. But in this current reality, Equality is often an insidious force, a weed disguised as a flower that prevents the seeds of Equity from germinating. And if we are truly serious about Equity, we have to walk a different path. Because, like Green Day says in their song, before they changed it: “I walk a lonely road/the only one that I have ever known/don’t know where it goes/but it is a safe and comforting illusion of progress that will prevent any actual systemic change required to achieve true Equity and social justice.” **!?!**

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## How a Season Comes Together

BY DAVID DOWER

Who is accountable for the season programming at your venue? David Dower, director of artistic programs at ArtsEmerson in Boston, reflects on the process of putting together a season and the priorities and responsibilities that accompany each step. To read the lively responses to this story online, visit [howround.com](http://howround.com).

When I first saw the uproar around the lack of diversity in the Manhattan Theatre Club season lineup last year, I thought I would just stay on the sidelines and watch it play out. Roundabout had announced a similarly homogenous season earlier, and the pushback was fleeting. Other companies around the country had announced similar seasons. This has become something of an annual ritual of announcements followed by denouncements.

But then *The New York Times* quoted Artistic Director Lynne Meadow responding to the criticism by saying:

"I don't deny the fact that this season is anomalous in terms of the percentages of diversity on our stages," she added. "It's just how the season came together."

This comment feels very misleading in how it portrays the role of the artistic team at the center of the season selection process. It deflects accountability. It denies agency. It paints the picture of an artistic director at the mercy of a confluence of forces that come together to dictate a season. Sometimes, it would be logical to infer, those outside forces just happen to come up all white, all male. "Oh well!" Like lottery numbers or bingo balls. Random. Nothing to be done. No way to avoid it. A season just comes together and, well, there you are.

No. A season is the outcome of a process of many decisions, some small, some large, all ultimately made by the leaders of the institution. A season is a very public expression of the priorities of the institution and of the people accountable for those decisions.

I also take issue with the notion that, in any particular year, a season is "anomalous" and therefore cannot be evaluated outside the context of an institution's historical record. This season, each season, is going to play out within the context of the contemporary moment. No matter what we have done in prior seasons, the communication between tonight's performance and today's news is present each time the curtain rises, whether we brought that fact into our planning process with us this time around or not.

There are hundreds of priorities to balance in the process of planning a season. The decisions we make reveal the hierarchy of those priorities. It is the season, not the mission statement, that expresses what we believe in, what we fight for, what we privilege right now, in this moment. A season is an expression of our values, both personally (as leaders) and institutionally. Whether we want to acknowledge it or not, this is the bottom line. A season does not "just come together." It is built on the foundation of our actual values, and determined by the ordering of our priorities toward those values.

It struck me, when I read that *Times* quote, that perhaps people didn't have enough perspective on that process to evaluate what was being offered as the explanation for this all male, all white announcement at this moment in our culture. So, I offer here, by way of example, the process of how the ArtsEmerson season comes together. I hope other season planners will share their own processes in the comment section. I hope we can start to have a conversation about the thousands of tiny decisions that add up to the result, and how we make those in our organizations.

**THE BASELINE.** Like most cultural institutions, at ArtsEmerson there is a baseline set of ideas that helps distinguish what we do from what we don't do. Without some guiding principles, there is simply too much to tackle. Without guiding principles, you wind up defaulting to something, like "strong prior relationships," for example, or "things we've heard of," or "things *The New York Times* raved about," or "things that our colleagues had a huge hit with," or "things with money attached," or "things I love."

ArtsEmerson was founded on and operates from four core assumptions:

- We are international in scope. We put the world on stage.
- We are generative in spirit. We look for ways to support the emergence of something new.
- We are additive to the cultural landscape. We program in the artistic gaps in our city and work hard to cultivate an audience for the arts in Boston that has traditionally not actively participated at the major cultural institutions.
- We work in long arcs of relationships with artists. When we find an artist that connects deeply with our community and our values, we support them over time and through multiple projects.

Along with this list of baseline assumptions, we have made a firm commitment to being part of a citywide effort to foster civic transformation around race and class equity through shared experiences of art and public dialogue. This is an initiative we identify as One Boston.

From the very beginning of the process at ArtsEmerson, we analyze the projects that we intend to consider for the various contributions each makes to our baseline. It's like a genome project—we record the

component parts of each work and plot the results on our "diversity grid" (see the illustration). There are ten dimensions on which we analyze those projects when they are placed on the list to be considered. They don't land there first because of their contribution to the baseline—the art leads. They land there because we are interested in the work itself. But once they enter this planning process, these baseline elements become part of the consideration as well.

This is the ground on which we stand to start the process of planning a season.

**STEP ONE: INVESTIGATION.** Like most of my colleagues, I spend a good deal of time during the year scouting work, looking at videos, talking to artists and agents, reading blogs and print reviews, and generally just exploring the world of available work. In my case, as a presenter/producer focused primarily on ensemble work, I don't tend to do as much reading of scripts as many of my counterparts. But the exploration is expansive. And, importantly, I am not alone in this work. Polly Carl does the same sort of exploring and brings a whole other set of projects into the room. Rob Orchard, ArtsEmerson's founder, still scouts for us and contributes other projects to the list. Others on staff make suggestions, and many watch DVD's or are asked to see work and report back on it. Our closest audience partners also recommend work that they are hearing about or have seen. By the end of this step there are likely anywhere between forty and fifty titles that we are serious about as a group, for the thirteen to fifteen opportunities in the season.

This list is kept readily available at all times to the whole staff via Basecamp. People can track what is on the list and what is coming off the list. They can look at the videos and write reports that get logged to Basecamp where everyone can read them. It is an open process in that way.

The investigation period also includes extensive listening in our community. What are the issues of importance to us as a city? What are the conversations taking place in the world that haven't yet found voice in our city? We say we put the world on stage, so where have we not paid sufficient attention recently? What are the artistic gaps when looking at the programming at other institutions, as well as at our most recent seasons?

The list, at this point, is an expression of our interests—it reveals what's on our minds and in our conversations. Priorities have been at play here already. It is emanating from our baseline, from our values.

**STEP TWO: A GATHERING, A WINNOWING** As the calendar advances, certain projects need commitments in order to stay in the conversation with us. Their planning timelines mean they cannot keep open a space for us on the off chance that their project remains standing at the end of our whole process. If we feel ready to commit, we move to contract and scheduling conversations. If we don't, we have to let



## ANALYZING THE SEASON: THE DIVERSITY GRID

Here's a look at the specifics of the 2015/16 ArtsEmerson season and how it came together to express our values and tell our story.

Here is what the planning grid looked like when we were ready to announce. You see there are ten columns where we are evaluating each project against our values. We are aiming for balance across the whole spectrum of our priorities. We do not need every project to hit on every dimension. But you'll see when you look at it that the colored boxes appear in every column multiple times and that, overall, there is a rough balance between the number of colored boxes and the number of colorless boxes. This is the outcome from the list of forty-five projects that we started with in step four of the process.

### KEY:

**Country:** What country did the work originate in?

**Culture:** What is the culture of origin in this work?

**Generative:** Is there a generative component to the project?

**Form:** What is the form this project takes?

**Venue:** Which space is it suited for?

**One Boston:** Does this project create opportunities to foster the race/class equity conversation?

**Gender:** What is the gender composition of the artistic leadership of the project?

**Family:** Is the piece suitable for a family audience?

**Arc:** Is there a relationship already building with this company at ArtsEmerson?

**X Factor:** Is there an intangible element here that is helpful in understanding its place in our season?

Every theatre has a process for season planning. This is just the one at ArtsEmerson. The engine of every one of these processes is a series of decisions along a timeline. Every decision is informed by our priorities. And in the end, the accumulation of these small negotiations with our personal and institutional priorities reveals the values underlying those decisions. We may not like what is revealed about ourselves or our institution. It may disappoint our audience, our colleagues, or our artists when they see our values on display. But we were not victims. We were not passive. We were not capricious. We were not surprised.

	COUNTRY	CULTURE	GENERATIVE	FORM	VENUE	ONE BOSTON	GENDER	FAMILY	ARC	X FACTOR
ERNEST SHACKELTON LOVES ME	US	Euro	New work	music theater	Paramnt		F/M		new	Shackelton
MR. JOY/EMERGENCY	US	Af/Am	new prod	solo	Blank Box?	yes	M	older	arc	
AN AUDIENCE WITH MEOW MEOW	US	Euro	New Work	music theater	Majestic	yes	F		new	celeb
CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO	Poland	Euro	First US tour	music theater	Paramnt	yes	M/F	*	new	Student Collab
CARMEN/MIDSUMMER	South Africa	African	no/yes	Music Theater	Majestic	YES	M/F	*	ongoing	Happy Audiences from Flute
OCTOROON w/ Company One	US	African American	recent work/new prod	play	Black Box	yes	M	no	ongoing	local company
TWELFTH NIGHT	UK	Euro		Shakespeare redux	Pushmt		M	*	new	Trad

them go. A decision point. A priority check. "Privilege this one?" "Let it ride longer and risk losing it?" "Let it go outright?" Some projects fall apart at this stage for other reasons. We can't make the schedule work. The money won't work. The theatres are the wrong dimensions. We can't have live flame on the stage. Things like that. These, too, are decision points. These are our priorities being sorted out, our values being acted upon.

**STEP THREE: ASSESSMENT. WHERE ARE WE?** At this point, there are a certain number of projects we've now privileged in the process and they are inked into our calendar and our budget. Those artists are building their plans based on these commitments. We begin a process of assessing where we stand with respect to our overall hopes and dreams for this season we are planning. By now we can see how much balance there is in the projects we've already committed to, which priorities are well met, and which aren't. Is the work all Eurocentric so far? Is it heavily male? Is there a balance in terms of form? Is our generative spirit being expressed? We interrogate the list for what it tells us about where we are in relation to our values.

**STEP FOUR: ADJUSTMENT. WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?** Here is the point where the push against what's easy, or what would "just come together," gets fully engaged at ArtsEmerson.

Remember, we have a list of more titles than we can possibly do in one season. So now we turn to this list to fill out the remaining opportunities in such a way that it tells our full story.

If we find, for instance, that we've committed to a bunch of projects led by men, we have to look at the list of remaining projects (all of which we're already excited about) for projects that help us express our value of gender diversity. If we find we've committed to known titles, we must look to our list to prioritize the new and emerging works or forms. If we find that there are timely projects that absolutely need to be programmed now in order to connect to the cultural moment in our city, those move up in priority. There are many, many permutations of this sort of calculus of the planning process. Drafts of seasons are drawn up and circulated. Members of the staff debate the balance reflected in these drafts using our values as the guide. We share aspects of it with community partners to test our own assumptions about the relevance and impact of the choices.

It has happened that we've had to go back on a commitment in order to make the space to fill a gap. In that case we attempt to move the commitment to the next season so we don't abandon the artist entirely. In one case we kept the time and money commitment but turned it to a workshop for a new work rather than a presentation of the piece we'd planned. This was not comfortable for the artist. It was not comfortable for us. But it was the only solution we could find for balancing the season in harmony with our values.

**STEP FIVE: ANNOUNCE IT.** That's skipping a few steps, in truth. We have to budget it. We have to get far enough in our talks with the artists that we can all agree it is ready to be announced. We discuss the season with the whole staff. We discuss it with our community partners. We discuss it with the press. And at some point, we go public with it. Just to say, there are multiple points along the way where stakeholders can, and do, raise questions or point out blind spots. The list did not just come together, and it is not just announced. **1/1**

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# Taking Out the Guesswork:

## A Guide to Using Research to Build Arts Audiences

WRITTEN BY BOB HARLOW  
PUBLISHED BY  
THE WALLACE FOUNDATION

### INTRODUCTION

BY SCOTT STONER

*Research, data, metrics. I was never comfortable with such left-brained aspects of my education as a young man studying to be an art teacher. Not that I didn't believe in the importance of research and evaluation in any field, but it was easier to embrace the notion that the arts are best suited to qualitative rather than quantitative measurement.*

*As an administrator responsible for developing and seeking support for national education programs at The Kennedy Center in the 1980s, I contracted out the research and evaluation design for projects. We had no resident research or evaluation specialist on staff. It was not until I tackled a challenge in 1990 to develop an innovative mechanism for disseminating information about best practices in arts education that*

*my conclusions and inhibitions about research changed.*

*I discovered the importance of combining various approaches to gathering and analyzing information about technological competence, capacity, attitudes and behaviors from targeted audiences (in this case, arts teachers) as I worked with engineers, library scientists and other partners to develop one of the first education-oriented sites on the new World Wide Web. (The site - ARTSEdge, launched in 1994 - is still going strong.)*

*Taking Out the Guesswork: A Guide to Using Research to Build Arts Audiences, a 2015 publication from the Wallace Foundation, speaks to my early trepidations and those that most likely persist among many colleagues in the presenting field regarding applied research. Its author Bob Harlow has compiled case studies that efficiently and effectively*

*respond to myths and misperceptions about "market research" aimed at audience development.*

*It focuses on essential questions and cost-effective strategies that are critical to building audiences. The guide doesn't pretend to be a comprehensive resource of audience research techniques, but it does provide real examples of assessment tools and strategies that should be easily replicated or adapted by most arts presenting organizations. And it places a high value on the art of listening and the need for arts presenters to gain an authentic understanding of the factors that drive individuals to choose why and how they engage in live performance and related activities in their own community. Although you will find much to value in this publication, I believe the call to be better, more thorough and curious listeners is its greatest asset.*





## AUDIENCE BUILDING

often means venturing into uncharted territory. You may have no idea what potential audience members think about your art form or organization, or even if they know you exist. You may also not know what they're looking for in terms of cultural activities or how your programming can fit into their time-pressed lives. Despite the unknowns, a surprisingly large number of audience-building initiatives move forward with little input from the very people organizations are looking to attract. That's like inviting guests to dinner without first finding out what they like to eat or what food allergies they may have, says Magda Martinez, director of programs at Fleisher Art Memorial. On a practical level, it can mean committing resources to initiatives that may prove unsuccessful.

This work doesn't have to require such a leap of faith. Strategically designed audience research can remove a lot of the guesswork that comes with creating and fine-tuning programs to attract new visitors. It can stimulate ideas about how to make an institution and its art more accessible to newcomers, identify obstacles that are getting in the way of engagement and suggest strategies for overcoming them. As an initiative unfolds, research can illuminate what's working, what's not and why. It can also sharpen marketing efforts, boosting the effectiveness of even a small budget. In short, strategically and judiciously used research can help organizations win audiences.

A new guidebook, *Taking Out the Guesswork*, is intended to help organizations take their first steps. It is based on a belief that high-quality strategic research is within reach for most institutions. Audience research

does not have to be complex or costly – a modest budget is sufficient in many cases. Special skills aren't necessarily required, but thoughtfulness, careful planning and execution according to plan are needed to obtain accurate information about an audience – and improve decision making.

Just ask the San Francisco Girls Chorus and The Clay Studio, two of the 10 arts institutions whose research efforts informed *Taking Out the Guesswork*. Accounts of their experiences bring audience research to life throughout the report, showing how to translate questions about a potential audience into a research project able to deliver valuable insights that will help you make inroads with that audience. To help readers accomplish the same in their own organizations, the guidebook also explains how to conduct audience research step by step by drawing upon





the experiences of the 10 institutions and the market research literature.

All of the institutions received a Wallace Excellence Award, The Wallace Foundation's grant program that funded audience-building initiatives at 54 organizations in six U.S. cities from 2006 to 2014. Grant recipients represented diverse art forms and pursued their target audiences in different ways, but, as stipulated by the funding agreement, all used market research to develop their audience-building strategies and track their progress. For many, it was their first time doing research.

The initiatives of the 10 organizations featured in the guidebook were selected as case studies, which can be accessed at [www.wallacefoundation.org](http://www.wallacefoundation.org). This report is organized around three activities that were integral to their success:

1. Learning about audiences
2. Creating effective promotional materials.
3. Tracking and assessing results

## A case study USING FOCUS GROUPS TO LEARN ABOUT POTENTIAL AUDIENCES Why Aren't They Coming?

PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET

**THE CHALLENGE:** In the first decade of the new millennium, Seattle's Pacific Northwest Ballet set out to buck the nationwide trend of young people turning away from ballet. The company had a reputation of excellence in classical story ballet and the work of George Balanchine, and new artistic director Peter Boal sought to both introduce new repertoire and "plant the seeds" for the audience of the future by attracting large numbers of teens and young adults to its performances. Boal saw the challenge as one of building relevance. "There are certain performing arts that young audiences do care about," he says. "They care about hearing a musical group. They care about certain films. I want ballet to be in that category."

Except for some reduced-price ticket promotions, PNB had not made significant overtures to young people. The marketing director at the time, Ellen Walker (now executive director), believed the company needed a stronger digital presence to reach them, given research showing that they learn about organizations primarily online. She and her staff also suspected that PNB communications, no matter how successful they were with current patrons, could better engage teens and young adults. They were determined to improve their strategy, but to move in the right direction, they first needed to answer three questions: Why weren't culturally active young adults and teens coming to PNB? What did they think about its marketing? What types of communication, promotions, and programs might pique their interest in its performances?

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE/METHOD:** To answer these questions, in 2009 and 2010 PNB conducted two rounds of focus groups made up of culturally active teens and young adults and facilitated by professional moderators. The discussions explored perceptions of PNB and of ballet itself, and how those perceptions aligned with what was important to teens and young adults when choosing cultural activities.

Here, we take a closer look at the second round of focus groups in 2010, in which participants discussed PNB advertising and its impact on their perceptions of the company. PNB engaged a professional research firm, Strategic Action, Inc., to recruit the respondents, conduct the focus groups and prepare a written report of the results and their implications.

**RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:** PNB wanted to talk with young adults and teens ages 13 to 35 who were new to the company, so its in-house database of current patrons was of no use. Instead, it tapped the database of a local focus group facility to find young people in Seattle who were culturally active - and, therefore, good prospects for PNB.

**QUESTIONS:** The moderator warmed up each group by asking about a recent live performance participants had attended, including how they had heard about it, whom they went with, and how it fit into their evening, such as before or after dinner. The two-hour conversation then moved closer to the main focus of PNB - determining what had attracted respondents to a particular performance, including the roles of price, promotions, and other elements driving choice. They were also asked about online and offline sources of information.



## LEARNING ABOUT AUDIENCES

When it comes to learning about the perceptions and lifestyles of an audience, arts organizations typically do qualitative research, such as interviews or, more commonly, focus groups. Qualitative research is popular because it is well suited to exploring ideas and discovering new things – both of which are necessary for an organization that wants to target an audience it knows little about or to engage an existing audience in a new way. While quantitative research tools, such as a survey with multiple-choice questions, provide objective counts or measures of something (e.g., how many visitors are first-timers), qualitative research is designed to capture the subjective experiences of a particular group in a more holistic way. Instead of collecting hard numbers, qualitative research lets people describe their attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions

in their own words. The questions are open-ended, allowing respondents to frame their answers on their terms and from their vantage points. It may seem as if research shouldn't be so subjective, but with qualitative research, that's just the point – to gather the perceptions, ideas and even emotions of members of a group. Those insights can then inform your audience-building initiative and the marketing you do to generate interest.

A focus group is a moderated discussion in which the interaction within the group identifies the concerns, interests, and habits the members share. In this way, a series of focus groups can reveal the range of opinions held by a target audience (e.g., “young professionals” or “non-English speakers”). They are usually managed by a professional researcher, who advises on the research design, writes the discussion guide, and moderates the

groups. Each focus group lasts one and a half to two hours, and typically takes place at a facility designed for such a purpose. Participants are often, but not always, recruited by the facility.

By undertaking this careful and thorough research, these institutions learned what potential audiences thought of them and their art forms. They identified specific actions they could take to combat negative or inaccurate perceptions and help new audiences connect with the work they presented. Following the examples, step-by-step guidelines explain how to conduct focus group research that will provide fresh and meaningful insights about an audience. [17.1](#)

This excerpt of *Taking Out the Guesswork: A Guide to Using Research to Build Arts Audiences* was reprinted with generous permission from Bob Harlow © 2015, The Wallace Foundation. To read the entire publication, visit: [WallaceFoundation.org](http://WallaceFoundation.org).

As the discussion progressed, group members gave their impressions on dance, PNB, and the degree of their interest in attending a performance. They talked about what had prevented them from going to PNB and how those barriers might be overcome. PNB wanted to explore new ways to introduce the company to young people that would attract their attention and build sustained interest. The group brainstormed ideas and also reacted to some hypothetical promotional offers and events, such as having PNB dancers perform at an all-ages dance club with a popular alternative rock band.

The focus groups also spent considerable time discussing offline and online advertising. Participants first recalled examples of advertising they liked, then turned their attention to recent PNB brochures and website. They spent a few minutes quietly reviewing the materials before discussing them among the group, so their reactions would be less likely to be influenced by what others thought.

**RESULTS:** The research identified two broad areas that PNB would need to address to attract young people: challenging stereotypes about ballet and advertising in ways that speak to this new audience.

**TIP:** You'll need parental permission to recruit minors for a focus group. For its research with teens, Pacific Northwest Ballet first gained permission from an adult in the household before talking to a teen to determine his or her eligibility to participate.

**ACTING ON THE RESULTS:** PNB wasn't surprised that teens and young adults thought ballet was boring and stuffy – it had heard those sentiments in its first round of focus groups. While it wasn't easy to hear such negative comments, PNB remained mindful that they were just perceptions and not based on actual experience or reflective of how the company really was. Nevertheless, the organization realized that it had to challenge those stereotypes, which the focus groups demonstrated were robust, if it was to succeed in attracting more young people. Given how little young adults knew about PNB and their inclination to see performances where they were familiar with the venue and artists, Walker and her team pushed forward with overhauling the company's website. They produced a broad and deep range of digital content, including videos featuring its dancers (mostly young adults), to help potential audiences get to know the company and provide an idea of what a performance would be like.

The research also led the marketing team to rethink its communications strategy and experiment with new ads

that tried to dispel notions of ballet as boring and stiff. They added more close-up photos of dancers to show their emotions and used a more vibrant color scheme. Often the ads included pricing information that young audiences said they wanted to see (e.g., Tickets start at \$25! or Up to 40 percent discount on tickets!).

Revamped PNB marketing supports a broader initiative to attract young people through new promotions and programs. The results so far have been very positive. Between the 2008-2009 and 2012-2013 seasons, PNB ticket sales to teens more than doubled and ticket sales to young adults ages 18 to 25 rose 20 percent. Those audiences have continued to grow.

**COST:** Between \$25,000 and \$30,000 for four focus groups. This included the fees for the research firm that designed and moderated the focus groups and wrote a report based on its analysis of the proceedings. It also included the rental of the facility where the focus groups took place, the recruitment of participants and their incentives.



## FAIR GROUND

# IS THE CULTURAL SECTOR READY TO MOVE BEYOND DATA FOR DATA'S SAKE?

BY IAN DAVID MOSS AND JOHN CARNWATH

## INTRODUCTION

BY JENNY THOMAS

During my career, I've led marketing and communications (and development and sales) departments of several smallish businesses in the cultural sector. You name it: public radio station, publisher, presenter, museum, agency and now, a national service organization. Nonprofit or for-profit, they were all lean operations.

In doing this work, my headspace is occupied by words, images, timelines, deadlines, dollar signs, html code, conference calls, team meetings. And then there's data. The universe of data keeps growing: click-throughs, open rates, survey results, leads,

keyword analysis and the rabbit hole that is Google Analytics. Micro-level or macro-level, there is so much to mine, so little time. I use data to reveal insights and propose answers, and, like you, to serve an immediate need. Big picture planning is a luxury and a necessity.

This article rightly highlights the Cultural Data Project (now DataArts) report *New Data Directions for the Cultural Landscape: Toward a Better-Informed, Stronger Sector*, an urgent call for data-driven decision-making and assessment that the field stops short of the capacity and culture required to do so.

Tongues planted firmly in cheek, the authors of this article say that Big Data

is "supposed to solve all of our problems forever;" and then tongues freed, admit that amid the factors they list (to which, I add curatorial vision), data is kind of a thing.

For 21st-century organizations, it's a really big thing. And for marketing professionals like me, it's a really big thing. For all cultural workers and for anyone who cares about audiences, communities or "end users," data needs to be a much bigger thing.

So I ask that you dive deeper into the CDP report (at [culturaldata.org](http://culturaldata.org)), look for a glimmer of self-recognition within those pages and reflect on the questions the authors pose here.

## IS THE CULTURAL SECTOR READY TO MOVE BEYOND DATA FOR DATA'S SAKE?

As any Internet geek or high-priced consultant will be happy to tell you, we find ourselves today in the age of Big Data. You know, the era when science and numbers are supposed to solve all our problems forever? That one. And yet in the cultural sector, according to a report published earlier this year, we don't have the data we need; we don't know what to do with the data we have; and even if we did, we still wouldn't use it to make decisions. (OK, that may be oversimplifying things a bit...but not by much.)

So what are we supposed to do? That's what the Cultural Data Project, which commissioned the report, wanted to find out. Many readers know the CDP as the folks behind those forms you have to fill out when you're applying for grants. Its spinoff last year from a foundation-sponsored initiative housed within the Pew Charitable Trusts to an independent nonprofit prompted some organizational rethinking, and "New Data Directions for the Cultural Landscape," by Slover Linett consultants Sarah Lee and Peter Linett, was one result. "New Data Directions" seeks to situate the CDP efforts within the larger context of data collection throughout the U.S. cultural sector.

The study synthesizes comments from an online forum that CDP hosted

in late 2013 with a small group of cultural data experts drawn from academia and the consulting world. (Disclosure: Createquity's Ian David Moss was one of the participants in this forum and is quoted a handful of times in the report.) It additionally draws from the CDP internal strategic planning survey, a paper by Margaret Wyszomirski (not available online) that sought "to frame and inventory the cultural data landscape," and the authors' own interpretations and experiences.

After citing the benefits that data-informed decision making has provided in other fields, "New Data Directions" identifies a number of factors that it says are preventing us from reaping those benefits, namely:



# CHALLENGES

	<b>Concerns about the accessibility, quality and comparability of cultural data</b>
	<b>Undervalued data</b> limits usefulness of cultural data as a decision-making tool
	<b>Lack of coordination</b> and standardization in existing cultural data collection efforts
	<b>Underdeveloped capacity</b> for good data collection and interpretation
	<b>Organizational culture dynamics</b> that can undermine the effective use of data.
	<b>Lack of a strong vision</b> for how to use data in planning and decision-making

Poor accessibility, quality, and comparability of cultural data

Norms about data collection and use, including low priority/importance assigned to the task of data collection in general

Lack of coordination and standardization among existing data collection efforts

Skill and resource capacity constraints among cultural nonprofits

Organizations' perceptions of the public and their audiences that inhibit the effective use of data in decision-making

A paucity of vision and lack of role models regarding the successful use of data to drive decisions

To address these challenges, the report recommends some straightforward steps, including coordinating leadership on cultural data, engaging program and artistic staff in conversations about data, shifting the frame of data use from accountability to decision-making, developing a field-wide research and data collection agenda, developing data-related skills among organization staff, and improving the cultural data infrastructure.

Piece of cake, right? **W**

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## ADO

# LESSONS ABOUT AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Through its Exploring Engagement Fund, The James Irvine Foundation provides risk capital for California arts organizations with innovative ideas and a readiness to engage new and diverse populations. This graphic, published in 2014, distills lessons from the early implementation

of Exploring Engagement Fund projects. Grantee organizations are testing their approaches to engagement of participants from communities of color and low-income groups. Preliminary data suggest that their strategies, in aggregate, are successful. A total of 127,074 people participated in all the events across the 52 grantee

organizations. In line with the intent of the Exploring Engagement Fund, these organizations reported reaching low-income and ethnically diverse participants. For more information about the Exploring Engagement Fund and The James Irvine Foundation, visit [irvine.org/arts/](http://irvine.org/arts/).

## Invest Time



True engagement with new and diverse populations takes time, patience and commitment

Plan long timeframes and expect adjustments

## Build Trust



Getting to know a community and building trust are vital to planning and implementing arts engagement

Engage community members and join their events

## Partner Well



Community partners are critical to accessing new and diverse participants

Work with well-regarded, active local organizations

## Relate, Don't Sell



Engaging new and diverse participants requires different marketing and outreach

Market via community relationships

## Go to New Places



Non-arts venues can help reach new and diverse participants, and often bring unique challenges

Make the effort to use locations familiar to participants

## Try New Approaches



New methods and styles can reach participants who perceive art as "not for me"

Encourage active participation and co-creation

## Align Your Team



Engagement calls for diverse capabilities, training and practices for artists and staff

Choose your team thoughtfully



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