

“Sharing Our Art in a Changing Community”
Lecture and Discussion Transcript

College-Conservatory of Music and Arts
& Culture Partnership, Fine Arts Fund

Featuring: Diane Ragsdale
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The Andrew W. Mellon

Welcoming Remarks: Douglas Knehans
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Introduction: Alan Yaffe
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Panelist: Pete Blackshaw
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Panelist: Evans Mirageas
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Moderator: Margy Waller
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Post-Presentation Panel Comments have been edited.

Knehans: I'd like to especially welcome today our guest speaker Diane Ragsdale and introduce her more fully after I thank you all for coming out on this cold day. I'd like to introduce the head of our Arts Administration Program, Alan Yaffe. Thank you.

Yaffe: Today we celebrate the tenth anniversary of (*inaudible*) [the Joan (Cochran) Reiveschl Lecture Series.] On behalf of CCM, the Arts Administration Program, the Fine Arts Fund, our valued partners of this enterprise, and the entire Cincinnati arts community, I wanted to (*inaudible*)

(*presenting poster-sized brochure cover*) We put together a poster of the first brochure from this series... some of us have already signed this. I will be available, so please add your thanks.... Thank you Joan for everything.

Joan (Rieveschl) Cochran:

(*inaudible*)....and that was a glorious time...(inaudible) first woman department [head] outside of home ec., nursing, etcetera, on the campus. As far as women being represented on boards, I mean arts, well Corbett and CCM were starting at the same time that I came, put me on the board as a voting member and that did not exist at any other arts organization at that time. It did, originally, because women started almost all the arts in Cincinnati. But at UC it was also a glorious time when the Ohio Arts Council, the National Endowment for the arts was giving great support to universities and other organizations to have residencies and that's what we did with our wonderful, wonderful program. We had lots of volunteers because people were still graduating from the public schools where they had arts in the schools and as you know that does not exist except in the suburban schools now. So it really was a wonderful time to for me and it was ... this idea it was to have an arts administration program and... Warren Bennis, who was the president at that time, and he sent me to Harvard to take the only arts management course at that time and so we came back and we had a committee at CCM and in the Business School, which was because at Harvard it was in the Business school and now today we have the arts management program, which is unique because we encourage student to get a business degree. And as you all know, it certainly helps in your job. And so I am so proud and he didn't say, "Hey all you arts management students, who are going to come in the work force, but we didn't know they would be having a hard time getting a job. So I'm going to say, "Give them a job."

Yaffe: It is most fitting that our tenth anniversary speaker, who is at the forefront, perhaps, of the most profound shift in the environment for arts and culture ... and this is often referred to as culture change. Not only has the technology for producing, distributing and marketing the arts have undergone rapid, and

often baffling changes, but the very definition of what art is, who makes it, or should make it, and what role it plays.... of what some people call cultural capital seems to mutate at incredible speeds involving arts producers, both in the not-for-profit and in the commercial sector. That is why we have invited Diane Ragsdale to speak with us today. She has brought a remarkable clarity to these issues in speeches with other arts councils. ... New York, Department of Cultural Affairs in New York, and other groups and she continues to speak actually starting around the world, very soon. Since 2004, Diane has served as the Associate Program Officer for the Performing Arts at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and prior to that as the Managing Director of On the Boards in Seattle, a leading presenter of contemporary art. She was also the Managing Director of a destination music festival in an Idaho resort town. She has also worked with Bumberhoot, the largest urban performing and visual arts festival in the United States, with Peter Gabriel and his world music, arts and dance festival and with the Sundance in Seattle film festival.

Following Diane's address, we are pleased to have members of a panel who will further discuss their definitions and ideas of culture change. Pete Blackshaw, who is the Executive Vice president of Digital Strategic Services at Nielsen Online, Evans Mirageas, the Artistic Director at the Cincinnati Opera and Margy Waller, the Vice President of the Fine Arts Fund, Arts and Culture Partnership, who will moderate the panel. But for now, please join me in welcoming Diane Ragsdale to Cincinnati.

Ragsdale: Thanks Alan. Thanks. Thank you Alan and Joan and everyone. I must say I've only been in Cincinnati yesterday and today, but what a terrific arts town and how proud you must be of the amount of money that come to the arts here. Fine arts Fund just finished their campaign. I know it was very successful even in these tough economic times, so I commend you all for your hard work in the arts and your commitment to the arts here.

The following was provided by Diane Ragsdale

Surviving the Culture Change
(Version 3.0)

Diane E. Ragsdale

This address was delivered on May 6, 2009 as part of the Joan Cochran (Rieveschl) Lecture Series, Creative Visionaries, a program sponsored by the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music Graduate Program in Arts Administration and the Arts & Culture Partnership of the Fine Arts Fund. It was presented at the MainStreet Cinema at the University of Cincinnati's Tangeman University Center. Copyright © 2009 Diane E. Ragsdale. For permission please email der@mellon.org.

I want to express my sincere thanks to the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music Graduate Program in Arts Administration and The Arts & Culture Partnership of the Fine Arts Fund for the invitation and opportunity to speak today. It's an honor and a privilege to be here.

Before starting, I need to preface my remarks by saying two things: (1) that my views are personal and should not be taken, necessarily, to be the views of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; and (2) that I have extraordinary respect for the hardworking and resilient leaders and staffs of arts organizations here in Cincinnati and across the US. Prior to coming to the Foundation, I worked for 20 years in arts organizations; I know firsthand how difficult it can be to produce great art, sell admissions and memberships, and raise contributions, even during a strong economy. I thank you all for your time and look forward to a discussion afterwards.

The title of this address is "surviving the Culture Change." Some of you may be wondering what I mean by "culture change," so I'd like to start with an anecdote and wind into this topic.

About 3 ½ years ago, I attended a retreat with leaders of a dozen orchestras, at which one lamented, likely reflecting the sentiments of more than a few in the room, "I feel like I'm the Captain of the Titanic, and there's an iceberg ahead, but rather than being on top steering the ship I'm in the bowels shoveling coal in the furnace. I'm afraid if I stop shoveling coal we'll run out of steam, but I know that if I don't start steering the ship soon we're going to hit an iceberg"

We'll come back to the coal shoveling later, but first I want to ask: What's this iceberg?

About 14 years ago I was teaching a general survey course, Intro to Theater, at a small public university and on the first day of class each term I would ask the 120 or so students to raise their hands if they had ever seen a professional theater production. About 10 hands would go up. I would then say, "Raise your hand if you would like to see one." 15-20 hands would go up.

Remember, this was before podcasting, blogging, YouTube, MySpace, I-phones, and P2P file sharing revolutionized communication and social networking'

So, I would ask of the remaining students, "Why wouldn't you want to go to the theater?" The answer was generally something along the lines of "I've gone this long without seeing a play, and I don't feel like I'm missing anything."

These students did not have direct personal experience with "The Theater" or, for that matter, "The Opera" "The Symphony" or "The Ballet."

I won't be telling you anything that you have not observed first hand when I say

that the fine arts are facing a society that is markedly different, and a consumer that is markedly different, from those faced 40 years ago-in the US this is due to cuts in funding for the arts in K-12 education, generational shifts and economic divides, increasing diversity in cities and towns across America, a trend towards anti-intellectualism, changing tastes and aesthetics, the culture wars, increased competition for people's leisure time (as a result of both many more direct and substitute competitors), urban sprawl, and the decline in the quality and quantity of arts coverage in the mainstream media.

And yes, on top of all of these forces and others, over the past decade plus, and at an ever-increasing clip, new media technologies have begun to shift the relationships between people, space and time and change the ways that people create, consume, commune, and communicate. This is the culture change to which I am referring. And what are the implications for the arts?

Russell Willis Taylor of the Washington, DC-based National Arts Strategies said to me a few years ago, when I asked her what were her greatest concerns for the arts, that she was troubled by the fact that arts organizations in the US can't easily explain to people why they matter.

This concern was echoed at the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention in Denver, Colorado where more than 2,000 arts organizations participated in a 21st Century Town Hall Meeting for the Performing Arts. At the closing meeting, the following issue was identified as #1: "Our communities do not sufficiently perceive the value, benefits, and relevance of the arts, which makes advocacy and building public support for the arts a challenge at every level."

And in the August 2006 issue of Inside Arts, Dana Gioia, then Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, was quoted saying, "...the primary issues facing the American arts at present are not financial. They are cultural and social. We have a society in which the arts have become marginal. We are not producing another generation of people who attend theater, opera, symphony, dance, jazz and other art forms. Most of these audiences have declined in the last decade, some of them precipitously."¹

For many organizations, this is the iceberg. So can we survive it?

Last summer, on the recommendation of a colleague, I read the book *Deep Survival* by Laurence Gonzales. Gonzales spent years trying to understand why some people survive harrowing circumstances-like an avalanche-and others do not and trying to determine whether there are common characteristics of survivors.

I was particularly interested in a chapter in which he examines how people get lost.²

Gonzales explains that the way we navigate in life is by forming and following mental maps: literally pictures in our minds of particular areas or routes. Gonzales says you get lost when you "fail to update your mental map and then persist in following it even when the landscape," (the real world), "tries to tell you it's wrong."³

Edward Cornell, one of the scientists Gonzales showcases in the book, gives an example of this. He says, "Whenever you start looking at your map and saying something like, 'Well, that lake could have dried up,' or 'That boulder could have moved,' a red light should go off. You're trying to make reality conform to your expectations rather than seeing what's there. In the sport of orienteering, they call this 'bending the map.'"⁴

Gonzales describes five stages that a person goes through when lost, which correlate with Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's stages of dying: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Gonzales says that the final stage-acceptance-is the one that separates those that survive from those that don't.

Here's how he describes it, "...as you run out of options and energy, you must become resigned to your plight. Like it or not, you must make a new mental map of where you are." Not where you wish you were. To survive," he says, "you must find yourself. Then it won't matter where you are."⁵

Gonzales also says that one of the most difficult steps a survivor must take is to discard the hope of rescue.⁶

A couple years ago I interviewed a Stanford University professor named Jim Phillips about his great book, *Integrating Mission and Strategy for Nonprofit Organizations*,⁷ and one of my questions was, "What advice would you give to a world-class orchestra whose audiences were declining and whose deficit was growing?"

He said, "If you are an orthodox orchestra, the reason you are losing audience members (from your viewpoint) could be that the world is not good enough for you." (Bending the Map!) "But," Phillips asserted, "art really exists only in relation to audiences and their experience, particularly the performing arts. So if a symphony is seeing declining audiences, then the questions are: Would you sooner close your doors than change what you do? What is it that's important to you and why? You cannot, however, answer these questions without considering your need for audiences and/or enough people willing to subsidize you. And the fact is the number of people willing to subsidize something that is narrowly enjoyed may diminish over time. At which point, you will need to be prepared to go out of business."

He hastened to add, however, there is another option "there are organizations that are redefining their missions in relation to people." ⁸

In other words, they are rethinking who they are and why they exist.

The late, great thinker Susan Sontag once wrote, "Existence is no more than the precarious attainment of relevance in an intensely mobile flux of past, present, and future."

I take particular note of the words, "precarious attainment of relevance." No organization can be granted relevance in perpetuity based on its laurels or the size of its endowment, or granted a pass to become static or stagnant because it is-to use a Wall Street comparison-"too big to fail." To exist, to thrive, to be artistically vibrant in the 21st century, arts organizations need to adapt to this culture change in order to attain, maintain, or regain, their relevancy.

One more thing. Accepting that it may be necessary to adapt can be particularly difficult for the largest, leading organizations. In *The World Is Flat*, Thomas Friedman says that the great company IBM nearly self-destructed because it stopped listening to its customers and stopped creating value that mattered for them. Friedman explains that "when a company is the pioneer, the vanguard, the top dog, the crown jewel, it is hard to look in the mirror and tell itself it is in a not-so-quiet crisis and [that it] better start to make a new history or become history." ⁹ IBM made a new history.

So, I'd like to humbly offer some thoughts on adapting to the culture change. Some of you may hear these ideas and think, "we're already doing this" or "that would never work for us" or "we don't need to do any of these things; we're doing just fine." And I'm sure you're correct in each case.

#1 - Don't Conflate Big Numbers with Big Impact

In his book *Convergence Culture* ¹⁰ Henry Jenkins talks about a relatively new configuration of marketing theory that he calls "affective economics," which seeks to understand the emotional underpinnings of consumer decision-making. He says that commercial entertainment companies are beginning to realize what their fan communities have been saying for a long time: that what is more important than the number of people who buy your product or watch your television show is the depth of their loyalty and the quality of their engagement. ¹¹

Jenkins gives some examples of this trend. He tells a story about Coca Cola CEO, Steven J. Heyer, who said in his keynote address at the 2003 Advertising Age conference that Coke would "use a diverse array of entertainment assets to break into people's hearts and minds. In that order."

Heyer said Coke was "moving to ideas that [would] elicit emotions and create connections. On Coke's Web site consumers can share personal stories about

their relationship with the product- stories that get organized around themes such as "romance," "reminders of family" "childhood memories" or "times with friends."¹² Speaking to this room of advertisers, Heyer said, "The ideas which have always sat at the heart of the stories you've told and the content you've sold ... whether the movies or music or television . . . are no longer just intellectual property, they're emotional capital."¹³

In his book, Jenkins also introduces the ideas of Kevin Roberts, the CEO Worldwide of Saatchi & Saatchi, who argues that the future of consumer relations lies with 'lovemarks' [as opposed to 'trademarks'] which are more powerful than traditional 'brands' because they command the 'love' as well as the 'respect' of consumers.¹⁴ These companies are talking about love and connections between people. And they are selling soft drinks and soap!

Former Wired editor, Kevin Kelly wrote an article a year ago called "1,000 True Fans" in which he says that an individual creator-someone producing works of art- doesn't need a mega-hit to get out of the long end of the tail and make a decent living, he just needs to acquire 1,000 true fans. What's a true fan? Well, for individual artists he says, "A True Fan is defined as someone who will purchase anything and everything you produce. They will drive 200 miles to see you sing. They will buy the super deluxe re-issued hi-res box set of your stuff even though they have the low-res version. They have a Google Alert set for your name. They bookmark the eBay page where your out-of-print editions show up. They come to your openings. They have you sign their copies. They buy the t-shirt, and the mug, and the hat. They can't wait till you issue your next work. They are true fans."¹⁵

Are we commanding the love as well as the respect of consumers? Are we cultivating true fans? How many true fans does it take to sustain an arts organization? Or an arts community? Do we have a sufficient number to be sustainable?

#2 - Go Cellular

In 2005, I read an article in The New Yorker, by Malcolm Gladwell (author of Outliers, The Tipping Point and Blink).¹⁶ The article was called "The Cellular Church" and was about Rick Warren, head of one of the most successful mega-churches in the US. The way these churches maintain a "sense of community" as they grow very large, says Gladwell, is by creating "a network of lots of little church cells - exclusive, tightly knit groups of six or seven who meet in one another's homes during the week to worship and pray."

The church has thousands of volunteers who are charged with getting to know each member that walks in the door and getting that new member plugged into a small group, formed around shared hobbies and interests - knitting, quilting, mountain biking. These cells effectively function as social networks, fueling deep friendships between church members. Without the small group, Warren explains

in the article, going to Church with 5,000 people could feel pretty impersonal. Perhaps a bit like going to a concert hall with 3,000 people?

What's clear from the article is that people who are in small groups are more likely to show up at church on Sunday, stay a member of the Church longer, and give more money. These mega-churches are succeeding because they understand that for most people, it is the social connections they form as an aspect of going to church that in large part drive them to attend and donate.

Perhaps like these churches, arts organizations need to help people create social connections as much as we help them form a connection to art and artists?

#3 - Go Slow

I think we kid ourselves when we believe a primary reason people are not patronizing the arts is because they have no time, even if they tell us they have no time. Saying "no time" reminds me of the oft-used, let-me-down-easy breakup line: "It's not you, it's me."

If you've heard this line, or used it, you probably know that it really means just the opposite.

Is the barrier really time?

The Slow Food movement was founded in 1989 to counteract fast food and fast life; the disappearance of local food traditions; and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes, and how our food choices affect the rest of the world. It has helped people rediscover the pleasure and satisfaction that comes with savoring well-made locally-grown food, appreciating the place it came from and the farmers and artisans that grew and prepared it, and enjoying the company of the people with whom you're dining. In other words, the Slow Food movement has given people a reason to make time for (and spend money on) finding, preparing, and enjoying good food.

And this movement, along with cooking shows, has had a powerful influence on our culture. Plenty of Boomers who have no time for the ballet are spending hours shopping at their local farmers market and chopping in their well-equipped kitchens, so they can enjoy gourmet feasts with their friends and families. I wonder: What would a Slow Arts Movement look like?

#4-Break Down The Barriers (You Know The Ones)

There are many barriers to participation and many of these have been enumerated for years. Arts organizations need to address them. Here are a few that seem to continue to plague the arts.

Our Spaces Constrain Artists and Audiences

Your concert hall or proscenium theater, long one of your greatest assets, may not be able to accommodate the ways that artists currently want to make work, or the ways that audiences want to experience it. We need spaces (live and virtual) that support artists, support socializing, and that enable a more dynamic interaction between patrons and artists.

We also need to recognize that when an arts organization takes the decision to own or build a space that it may be (consciously or unconsciously) changing its mission or limiting the kinds of artists or projects with whom it can work. When arts organizations get involved with capital projects boards spend a lot of time talking about how to raise the money, but is there a conversation about the difference between an artistic idea that is suited to a 200-seat black box theater and a 600-seat proscenium theater?

Arts organizations may also need to spend as much time talking about the non-performance areas in a venue as the performance spaces. Lobbies need to be more than holding pens. A kiosk with a pot of coffee and a tip jar, or a "mini-bar" with \$8 beers stuck in the middle of a cramped or cavernous room with gray walls, no comfortable seating, harsh lighting, no music, nothing to engage with visually, and that shuts down after intermission, doesn't cut it anymore-and I'm not sure it ever did. Lobbies could be living rooms, galleries, book shops, Internet cafés, or really great bars-the third space, as they say. Museums have, of course, been doing this for years-incorporating restaurants and shops into their spaces. Theaters are also getting on board.

Portland Center Stage and Center Stage Theater in Baltimore have both designed their lobbies to create a more relaxed and social environment.

We Lock Down the Art

A growing number of musicians, most notably Prince, are giving their music away as a way of generating awareness, building a fan base, and developing an audience for their live performances. In order to reach broader audiences arts organizations may need to create free and low-cost opportunities for people to sample and share their art with others.

I tend to seek out dance and music concerts at which new music is being played - often premiere performances. I'm amazed and disappointed at how frequently there is no recording available for me to download from the organization's site the next day, no clip for me to put on my Facebook page or email to friends. There's not even an invitation or opportunity for me to check a box saying I would be interested to be notified if a recording is released so that I can download it at some point in the future. The easier an organization makes it for me to deepen my experience and share my interest and enthusiasm with others, the

better. And if I encourage my friends to purchase a piece of music or go to a performance, it's going to have much greater impact than if the organization itself does.

If the premise of Chris Anderson's *The Long Tail* is true-that the future of culture and commerce lies not in creating blockbusters but in creating and mining niche markets-then arts organizations might be amazed at how many people around the world would pay a modest amount to download high quality audio and video recordings of performances that they have seen or that they currently cannot access any other way.¹⁷ Mediated experiences can break down geographical, social, economic, and time barriers.

This is not about top down control from arts organizations; it's about allowing patrons to be active participants and turning them into devoted fans and catalysts for participation by others- in other words, driving word of mouth.

Speaking of which, what about patron as critic? If the consumer has achieved taste making status anyway, then why not elevate seasoned patrons to the role of reviewers and encourage them to write thoughtful reviews, posted as blogs on your Web sites? Prior to joining the Foundation I was the managing director of a now 30-year-old Seattle-based organization called On the Boards that presents contemporary performance artists from around the world. With the help of Doug McClennan at ArtsJournal.com, OtB started a patron review blog in late 2003. It's been incredibly successful.

Patron reviews not only give your organization critical information about what patrons are thinking, but help patrons build community, and improve their capacities to process, discuss and understand what they have experienced-in other words, develop cultural literacy. A blog welcomes and promotes alternate viewpoints from those espoused by the local art critic-let's not forget that art is subjective, after all; and, in the absence of a review, a patron review is a strong substitute for satisfying those "latemovers" who need to hear what people think before they will buy tickets. And they may trust your patron reviews more than they trust the local critic, anyway. (Assuming you're fortunate enough to still have an art critic writing for your local newspaper.)

We make people feel inadequate and intimidated.

First, as Bill Ivey suggests in his new book, *Arts, Inc.*, it may be time for us to let go of the idea of artistic hierarchies.¹⁸ In other words, if we want people to participate, we may need to stop hammering so hard on the idea that Bach is intrinsically better than Bjork, and Bjork is intrinsically better than my Uncle Bob playing banjo in his barn. I recently interviewed Bill Ivey, and he said that rather than seeing themselves as "the be-all and end-all" fine arts institutions need to see themselves as an important part of a spectrum of art making.¹⁹ It's all valuable; and in fact, commercial entertainment companies like HBO and AMC

may be beating us at our game with shows like *The Wire*, *In Treatment*, and *Madmen*. They are working with excellent writers, directors, actors, and designers and doing bold, ambitious work.

Second, we don't often acknowledge that the experience of going to a live performance or museum can be unfamiliar and difficult for the uninitiated. In fact, sometimes it's difficult for the initiated. Like the gym, you have to start going on a regular basis before it becomes familiar and before going feels better than not going. In his book *Economics and Culture*, scholar David Throsby writes, "... taste for artistic services or goods is cumulative. It is apparent that a person's enjoyment of music, literature, drama, the visual arts, and so on, and hence her willingness to spend money on consuming them, are importantly related to her knowledge and understanding of these artforms."²⁰ I truly believe that one big barrier to participation is lack of knowledge and understanding-I've been going to 175 to 200 performances a year for five years and I still have days when I feel "ill-equipped" to go to a performance. Are arts organizations doing all they could to address this barrier? Are prices low enough that people can make the arts part of their daily lives or even monthly lives? Beyond that, are we giving people the knowledge some may want and need to fully appreciate the work? Jazz at Lincoln Center has a great program called *Swing University*, geared to adults, which explains jazz, its development, and how to be an effective listener. Perhaps we need more programs like this?

Finally, we are only hurting ourselves when we believe and let our patrons believe, that they are meant to be passive and appreciative and well-behaved. There is value in demystifying the artistic process (as choreographer Elizabeth Streb says) and encouraging patrons to be actively engaged. Let them clap when they feel like it; let them come to a rehearsal even if they haven't donated \$10,000 to the organization; let them express opinions-yes, even publicly and even negative ones; give them dance, acting, and music lessons-yes, even the adults who never wanted to be professional artists and don't have any experience. In January of this year, the Joffrey needed away to generate new income so it decided to offer dance classes to the public. Since January, the classes have generated \$200,000 in revenue, and the Joffrey is expecting to earn another \$300,000 by June. Moreover, people who take the classes are buying tickets to see their teachers and the rest of the company perform.²¹ When On the Boards launched its blog several years ago, one of the first things we noticed was that the people we asked to blog started showing up to volunteer and donating money to us. People like to be invested, to feel ownership.

#4 - You Can't Fix It in Post

When artistic director, Irene Lewis, arrived at Center Stage in the early 90s the theater was producing works primarily by white playwrights, performed by white actors, for white audiences. Center Stage is based in Baltimore, where 80 percent of the population is African American.

Irene Lewis astutely determined that Center Stage was not actually serving the larger community of Baltimore, and the theater made the commitment to change that by programming 2-3 out of 6 plays each season by African American playwrights or about the African American experience.

Despite angry subscribers and financial consequences, the theater stayed the course. Today, the African American plays in the season generate the highest attendance and revenues. It took 15 years to get there.

No podcast, YouTube video, or other new media strategy is going to make 25-year-olds want to go to a performance that doesn't seem relevant to their lives in a venue in which they do not see other people their age. Intellectual relevance cannot be relegated to the PR department.

Whether you're trying to reach younger or more diverse audiences, like Center Stage, you need to do it consistently and authentically and you may need to be prepared to lose some current patrons in order to gain new ones.

#5-Be a Concierge: Filter and Make Recommendations

One of the greatest challenges for consumers created by the Internet is having too many choices-people are bombarded with information. Consumers increasingly expect customization, and for retailers to understand their preferences and market to them accordingly. Recommender- sites understand this. Arts organizations, on the other hand, really don't seem to get this and are generally terrible at helping patrons make smart, satisfying purchase decisions.

Arts organizations tend to tell the public "We've got 8 or 18 shows this season, and they are all fantastic (!!)" Well, they may all be pretty good, but they are not all the same, and by not helping patrons find the play that they are most likely to enjoy seeing, there is a greater likelihood that they will either choose none of the above; or not have an enjoyable experience.

Perhaps arts organizations could become arts concierges: responsive, reliable, and trusted friends who help patrons make decisions about what to see, who to invite, and where to go for dinner beforehand. V/e live in a time when most people don't have a culturally sophisticated friend or relative to help them engage with the fine arts so arts organizations could create value by taking on this role.

And much of this could probably be completely automated. If you buy a book on Amazon, often encourages you to buy another book by the same author and get both at a discounted price. If I buy a ticket to Three Sisters on one theater's Web site, what if it encouraged me to buy something else: "You bought a ticket to Chekhov's Three Sisters. Here are other cultural activities (at our theater or others in town) that might interest you. Bundle any of these other items with your ticket purchase and receive a discount on all the items." If every cultural organization did this in partnership with other peer cultural organizations I have to

imagine something good could come of it.

But being arts concierges, filtering, and building partnerships organization by organization may be just the beginning.

#6 - Aggregate Supply and Demand

Imagine this idea scaled for an entire city. What if all the products from all the arts organizations in Cincinnati were aggregated by a site called "CincinnatiCultureClub.org" and you could get a periodic email in your in box making personal culture recommendations to you from everything that's happening in your city.

Using a sophisticated recommender system, coupled with social networking and patron reviews such as site could help patrons make more informed decisions, make recommendations, and maybe even increase participation.

And what if this site allowed patrons to create horizontal subscriptions bundling artistic experiences from various organizations? These could be customized or the site could suggest some thematic packages: "A Masterworks package" an "An Avant-Garde package" "A Wholesome Family Entertainment package".

By doing this, one concert on your season could appear on hundreds of niche packages.

And what if these packages included nightclubs, commercial theater, films, gallery exhibits, books, music, and other entertainment?

What if because you bought a ticket to a concert, you could automatically get an alert when the soloist was being interviewed on your local public radio station? What if the interview was automatically downloaded as a podcast, or emailed to you? What if because you recently bought the Nonesuch Retrospective CD, "John Adams: Hallelujah Junction," or his memoir by the same name, you were alerted when his works were going to be performed by your local orchestra or opera company? What if you were one click away from buying a ticket?

In 1992 sociologist Richard Peterson coined the term Cultural Omnivore to describe the tendency of many people to develop tastes for everything: high art and pop culture and everything in between.²²

We may have a generation of cultural omnivores out there, but we've made it really difficult for them to feast because we've created silos between high art and low art, and between the disciplines of music, theater, dance, opera, the visual arts, film, and literature.

Why not help these omnivores find their ways from the film "In Bruges" to the Martin McDonough play, The Lieutenant of Inishmore? In the minds of the consumer, it's all culture.

By maintaining our "separate and better than others" status the arts could be losing their spot at the banquet.

Rather than competing against one another to sell subscriptions and single tickets, perhaps arts organizations could work together to increase cultural participation? Perhaps we could, among other things, create "Cultural Omnivore Subscriptions?"

#7 - Focus on Seeing Better Rather Than Selling Better

Should we get rid of subscriptions? Stream podcasts? Produce videos for YouTube? Hire DJs and VJs to play in the lobby after the show? Have a MySpace page? Text our patrons on their cell phones? Re-conceived the season brochure-again? Re-design the Web site-again? Host some sort of amateur art competition? Radically lower ticket prices? Maybe; but before answering these questions we may need to answer some more fundamental questions. To adapt to the culture change organizations may need to focus less on selling better and more on seeing better.

It's been interesting to observe how arts organizations have responded to the economic crisis- everyone seems clear: Measures must be taken! V/e need to "essentialize"-a word I keep hearing arts leaders use. We need to reduce expenses. V/e need to appreciate our loyal patrons. We need to remove price barriers in order to reach more people. We need to be willing to make changes in our organization in order to survive "in these times."

But what about the past 30 years? It doesn't seem as though many of us were having night sweats as the audiences gradually turned grayer, and more conservative, and eventually dropped off. Why not? Perhaps because it took 30 years to reach the abyss rather than 30 days?

If you know the story of the boiling frog then you may be familiar with the idea of "creeping normalcy if normalcy." Creeping normalcy refers to the way a major change can be accepted as normalcy if it happens slowly, in unnoticed increments, when it would be regarded as objectionable if it took place in a single step or short period. Some couples wake up years after being madly in love to find that the intimacy that was created in the early days has faded slowly and silently because they stopped noticing and nurturing each other.

Relationships require attention to be sustained. Perhaps, like the couple that wakes up one day to realize "We don't know each other anymore; we have nothing in common," we failed to see that our communities were changing, and that art and artists were changing, and that we, as institutions that exist to broker a relationship between the two were not changing in response. We failed to see the culture change. We were bending the map.

There is a real danger if we conflate growth of the budget, economic impact, or box office success with having intellectual relevance and creating meaningful impact on individuals and on society. The arts can't declare mission accomplished just because they get people through the door. It is not sufficient to create artistic experiences and sell or give them away without regard for the capacity of people to receive them and find meaning in them.

In her article in the Chronicle of Philanthropy, "Let's Put the Word 'Nonprofit' Out of Business"²³ Clair Gaudiani has proposed that we replace the word 'nonprofit' with 'social profit.' I like this idea because it encourages us to remember that we are nonprofits because we exist to create value for society, rather than profits for shareholders. It reminds us that we exist within a social and cultural context-and if that context changes, then we must adapt.

How do we improve our ability to see the culture change and adapt to it? From a biological standpoint, adaptation is fostered, in part, by allowing diversity into a system. At the organizational level diversity comes from having leaders and staff and board that reflect the various communities (young, old, rich, poor, of different cultural backgrounds) you exist to serve and allowing them to influence the organization. It also comes from working with new artists, new thinkers, and new partners-and by partners I do not necessarily mean other arts organizations.

At the sector level, diversity comes from allowing young leaders to be at the table and allowing new organizations to become leaders. Rather than privileging one generation or type of organization over another, we need to encourage diversity in the system and then learn from each other.

Before ending today, I want to go back to the shoveling coal metaphor, which is one that seems to strike a chord with many arts leaders: At a theater convening two years ago, the artistic director of a very small and innovative theater in NYC said "We feel tremendous pressure from our funders and from our boards to grow. Why can't it be OK for us not to grow? We want to stay small and still be considered successful."

While 2009 has brought the call to "essentialize" and downsizing is now in vogue, these past few decades arts organizations have by-and-large dutifully responded to the encouragement "to grow." We tripled the number of organizations and built bigger and better facilities. Arts organizations created hierarchical corporate structures, professionalized their staffs, and increased the size of their operating budgets, the number of programs, exhibits, and performances they offer, and the number of seats in their halls. Even as audiences were steadily declining, arts organizations continued to grow and new organizations continued to be formed. And now many arts leaders feel trapped shoveling coal. While coal shoveling may simply be part and parcel with working in an arts organization, there is no doubt in my mind that the shoveling is intensified if an organization is operating at

a level that is simply unsustainable.

On February 15th of this year, The New York Times ran the following articles on the front page of the theater section: Above the fold, "Drama, Live and on the Financial Edge" about theaters "fighting to keep the reaper" from their doors; below the fold, "Old Sets Live On As Broadway Embraces Recycling."²⁴ As I read these articles, it occurred to me that when we talk about environmental sustainability we are quick to understand that sustainability requires that we use resources at a rate at which they can be replenished. But what is true for natural resources is also true of human resources. We cannot pay our artists poverty-level wages, burn out our staffs, ignore or underutilize our volunteers, fatigue our board members and donors, or continually push our subscribers and ticket buyers to buy more, more, more concerts on our season, at higher and higher prices, without consequences. This is not sustainable.

There are organizations that simply do not have a broad enough, deep enough, or fanatical enough base of support to sustain their current operations.

Furthermore, growth that is difficult to sustain can cause an organization to shift or compromise its mission, as the more desperate it is for resources, the more likely it is to pursue opportunities that are outside the scope of its core competencies. Jim Phills talks persuasively about this in his book.

Taking artistic risks, increasing attendance, fostering access, improving artistic quality, deepening engagement, and hitting earned and unearned income targets, do not necessarily go hand in hand.

We can kid ourselves into thinking that we can pursue these goals simultaneously and without compromise by separating into different departments the functions of making the art, selling admissions, raising money, balancing the budget, educating patrons, and understanding the community. But the compartmentalization of mission is only a short-term alleviation of the genuine philosophical struggle to reconcile these competing goals. And prioritizing and balancing these goals is only likely to get more difficult given the economic climate.

It probably goes without saying, but now may not be the time to push for budgetary growth. Now may be a time to focus on the core, think deeply about why your organization exists, and integrate and realign your organization firmly behind common goals, values, work that excites everyone in the company, and meaningful measures of success (find a way to measure whether you matter to people!).

It might also be a good time to examine whether your current organizational structure continues to be an effective and efficient way to deliver on your mission. Perhaps it's time to examine the hierarchies and vertical organizational structure

in your institution. You might also look at your office space to see if it promotes or impedes communication silos.

I'm convinced that you do not need the resources of the Metropolitan Opera to adapt to the culture change. To survive, you do not necessarily need to birth a radical new innovation like HD broadcasts; and such endeavors are highly risky. There's a reason why most of the R&D labs in the world (Bell Labs, for instance) were started by monopolies. It takes a lot of money to fund the failures that are part of innovation. Having said this, do not allow lack of resources stop you from adapting. As National Arts Strategies has been teaching for years, strategy is about making choices. It's as much about letting go of programs that don't work or serve your mission or long term vision as creating new programs that do.

In these economic times, I find myself asking, "*Where did all the money go?*" If arts organizations and their funders had to do it all over again, would we make different choices with where we spent the money? You can reallocate the resources you have and make meaningful, powerful changes in your organization.

Last year, I saw the gorgeous ENO/Met production of Philip Glass's *Satyagraha*, directed by Phelim McDermott, co-founder of the terrific theater company, *Improbable*. My colleague at the Foundation, Susan Feder, pointed out a line by Mr. McDermott in the program notes that I think has pertinence to this topic. He wrote, "Improvisation as we practice it is less about being quick-witted and wacky and more about embracing paradoxical skills. These include the ability to be courageous and decisive while at the same time open and vulnerable to whatever happens around you. We work on developing the ability to be humble, not armored, in the face of unexpected events..."²⁵

In the end, Laurence Gonzales, the author of *Deep Survival*, writes, "Those who avoid accidents are those who see the world clearly, see it changing, and change their behavior accordingly."²⁶

The possibility exists that adapting to the culture change may not simply allow us to survive for the foreseeable future, but to improve the system for creating and distributing the arts in the US. In 1963, the philanthropist John D. Rockefeller III proclaimed, "the arts are not for the privileged few, but for the many. Their place is not on the periphery of daily life, but at its center." America came a long way but didn't fulfill Rockefeller's vision in the 20th century. But wouldn't it be great if we could do it in the 21st-if we could actually put the arts at the center of daily life for Americans? If we can be open to, and courageous in the face of, the changing world, I believe we can.

I end today with a quote from Lewis Hyde.

In his 1945 book, *The Gift*, Hyde says, "The art that matters to us-which moves the heart, or revives the soul, or delights the senses, or offers courage for living,

however we choose to describe the experience-that work is received by us as a gift is received.

Even if we have paid a fee at the door of the museum or concert hall, when we are touched by a work of art something comes to us which has nothing to do with the price."²⁷ Hyde says that whereas :the commodity moves to turn a profit, the gift moves to the empty place. It turns toward him that has been empty-handed the longest, and if someone appears elsewhere whose need is greater it leaves its old channel and moves toward him."²⁸

Perhaps it's time for the arts to stop waiting for people to find us, to appreciate us, and instead move toward them; seek to understand them; break into their hearts and minds-in that order.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Footnotes

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3. Laurence Gonzales, *Deep Survival*, 151-171. Quote on 163.
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5. Laurence Gonzales, *Deep Survival*, 166-169. Quotes on 166 and 167.
6. Laurence Gonzales, *Deep Survival*, 169.
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11. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 61-64
12. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 70.
13. Steven J. Heyer, keynote remarks delivered before Advertising Age's Hollywood + Vine Conference, Beverly Hills Hotel, Beverly Hills, California, February 5, 2003, as quoted by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture*, 69 . For a transcript of Heyer's remarks, see <http://www.egfa.com/pagesNewsletter%20-%20Heyer.pdf>.
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24. Kate Taylor, "Drama, Live and on the Financial Edge," and Cara Joy David, Old Sets Live On As Broadway Embraces Recycling," *The New York Times*, February 15,2009.
25. Philem McDermott, "Note from the Director," The Metropolitan Opera Playbill for the 2007-2008 season production of the Philip Glass opera, *Satyagraha* (April2008): 49.
26. Laurence Gonzales, *Deep Survival*, 281.
27. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift-Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1945): xii.
28. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift-Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, 23.

Yaffe: {cut}...Margy founded and served as the Executive Director of the Mobility Agenda, a think-tank in Washington, D.C. Before that she was a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution and prior to that she was a senior advisor on domestic policy in the Clinton-Gore White House. She brings a long record of advocacy to Cincinnati and we are very, very proud and pleased to have her here.

She is a native of Cincinnati and is the daughter of Dick Waller. Margy, I leave the floor to you.

Waller: Thank you. It is really a pleasure to be here and to represent the Fine Arts Fund and the Arts and Culture Partnership. And co-hosting Diane. Isn't she terrific?

It's kind of fun to be working at CCM. I took my first ballet lessons here when I was like, I don't know five and my father taught at CCM while he was principal clarinetist at the Cincinnati Symphony. As an organization that is in the midst of a major transition, at the Fine Arts Fund, I must say, this is a very interesting talk to listen to and to think about how these ideas, and suggestions and questions apply to us at the Fine Arts Fund as well. And if you all are interested in learning more that you should definitely take a look at our website which is www.fineartsfund.org and on the homepage you will find the arts and culture partnership blog, where we are doing our best to initiate a new conversation with the community online, but also in settings like this. We are very glad to be co-hosting because it gives us a chance to continue that community conversation about how we go forward as we think about shifting from primarily a fundraising organization for the arts to an organization that really focuses on strengthening community through arts and culture organizations and arts and culture experiences in our community.

With that I will introduce our two panelists who are going to give some brief remarks, some reactions to Diane presentation and then we are going to open it up to you all for your thoughts and reactions and questions.

In your handout, that you got when you came in, the program for today, there is detailed bio for each of our two very accomplished panelists. Contrary to what Alan said, I'm not going to actually walk through those exactly. Except to say that obviously Evans is with the opera and Pete is with Nielsen, although he has done many other things, as has Evans. And they both continue to do other things, which you should definitely read about and learn more about.

I'll tell you that when I thought about who to have for the panel, I chose these two for very specific reasons. Evans impressed me greatly. One of the first things I did when I took the job at the Fine Arts Fund and was commuting between D.C. and Cincinnati during the summer, was to go to the opera's annual luncheon where I heard Evans speak for the first time and realized: Here is someone working in the arts, but really understands the relationship between arts organizations and community and people in that community, which is something I know I strive for all of the time. And he really gets that. I was at a dinner party with him recently where we were engaged in a conversation among people at the dinner party, ages 70 something, probably to 20 something, about who reads hard-copy newspapers and who doesn't and why. That was an interesting conversation that Evans contributed to. So I thought he would be great here today.

And then Pete, who I had not met before today, but came highly recommended. I asked a bunch of friends of mine, "who should I ask to react to the kind of presentation that I knew Diane was going to give from outside the arts community?" I understand Pete is an arts supporter, but he doesn't work for an arts organization. So he is going to give a perspective slightly different from one we might get from people we talk to all the time within our own arts community.

With that I think I'll turn it over to Pete first and then we'll hear from Evans.

Blackshaw: Okay great. I wanted to first open with - some of you may know me from Twitter. I use all the social media platforms, but I did twitter a brief note about your presentation. I said, "Diane Ragsdale of the Mellon Foundation gets the convergence of the arts and social media or the lack thereof. Huge shout out." I'm sure that when I check my twitter account there will be all sorts of validating comments.

I think your presentation resonated with me at many levels and I'm not really sure where to begin. Let me kind of start with the opportunity. I think despite all of the challenges and some of the barriers you describe, which I think are

all accurate, I think the arts community is on the cusp of a potential renaissance in how we connect with new entrants, how we redefine the genre, how we drive participation. And the one thing that was kind of- at the top of my mind is – I've kind of thought about what's really on and I think there is a really powerful connection, a symbiotic relationship between arts and emotion and when I think about everything that I've witnessed in the social-media space-going back to the very, very early days of the internet up through all of the expression platforms that unfolded, from message boards to forums to blogs to the use of multi-media, I see incredible opportunity.

I just think the challenge is, how do you channel that creative energy that is so latent in the art community around these new platforms? Not necessarily at the expense of offline. If there is anything that I've learned at Nielsen, of late, is that there is this incredibly powerful ecosystem that's evolving between the things that take place offline and online. You can't really talk about blogs independent of what newspaper reporters write offline. The blogosphere kind of feeds the offline news and then what you read about or experience offline echoes online. And I think that's a really powerful opportunity for the arts.

One of the things that really-that you kind of nailed-was this notion that you go to an arts event and why can't the same thing that takes place at Amazon, which is so critical to driving trial. I think about the last twelve books I've purchased have probably been prompted or teased by previous purchases. And I don't really think that's a high technology barrier. If anything, what's almost challenging Nielsen is the proliferation of all the free tools that are popping up all over the place. It's incredible- you want to see a creative renaissance just look at the 500,000 developers that are working on Amazon Apps. I was at a presentation yesterday where Amazon was talking about 500,000 developers figuring out better ways of basically making it easier for people to buy books. But the amount of creativity that is going into those practices is almost like mindboggling. So I think what we need is to channel the creative energy inherent in this community towards better ways of driving trial, striking emotional connections, clearly fueling the network effect.

I think a lot of that's taking place. Let's not be too hard on ourselves. I'm in the listening business. At Nielsen we monitor conversations for hundreds of brands. We try to take the learning from the insights to try to parlay that into marketing strategy, into big ideas. And I'll tell you for free, that there is a lot of – the creative renaissance is already taking place. In fact, I dare say, what I think the arts community potentially needs to do is become better digital curators of what's currently out there and use that end product to stimulate some of those direction that you are talking about (*to Ragsdale*).

So again, I want to frame this more from opportunity versus we've got big problems coming around because I really do believe that if we harness the

energy, huge opportunities.

Mirageas: I want to direct my reaction primarily to those young men and women here in the room who are going to be my successors in the work that I've done in all of my adult life. I fully intend on being around for a considerable time longer but will enjoy entering fossildom and anecdotage. But what Diane has said yesterday and at a wonderful small forum where many arts leaders were present last night -a dry run for today- Diane got me thinking about something fundamental about arts institutions, not only here in Cincinnati where I have a very close and, I hope a fairly growing and in-depth knowledge of what's going on in town, but from my own global perspective from working with arts organizations coast to coast and in Europe – because as my bio indicates I have worked with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, individual conductors and composers here and abroad, as well as other festivals and so on and so forth. And I have to say with a certain amount of trepidation that most of our major arts institutions are broken and are desperately in need of repair in a fundamental way, from the nuts and bolts on up. Our symphony orchestras, our opera companies, our ballet companies, less so our theater companies, are moving forward at a glacial pace with a kind of Juju on their shoulders that will sink them within a decade if they don't fundamentally reexamine the way they do business and create their art.

And I speak not just of the arts institutions here in Cincinnati, but every symphony orchestra, opera company, ballet company, museum, some professional theater companies that I've encountered, and, what I'd love to use henceforth, called the social-profit world. They are broken to my estimation because they find themselves in a very peculiar spot. They have curated a legacy of works written primarily by dead white men and they are now in the very unusual position of having to try and figure out if those compositions, those creations – and I mean the lively arts more than the Mona Lisa or <gap> or any kind of fixed art- but if those creation mean in the world of Twitter and LinkedIn and Facebook.

I love to think that the Beethoven Fifth will always be the Beethoven Fifth and you can't hurt it. That is exists independent of whatever we do to perform it, or *Tosca*, or <gap> or whatever you can imagine that has been created to be taken off a page and presented to you. What Diane's comments have said to me today, have thrown into very, very high relief the fact that you young men and women here today learning how to be administrator, curators, promoters, impresarios of the arts have an enormous job ahead of you because those pieces of art that your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents felt to be iconic and central to their lives are now very truly in jeopardy because we are at a crossroads of not knowing exactly why they mean something to you twenty-somethings.

I can't say with my hand on my heart that the Beethoven Sixth symphony

means something to you. Informed or uninformed. Whether just sitting down amongst your peers one evening, listening on your Ipod or on one of those old-fashioned things we call a compact disc, already, you will get the Beethoven Sixth symphony and it will mean something to you. I don't know if when you come to Music Hall, I hope, this summer to see Ainadamar, about a gay poet and playwright who was brutally murdered by assassins from Franco's Falangists will mean anything to you. I don't know. I hope so. But my great discomfort right now is that I am of, perhaps, the last generation being in my middle fifties who grew up with what Diane was talking about. That Halcyon period of music education and culture for all promoted, sometimes to the detriment of the future of the art by places like the Ford Foundation, which were always saying, "Grow, grow. Make more orchestras in more towns. Make opera companies in more small hamlets. Make more, more because everybody wants more." Well maybe we don't anymore, want more. And I don't mean this to sound like a polemic or also a Cassandra, but I do want to challenge all of you young men and women in this room who will be pursuing lives in the administration and promotion of the arts that you have an enormous challenge ahead of you.

I don't think there is anything going to happen to detriment 100 years from now to the Beethoven's Fifth or *La Bohème*, but I do know that you face going ahead, apropos of what Diane said today, a tremendous challenge as to reinvent why it matters. I think that if your were to go to the Louvres and see the Winged Victory, with out any cultural context, you would probably understand why it's beautiful. There missing its arms and head, but still in this incredible forward motion as if she's got someplace to go that's really important. And just the fact of that frozen motion or a great and beautiful building... Music frozen, "Architecture is frozen music." Who is the wonderful I.M. Pei who said that? I think the frozen arts are in better shape in some ways because they have an intrinsic, static beauty.

Our plastic arts are in greater danger because they depend on you getting it and we as purveyors of those experiences whether we are symphony orchestras or ballet companies or opera companies or even theater companies. And I keep excepting theater because theater is constantly renewing itself. Every time you turn around there is a new play. There is a new take on the experience of today or the experience of 100 years ago. Symphony orchestras and opera companies are not renewing the cannon as much because of the nature of the beast and I'm not that worried about, as I said, whether *Aida* will mean something in the larger sense of artistic things 100 years from now, but I am desperately worried as to whether it will mean anything to you. And I think your big challenge is to take these beautiful works of art that have been created and figure out, does the Tchaikovsky Fifth Symphony really mean anything to you and to the children you will have. And if it does, what are you going to do to make it meaningful?

Waller: I must say that I'm grateful that we are taping this so that lots of other people can see this conversation. It's really terrific. Now we'll open this up to you all. Let me just ask if we have mics for the audience. We do have mics for the audience, one on each side. So we want to get that part of the conversation as well. And if you would preface your question with your name and if you want to identify and organizational relationship you can do that too.
(inaudible)
We have two mics. You don't need eyes in the back of your head, Alan. I can see them.

First question, right here up front. She's got the mic behind you, Amber.

Feldman: Hi I'm Amber Feldman. I'm really curious. As you were talking about diverse performance, I kept thinking back to graduate school and I went to the University of Texas and there was such fantastic art being produced there in graduate school and in classrooms and in the community. Site-specific performance and it seems like it was all kind of grunge theater. I know there were grunge festivals popping up around the country. But how do we bring that kind of diverse, new performance into the mainstream so that we are reaching those younger audiences that are no longer coming to theater or that can no longer afford theater, for that matter. How do we really engage that audience? The internet is sometimes creating more, we're seeing more experiences, kind of that virtual experience, with Netflix, watching on your own video monitor or YouTube when you are still watching video alone. How do we bring those audiences together to create these community experiences that you get watching a performance together.

Ragsdale: Were you in Austin?

Feldman: Yeah.

Ragsdale: I was in Austin two weeks ago where I met with representatives from about twenty small theater companies. There is no large theater company in Austin. They don't have a regional theater. What they have instead is an incredibly fertile environment of many small organizations. And because there are no significant arts foundations based in Texas these small arts organizations are really undercapitalized. A lot of people have three jobs, or do art on the side of a full time job, or work for free, or for, basically *beer*. And they do really terrific work. It's a terrifically exciting community.

So I was meeting with them because they realized that they are having some challenges building capacity and taking their organizations to the next level professionally. This is kind of a roundabout way to get to your question, but I think it gets to something fundamental. They've brought the theater community together and are actually considering developing their capacity as a community, rather than as individual organizations. For instance, one

problem they are facing is that there are only a handful of good designers in Austin and so they all have to share them. Because of this they run into scheduling problems or burn out the talented designers they have. Additionally, the theaters don't have adequate scene shops. They are asking questions, such as: should we build a cooperative scene shop for the entire theater community? Should we work together to develop design capacity in Austin?

What do we have in most other cities? Well, if you have eight major theaters, then you may have eight scene shops, eight costume shops, eight marketing departments, eight development departments, eight, eight, eight... if not *eighty!* Because, actually, quite a few cities have closer to eighty theaters and many have vertically integrated systems.

I've rarely seen good partnerships in the arts (although MOMA and P.S.1 is one recent example) in which a big institution, let's say a theater, as a way of reaching a younger audience, takes under its wing a really small hip theater, essentially saying with this strategy, "We're not going to try to do funky, weird, new plays, our patrons don't actually want to see that stuff. We're not going to build a second stage and quarantine the risk in there. Instead, we're going to give this small, innovative theater company money out of our budget to help support its risk taking and then if something comes along that we think is promising and deserves a bigger audience we're going to help it go to the next level." Arts organizations tend to want to develop internal capacity rather than partner with other institutions to develop capacity. What's great about Austin is that they appear to be going a different route than most other cities.

Blackshaw: It reminds me of when I raised money from venture capitalists. They had a set of objectives and leveraged the – they co invested and I think that's actually an excellent idea. And I think a lot of what's going on now in the world of branding and marketing, certainly in your community as well, is this notion of co-creation. Where it's a co-investment and it leads to- and brands are recognizing that consumers just don't trust advertising and they certainly don't trust the advertising message as much as the consumer. The consumer brings a level of authenticity, trust, certainly more transparency. Consumers are better listeners. They will respond. And so advertisers are now realizing, "boy, we need to actually hold back a bit on the shout at consumers mentality. We may need to enroll them." And it is true. There is a lot of hokeyness out there where design, the TV commercial, but there's a certain degree of respect for the fact that the consumer is the closest person to the actual product itself.

Ragsdale: The most passionate about it.

Blackshaw: The most passionate. I think one thing I meant to say in my opening comments that you talked about, that I think is just so critical whether you are

in marketing, traditional marketing or in the arts community- this notion of advocacy is so critically important. In fact, I think it helps to answer your question from a how do you start to build the bridges.

I believe that loyalty is no longer enough. Absolutely not enough. You have to – in a world where consumers control the message, drive the highest degree of trust, are creating the content you have to figure out how to nurture your advocates. In your particular case you are dealing with smaller minorities of highly passionate purveyors of the arts or whatever the right term is there. And the question is how do you convert that passion into something else.

For example, building on an earlier example, if you see a great play, what are you doing to make as simple as possible, as friction free, no barriers, to post that good experience on YouTube or to tweet it or to bond with a mobile community where everyone can say great stuff? One of the things that's breathing new life into television, and it sounds a little bit counter intuitive – the conventional wisdom is that time shifting is killing television, but the communities that are aggregating around events like the television show are almost bringing a whole new layer of conversation. In fact we've been debating this within Nielsen about "will Twitter save the 30 second commercial or the traditional TV show?" It's interesting if you look at online communities while a show like 24 or probably even a lot of public broadcasting events there is this level of conversation going on; a level of advocacy, emotional intensity. There is an attentiveness and you look at that and all you think is opportunity. Is there an insight there that I should play into my website strategy? Do I need to think differently about a world where everyone can access the internet through any mobile device? Maybe we need to do a better job in the arts community of – when I have an emotional moment, that it is captured through these devices; hence, through a network effect. Again it's that notion of converting advocacy. People are emotionally involved. They're committed and are we leaving value on the table by not allowing that- to convert that into other things.

Here is the good news. Relative to when I was doing this in the mid to late 90s at Proctor and Gamble, the barriers to doing all this is so much lower. There is no real excuse. The question is, can we just spend the time to really- our own creative process of mapping out the psychology of the consumer, the art consumer, if you will, and thinking about all the other things they can do to build our franchise. And again, massive opportunity. But we need to know what the tools are that are out there.

Mirageas: Talking about collaborations. I think Cincinnati is probably- and I'll do a Cincinnati commercial here because I'm so proud of what we do in this city. I'll use my company. The Cincinnati Opera, every summer for nearly 90 years, has hired the Cincinnati Symphony to play in the pit. For many years, including this summer, the Cincinnati Ballet is our ballet. The artistic director

of Cincinnati Shakespeare will make his debut as a member of our group this summer and this institution, CCM, is vital to the success of our productions this summer because many of our chorus members and many of the young artists fulfill chorus roles or small roles on the stage. So it's a wonderful example just here in our hometown of one organization that has an unusual advantage because opera requires so many moving parts. That it can work with other arts institutions and be a convener of all of the arts; albeit only for a short period of time, for four operas in the summertime. But for that magic two months, the arts in Cincinnati all explode in Music Hall under the aegis of the opera company. So that's another example of how it could, it can, it does happen.

Waller: I've actually written about this in a blog. My parents worked at the Symphony and it was important to them that they had that summer job. (*inaudible*) It let me have a better life and better for the community. See how these things work? Okay, back here.

Kelly: I'm Courtney Kelly. I'm a second year in the arts administration graduate program and I need a job. I was wondering – I guess this question is more for Evans, or for everyone as well. I was listening to the Beethoven Fifth symphony yesterday and I personally- I know that for me I was very lucky that I had exposure to the arts very young and Diane spoke with us earlier today and as you spoke, you questioned the fact that arts education is disappearing if not already gone, and I'm wondering – you want us to be engaged and you want symphonies to mean something to us. How do we- it does mean something to us. We just went through graduate school and as arts administrators it should mean something to us. How do we hope to continue that it will mean something to our children who don't have that arts education experience? How do we combat where they're not exposed to that if it took that much for me to want to be wanting to listen to a Beethoven symphony (*inaudible*) How do we hope if people don't have any exposure they'll hopefully want to come to our concerts?

Mirageas: You've asked the \$50,000 question. I don't think any – I don't have an answer for it, other than to say that since you are talking specifically about classical music and classical orchestral music for the moment, because that's what I'll confine my answer to. It is the product of less than 250 of the most recent years of western culture. It has occupied a central space in western culture for 250 years. I will say the heretical thing to say that maybe in 100 years it won't mean as much as it once did. Nowadays there is not a big an audience for Palestrina Masses, but back in the days of 1600 and before hand when everybody had to go to church there was a huge audience for Palestrina Masses when they were performed as part of the service. Everything has its time. But I think one way of giving the Tchaikovsky Fourth or the Beethoven Sixth symphony a chance is simply exposure, is imply making this music this music available in your home for your child when he or she is young. Arts

patrons aren't, generally speaking, made out of thin air at age 45. Almost everybody I know who is a patron of the arts or an advocate of the arts tells me the same story: "When I was a kid my mother played classical music on the radio. When I was a kid we listened to the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts on the radio. When I was a kid, if it's a much older kid, there were records played on the phonograph in my house."

I think my only answer to you is as you have children you have younger people that you can influence just play the music. Let them hear it. Kids are so open and malleable they don't – a four year old, maybe it will happen in five or ten years time, but a four year old is not yet savvy about Twitter or Facebook. A four year old is still in that stage, or a two or a three year old is still in that stage when the simple kinetic energy of music is generalized in their experience. They don't know Duran Duran from Dvořák. All they know is what makes their feet move and their eyes smile. So maybe the simple answer is play music in whatever form it exists. Play the music for every kid you know and it will stick to some. It will never stick to everyone, by the way. This whole fallacy that classical music is for everyone is bologna because it can't be, because there are some people that are just not wired to enjoy it. That's okay. Maybe they're wired to enjoy jazz. Maybe they're wired to enjoy pop music and they will become the next great composer of pop songs. That's alright. But if you love this music as you say you do, simply expose people to it more than anything else.

Ragsdale: I also think that there is an opportunity to reach those adults who may have never had the chance to learn about the arts and who now have kids and who think, "God, I'd love to give my kids that experience, but I am intimidated. I don't know how to pick the right concert. I'm not sure how we would dress." I think organizations could actively target those adults and give them the opportunity to attend at the same time as the kids and get that basic level of introduction that one really needs to have an enjoyable experience going to concert halls.

Blackshaw: Again, I think we need to think smarter about how to drive traffic. If you look at something like YouTube- what's one of the most popular activities on YouTube? Anybody have a guess? What's really driving a lot of the volume? It's how-to. People explaining how to do things. For me, the dad who is not sure he can really teach his kids soccer, I may look at some other dad offering his expertise about it and I think the music community needs to bring the complexity down to size.

One very important development, I don't know if you've noticed in the last few months, but TV is moving to the computer and we are basically selecting our content. Often times it's not the 30 minutes. It's the three, four minute videos. I have twins, four years old. We are just addicted to musical snippets. They love the show *Oliver* and you know what's great about YouTube. We

have watched so many versions of some of the songs. So first we exhausted the inventory, if it was bootlegged or whatever, of the musical itself, the movie musical. But then we ran through every high school musical version of it that some mom or dad put online. And what's great about those often times there a nice little introduction that prefaces "I'll do anything" or whatever.

When you think about music- I think about my barrier. It's impenetrably boring sometimes. You have to go through everyone else doing their instrument before you get to the trumpet and you just started to develop this incredible distaste. How do you take that insight and turn it into something really user friendly. Maybe you need to use some humor. Maybe that sounds- I'm not really sure, but I think listening to the conversation and looking at how others are doing it, often in a very non-hierarchical way. What I love about the internet is that there is just absolute brilliance at the end point. Often time the folks that have had the least money are achieving the greatest breakthrough at touching the hearts and minds of others. To some extent they are not burdened at all by legacy or a lot of marketing money. They are just bringing their raw creative instinct to figure out how do I connect and bond and drive advocacy. I'm waiting for all of you. I am terrified that I am not going to succeed in making my kids love music. I'm afraid that they are going to try it, but like me ditch the band because of whatever. But what is it that you are going to provide me, the consumer, that is eager to teach my kids about music and the arts? How are you going to make it easily accessible? How are you going to open that entry point so that I gradually get to this state of love? I think everyone does have the potential to upsell to deep devotion, but that trial period is critical. So I forward to your three minute video on whatever .. the

Ragsdale: Beethoven's Fifth.

Waller: I understand that the people who were carrying the mics have made my decision easy by turning the mics over to the final two questions. So where are you? Who are you? What we are going to do, because we are actually out of time, is ask each of you to ask your question, no speeches please, and we'll let the panel each respond to those two questions and make our final remarks at the same time. We'll let Diane go last and then we will end. Okay?

Audience 1: My name is (*inaudible*). I am actually new to Cincinnati. I just moved to Ohio a few weeks ago. Coming from Indianapolis, but raised in Philadelphia, first - I know you said just a quick question. This really isn't a question. It really is kind of a suggestion. Coming from the world of education listening to your commentary tonight, it was wonderful because you could actually transpose that into the world of education. Everything you said. What's interesting to me in the world of education they created a theory to answer those questions of youth falling away and drop out rates and literacy issues with what they call Ecological Systems Theory, which is kind of an expansion

of the core of the child and everything that is surrounded by the child all the way out to the parts of the community to the family. And what they've done to try to reach children is catch them at their core. What is their environment teaching them and maybe we can find a way to connect the dots in the classroom.

You made a very interesting point with music being exposed to children- how they get exposed to it. Most generations of parents- they aren't exposed to it. They aren't even exposed to education. So say you have them play it their home is almost like going above their heads. Isn't there a way that we can open up the arts encourage children or families, like you said, even through the school system? We are talking about investing in opportunities. We are talking about Twitter. All of these things that don't reach the core. Twenty-somethings are already twenty-something. If you really want to build the bridge it seems to me you would start with the babies and then you would raise them up. My first opera was Pennsylvania Ballet Company. I was seven years old and compelling, so it was opera and ballet and that amazed me at seven.

I had a mother that opera was her hobby. What she would do is she would take all the children in the neighborhood. Round them up and bring them with us to these events. Often times they would be the loudest section because these children weren't exposed to that, but almost all of these children that grew up with me have a connection to the arts in some way. They are not all artisans, or singers, or what have you, but they have an interest and they are bringing their children up on it as well. So your point was well made. My question is when are we going to do it.

Ragsdale: We should have started a long time ago. Maybe soon.

Audience 2: (*inaudible*) What I was actually struck by with your talk is the omission of the word education. You never mentioned it once except perhaps in (*inaudible*). But there was no mention at all offering education and teaching people how to reach our art. And I think it goes way beyond merely playing music for them. They have to know how to listen to it. Sure the (*inaudible*) is beautiful, but if you don't know why, then maybe it doesn't matter if you ever see it again. So while (*inaudible*) or what it means to you, but if you know how to speak about it. And the only way you know how to speak about it is if you learn. And our arts administrators know how to make money, but they don't know anything about the aesthetics of art, ...not a teacher, then (*inaudible*) The only way I will give money, is if it means something to me and the only way it means something to me (*inaudible*) I know what good art is...(*inaudible*) They look to people who know. They don't come just to look at the pictures. They come because they want someone to tell them. Why...(*inaudible*) and it's only (*inaudible*)

Waller: Both of our questioners have strong feelings about their topic. Respond if you

like and make closing statements.

Mirageas: I'm sorry, but I have to disagree with you. One of the people that I feel knows the most about opera of anybody I know prefaces every comment he makes with "I don't know anything about opera, but I love it." I think what we do – because that puts up another barrier. I think what I'm so passionate about is that-I'm a highly education musician and I work with a lot of highly educated musicians as well. I do know the nuances between performance to performance and that enhances, I guess, my enjoyment. But I'm also so passionate about the woman who comes up to me at the intermission of the opera and says, "I just loved being here tonight because I was in a group of people who loved something and are passionate about it. I don't know anything about opera, but I just love the way it sounds." I disagree with you that people don't go to museums to see pretty pictures. That's okay because if you create the necessity of knowing something about an art form, if you create that barrier, you are immediately- you might as well put a gun to your head and shoot yourself now because then we will die.

What I do agree with you on is that the availability of education is the most important thing that we can do as presenters, as curators of art. We must take over where the schools have dropped the ball and if we're going to any thing as institutions, whether it's the Symphony Orchestra or the May Festival or the opera or the theater company, we have to become the educators. We have to make available to our potential patrons – Everything that you talked about (*to Ragsdale*). You both have fired me up so much tonight about how little I have done in my life already to be an advocate for what I love and how much more I have to do. But the fact of the matter is that it's up to us. It's up to the institutions because unfortunately because of the funding problems and what not- when I worked with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and worked with their education program, ran into scores of teachers who were supposed to be teaching their kids music, total ignorance about classical music. And I'm not criticizing them. I'm just saying, that's the level to which the public schools in general and even in affluent communities have descended in this country. So it's up to us. Boy, do we have a lot of work to do.

Blackshaw: I can't build on that.

Ragsdale: You have no final comment?

Blackshaw: No.. I'm not.

Ragsdale: Okay, first, yes you're right: the address really doesn't speak to education; and it's not for lack of awareness that this is a critical issue. Interestingly, I don't know if you know this statistic: that attendance at classical music concerts is highly correlated not with people who grew up taking music appreciation classes but with people that grew up playing instruments. And research seems to

indicate that shipping kids off to a concert once a year doesn't have a lot of long-term impact. I don't think you have to have a handbook and a degree to go be able to sit and take in a performance. But I do think cultivating taste over time and the ability to discern and discuss art in a way that can be really satisfying does require seeing a lot of art and being given some tools.

I also philosophically believe that a lot of the arts in education programs that are created are terrible. Why? Because arts organizations were not set up to do arts in education. They were set up to put on concerts, plays, put up exhibits. While some have developed incredible competency in arts in education and should be lauded for this and should be paid large sums of money because they are delivering excellent services, a lot of what's done under the banner of arts in education is neither great art nor great education in art. The fact is what we need to do is put arts back in education. We need schools to teach art. We need music teachers and art teachers to be reinstated. When the arts took on the mantle of arts education because public education dropped it, it didn't fill the gap that was left. It didn't replace being able to take music and art classes as part of your everyday curriculum. And I think it is really important for us to push for that to happen.

I also think that encouraging all arts organizations to adapt and create arts education programs could be neither good for arts organizations or kids. I don't think that's the answer. I think it could be worthwhile to consider hybrid organizations. We have overbuilt the arts and culture sector and perhaps have a few too many theaters and dance companies, etcetera. Perhaps some of these arts organizations could be repurposed as hybrid arts education organizations: companies that have competencies in both art and education, that work closely with public school systems, and that create substantive, meaningful programs and put artists to work in the schools in ways that are dynamic. If you're going to do arts in education well, I think it needs to be a fulltime focus. I don't think an organization can do it on the side with one staff person running herself ragged with \$10,000 in her budget.

But you are absolutely right. Education is going to be key if we are going to have audiences in the future. Anyway, my parting comment. Thank you all for coming. This is really terrific. You stuck around past 6 o'clock.

Waller: Thank you all. We will be posting something on our website about this event and I encourage you all to react with your comments if you weren't able to make them here today.

Yaffe: And please join us at Mic and Mack's for the reception and please be sure to sign the poster. Thank you very much.