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Effective immediately, SRO Artists Inc announces that it is now representing Loudon Wainwright III for live performances in North America. Loudon has had a long and illustrious career highlighted by 22 album releases, a 2010 Grammy for Best Traditional Folk Album for "High Wide & Handsome: The Charlie Poole Project", and two previous Grammy nominations for "I'm Alright", 1985 and "More Love Songs", 1986. His most recent recording, "Older Than My Old Man Now" was named one of NPR's Top 10 Albums of 2012. Immediate Avails! ●

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- Dark Star Orchestra
- Four Bitchin' Babes
- Get The Led Out
- Gonzalo Bergara Quartet
- Janis Ian
- Johnny Clegg Band
- Karla Bonoff
- ^ Loudon Wainwright III
- ^ Marcus Roberts
- Mariachi Sol de México
- ^ Martha Redbone
- Roots Project
- ^ The Nile Project
- ^ Nuevo Ballet Español
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INSIDE ARTS

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COVER: Photo by Gabi Porter/APAP

INSIDE ARTS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTERS

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Arts Presenters is a national service and advocacy organization with nearly 1,400 members worldwide dedicated to bringing artists and audiences together. A leader in the field, Arts Presenters works to effect change through professional development, resource sharing and civic engagement.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



LEHUA SIMON was not sure she could make it from Hawaii to New York City in January. As assistant theater manager at the Leeward Community College Theatre in Pearl City, she had been invited to give a five-minute presentation at APAP|NYC, but funding for travel was delayed. It looked as if her opportunity to present might slip away, yet she stayed on the path and eventually landed in New York.

Her presentation was one of eight on a Monday morning at the conference. Simon was nervous. Her voice trembled. She teared

up as she spoke about the spiritual depth of the work at her performing arts center and how her own personal loss and passion had driven her to work more mindfully as a performing arts administrator. Her five minutes to shine — as the session was called — was so compelling, the audience — small by nearly any standard — voted her a favorite, and within an hour, Simon was standing on the largest stage of the event, our annual awards luncheon, re-delivering her talk, this time in front of more 700 leaders in the field. She brought down the proverbial house.

When Simon walked on to stage, she represented leadership activated in the moment. She embraced the risk, took up the challenge and succeeded.

Simon is a fine example of individual leadership that makes an impact through personal creativity, determination and empowerment. She didn't get to APAP on her own, but she took all the steps to get there and was ready in real time to participate in ways she hadn't imagined.

We know from our experiences with the APAP Leadership Development Institute that change does not always have to come from the top down. We can, indeed, affect the field, our institutions and communities with a new paradigm of direct action leadership.

In the coming months, we at APAP are looking at our own responsibility as an organization to lead in the field, to support active leadership, to make decisions that can happen immediately rather than through extended processes and committees — which have a place, but are not the only ways to enact progress.

Thank you for your daily leadership, for all the decisions you make and steps you take every day to assure our sustainability and the health of both our field and our society. Let us keep deliberative leadership in our thoughts as we return to our work space, staff members and communities.

Mario Garcia Durham, PRESIDENT & CEO

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VOICE

BY KRISTEN ANDRESEN



For three Chicago performing arts groups, splitting a development team fuels fundraising — and creative collaboration.

FAIR SHARE

FOUR YEARS AGO, Julia Rhoads of Lucky Plush Productions faced a problem that many artist-led organizations can relate to: Her dance company needed help with fundraising, but she could only afford to hire someone with little or no experience, and once she did, the training became so time-consuming that it just wasn't worth it.

Fast forward to 2014 and her solution — splitting the costs of a development team with two other Chicago-based arts organizations — has both helped with the bottom line and fostered creative collaboration for Lucky Plush, the contemporary chamber sextet Eighth Blackbird and Blair Thomas & Co. Puppet Theater. The initiative, called Creative Partners, recently earned one of the in



Blair Thomas & Co.
Puppet Theater

STEPHANIE HOWARD

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VOICE

Entrepreneurship Awards from Fractured Atlas.

“I felt from the beginning that it needed to be an interdisciplinary collaboration,” Rhoads recalls. “There is an inherent lack of resources that we all face that is often discipline-centric, and I wanted to make sure this wouldn’t cannibalize the other companies.”

Rather than jump in headfirst, she spent a year researching the benefits and potential pitfalls of cost-sharing. The more she learned, the more excited she became. Over the course of that year, she held focus groups with local theater and dance organizations to determine compatibility.

“I assessed the organizational needs of each company to be sure that this would be a solid fit in the ecosystem, but I also wanted to make sure we had shared aesthetic values and shared values in art making,” she says. “That would have a greater impact in the long term for cross-pollinating audiences.”

The vetting process made two things clear to Rhoads. First, Eighth Blackbird and Blair Thomas were the right collaborators. And second, although she had initially thought they’d share an executive director, what they really needed was a development team. From there, the group worked with the Northwestern University Entrepreneurship Law Center to ensure that the three organizations, which had very different approaches to business, could interact in a way that would benefit everyone.

“We wanted to make sure it was equitable, and we looked at that through a lot of different lenses,” Rhoads says.

Creative Partners employees spend equal time raising money for each member organization and the collective itself. At any given time, the staff might raise more money for



WILLIAM FREDERICK

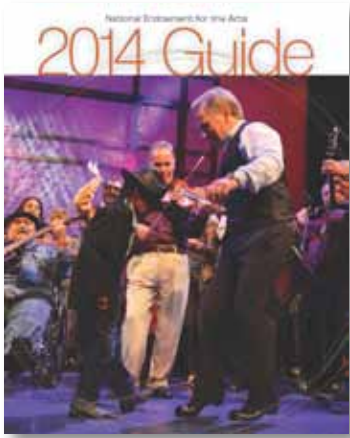
one organization than the others, but everyone gets equal time. Although Creative Partners is not yet self-sufficient, Rhoads says the investment has been worth it. Not only is each organization raising more money than it has in the past, but Rhoads and her colleagues also benefit from cross-marketing opportunities, collaborative performances and the wealth of experience each organization brings to the table.

“Cross-leveraging isn’t just about fundraising,” Rhoads says. “We’re in constant conversation, and we’re learning so much from each other in all areas of operations. The learning is so amazing and so deep that it allows us to have each other’s backs. We’re always talking about how to lift each other up.”

For more information, visit creativepartnersarts.org.



NATHAN KEAY



GUIDE POSTS

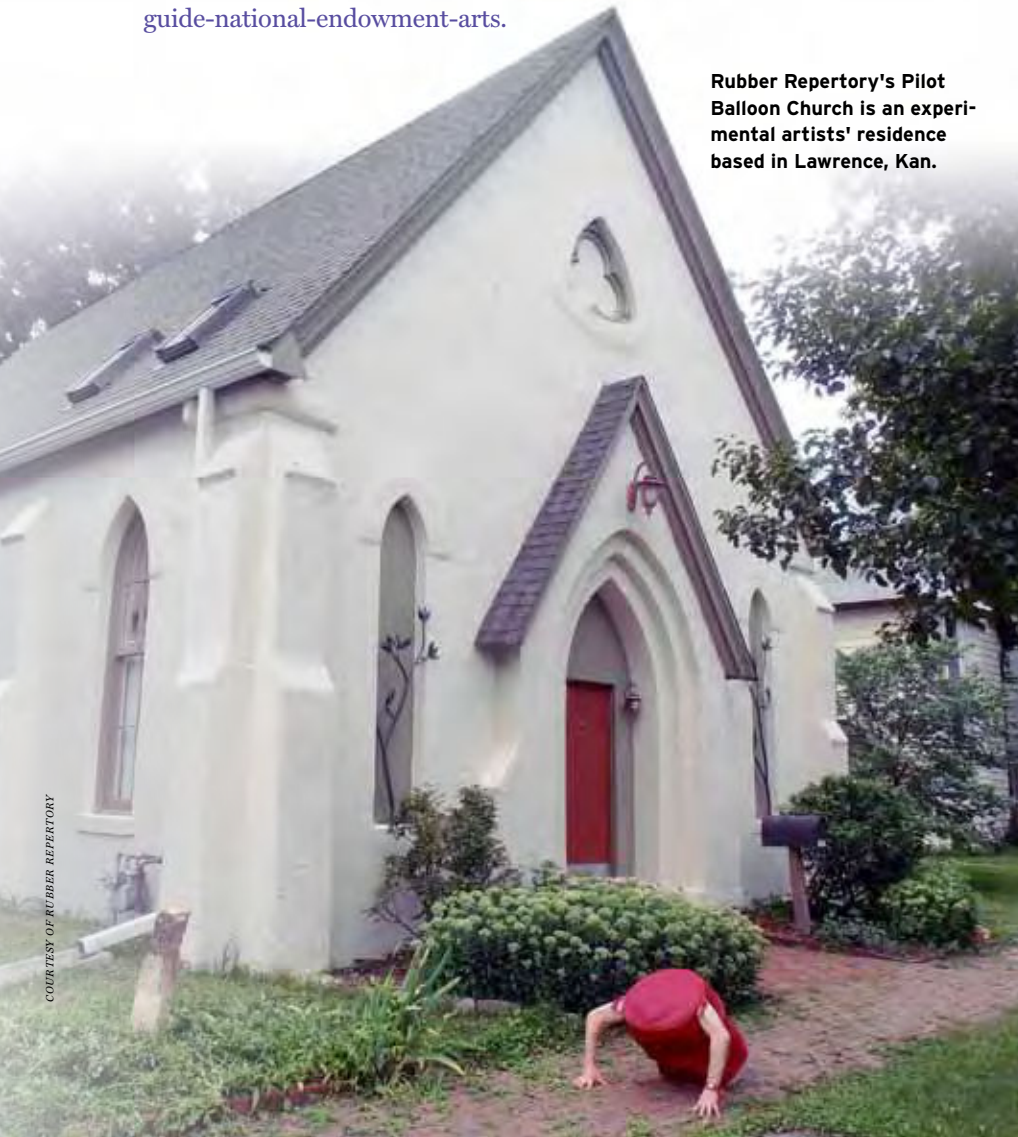
THE NEA 2014 GUIDE, which outlines the programs and activities that the NEA supports, as well as grant application deadlines, is now available online. Included is information on Grants for Arts Projects, Our Town, Literature Fellowships, Lifetime Honors and Partnerships. To download the guide, visit <http://arts.gov/publications/2014-guide-national-endowment-arts>.

RISK AND REWARD

A POP-UP ARTISTS' COLONY, a nonprofit that helps artists build financial assets through homeownership and an e-commerce venue to promote emerging fashion designers are among the winners of the inaugural Arts Entrepreneurship Awards, announced by Fractured Atlas in February. The organization aims to provide artists with the technology and tools they need to raise money, insure themselves and their work, grow their audiences, find space to make and share their art and more. The awards were established to inspire risk-taking and disruption in the arts by recognizing new models for building successful arts careers and organizations.

"We are thrilled to honor these innovators and risk-takers who embody the spirit of entrepreneurship and bring the same extraordinary creativity

Rubber Repertory's Pilot Balloon Church is an experimental artists' residence based in Lawrence, Kan.



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Jazz



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Toshiko Akiyoshi Trio *Nea Jazz Master*



Eddie Daniels
Marlena Shaw
Mills Brothers
Brian Lynch
The Cookers

LAVAY SMITH

Latin

Little Joe
Y La Familia

Orquesta
La Moderna
Tradición

Claudia Villela



EDDIE PALMIERI

Nea Jazz Master

Pete Escovedo Orchestra

Tito Puente Jr. Orchestra

Blues

QUINN DEVEAUX

Blue Beat Review



Persuasions
Gospel
Hummingbirds

Steve Lucky
and the
Rhumba Bums
Featuring
Carmen Getit



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VOICE

to the office as they do to the studio,” said Adam Huttler, founder and executive director of Fractured Atlas. “By experimenting and challenging conventional wisdom, these five winners have developed new approaches to age-old challenges in the arts field that can serve as models and inspiration for artists everywhere.”

Honorees include Creative Partners, Rubber Repertory’s Pilot Balloon Church House, ArtHome, Of a Kind and Higherglyphics. Rubber Repertory theater company’s Pilot Balloon Church House, a pop-up artists’ colony in a church in Lawrence, Kan., offered short-term residencies to artists of any discipline and any financial means. Launched with a \$9,000 crowd-funding campaign, the colony hosted more than 80 artists from 11 states and four countries over the course of the year-long pop-up. ArtHome was founded to help artists build wealth through homeownership and financial literacy. It offers a peer lending program, match savings accounts and counseling for first-time homeownership, foreclosure prevention and loan qualification. Of a Kind profiles a different up-and-coming designer every week who then creates a limited-edition commissioned piece for Of a Kind customers. Higherglyphics has developed a business infrastructure for public art installations that increase brand awareness and patron interaction via sponsorships. **IFA**

For more information, visit fracturedatlas.org

NEW GROUND IN NEW ENGLAND

WHO ARE THE (creative) people in your neighborhood? Thanks to the New England Foundation for the Arts, the



answer just got a lot easier to find. NEFA recently launched an online directory to promote the people and places that fuel the region’s creative economy. CreativeGround.org allows artists, cultural nonprofits and creative businesses to create in-depth profiles. Visitors to the site can learn more about the creative assets in their own community, search for a particular artist or discipline, or find a venue to host an event.

“The creative economy is a powerful engine of growth and community vitality,” says NEFA research manager Dee Schneiderman. “CreativeGround is the next phase of NEFA’s commitment to spotlight, connect and further understand New England’s diverse and active creative sector.”

The site is part of a comprehensive creative economy program at NEFA, which includes regional conferences, research publications on the economic impact of the sector, data and creative economy project sharing and hosting an informal creative economy network of peers. The site also serves as an artist directory and resource for several of NEFA’s regional grant-making programs, New England States Touring (NEST) and Native Arts. **IFA**
For more information, visit creativeground.org.

TransActions



MARY ROSE LLOYD

Mary Rose Lloyd, director of artistic programming at the **New Victory Theater**, received the Mickey Miners Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2014 International Performing Arts for Youth Conference in Pittsburgh, Penn., for her significant impact and contribution to the field of the performing arts for young audiences. Lloyd annually programs a full season of approximately 15 companies with a mix of performing

arts genres and age ranges. She has an MFA in arts management from the Yale School of Drama, where she received the Morris Kaplan Award for Excellence in Arts Administration. She has been a part of various international delegations for curatorial research and has served on many grant-giving and funding panels, including the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour. • **Meena Malik** has joined



MEENA MALIK

the **New England Foundation for the Arts** as a program coordinator for the National Theater Project. Before joining NEFA, Malik managed all aspects of the 35-member Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, including operations, fundraising and general management. Earlier, she directed the administration and education program for the MetroWest Opera and worked in administration for the New England

Conservatory's Preparatory and Continuing Education. She is a founding member of the Voci Angelica Trio, which performs international folk music with the mission of spreading cultural understanding. • In other NEFA news, the organization has received \$5.2 million from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to support the **National Dance Project**. NEFA launched the National Dance Project in 1996 to encourage the creation of new dance work to share with audiences in communities throughout the U.S. Since then, the program has distributed more than \$25.8 million in grants, has reached over 3.2 million



CHRISTINE CHEN

audience members and funds tours to an average of 37 states annually. • In February, **Christine Chen** left her post as executive director of **American Repertory Ballet** to become the director of adult programs at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. Chen, who began working for ARB in November 2009, led the organization through a fi-

nancial turnaround to three straight years of surplus budgets while also expanding the company's artistic and educational programming. She leaves the organization following a landmark year that saw the premiere of two major works by artistic director Douglas Martin as well as a record-breaking 50th Nutcracker season. Until a new director is appointed, **Lisa Beth**



LISA BETH VETTOSO

Vettoso, ARB director of educational programming, will serve as acting executive director. • **Theatre Communications Group** has announced Cycle A recipients for the third round of Global Connections.

Supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, this grant program encourages reciprocity and cultural exchange throughout the world through ON the ROAD grants to foster new relationships with international colleagues and IN the LAB grants to further pre-existing international collaborations. Now in its third year, the Global Connections program awarded up to \$5,000 to seven projects through ON the ROAD and \$10,000 to three projects through IN the LAB. ON the ROAD recipients are **Alexander Borinsky** (Brooklyn, N.Y.) who will collaborate with Rahel Zegeye and Daniel Balabane in partnership with Masrah Ensemble in Beirut, Lebanon to reimagine both his American monodrama *Baltimore* and Ethiopian playwright Tesegaye Gebre-Medhin's *Tomorrow's Man*, resulting in new translations into Arabic, Amharic and English; **Anisa George** (Philadelphia, Penn.), the artistic director of Penn Dixie Productions, will forge a new relationship with Lindalinda (Buenos Aires, Argentina) through the creation of a new work and widen her understanding of and collaboration with the broader Argentine theater community; Hartford Stage's (Hartford, Conn.) **Elizabeth Williamson**, senior dramaturg and director of new play development, will travel to Tallinn, Estonia, to meet with the artists at Teater NO99 and pave the way for future collaboration; Interact Center for the Visual & Performing Arts (Minneapolis, Minn.) will travel to Hmong Hill Tribes of Chiang Mai Province in Northern Thailand to research stories, music and ceremonies towards the development of a multi-disciplinary, dual-continent, original theater event. The Twin Cities are home to the largest Hmong communities in North America; The Playwrights' Center's (Minneapolis, Minn.) producing artistic director, **Jeremy B. Cohen**, will travel to Australia to build relationships with play development, training, and producing organizations toward the creation of a multi-faceted U.S./Australian playwright exchange; **Théâtre du Rêve** (Atlanta, Ga.) will bring Béleck Georges of Haiti to Atlanta to create a dialogue with young artists and Atlanta-based professionals in a five-day workshop, exploring their artistic and socio-political voices; **Anna Vigeland** (Amherst,

Mass.) and **Peter Balov** (Quebec, Canada) will travel to Sofia, Bulgaria to prepare for a collaborative cross-disciplinary theater production with the Red House Centre for Culture and Debate, uniting Bulgarian, U.S. and Canadian artists. IN the LAB recipients are **Bond Street Theatre** (New York, N.Y.) will continue its collaboration with Thukhuma Khayeethe Theater of Myanmar on a contemporary production of Ben Johnson's *Volpone*; **Dell'Arte International** (Blue Lake, Calif.) will bring French director/designer Alain Schons to the U.S. to collaborate with company members Joan Schirle and Laura Muñoz on research and development of *Elisabeth's Book*, leading to completion of a script; and **The TEAM** (Brooklyn, N.Y.) will collaborate with the National Theatre of Scotland on a new work exploring the political legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment on both modern American politics and the pending referendum on Scottish Independence. • Since 1997, Americans for the Arts has partnered annually with the U.S. Conference of Mayors to honor elected officials and artists for their outstanding public leadership in the advancement of the arts. The 2014 recipients are actor, producer and activist Fran Drescher, Public Leadership in the Arts Citizen Artist Award; Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, Public Leadership in the Arts Award for State Arts Leadership; Akron, Ohio, Mayor Don Plusquellic, Public Leadership in the Arts Award for Local Arts Leadership for cities with a population of

100,000 or more; and Dubuque, Iowa, Mayor **Roy Buol**, Public Leadership in the Arts Award for Local Arts Leadership for cities with a population of less than 100,000. • The **Sphinx Organization** has received a \$4 million anonymous programmatic gift, the largest single contribution in the organization's history. The gift will expand the scope of Sphinx's educational and training programs that aim to empower its alumni to pursue transformational artistic and career opportunities. As a result, Sphinx will enhance its top scholarship awards for the national Sphinx Competition for young black and Latino string players. In addition, Sphinx will launch a competitive scholarship program for alumni of the Sphinx Competition, Sphinx Virtuosi, Sphinx Performance Academy, Sphinx Symphony Orchestra, and the 2012 and 2013 Sphinx Medals of Excellence. An intensive training program is being established for emerging conductors of color in partnership with several leading orchestras in the country. The organization's mission is to transform lives through diversity in the arts. Annually, Sphinx reaches more than 20,000 young people and more than 2 million in live and broadcast audiences. For more information about the Sphinx Organization, visit www.SphinxMusic.org. • Arts Presenters mourns the loss of NEA Jazz Master **Yusef Lateef**, a virtuoso on the traditional jazz instruments of saxophone and flute, who passed away in December at 93. **IFA**

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Follow Spot: Call it a comeback

Dance Theatre of Harlem returns.

BY KRISTEN ANDRESEN

IN HONOR OF Black History Month in February, Dance Theatre of Harlem traveled to Honduras as part of the U.S. Department of State's Arts Envoy Program. It was a whirlwind week full of workshops that culminated in two public performances. At each, the company had to turn away hundreds of people.

"There was such a desire, such a hunger around the diversity of the company, which reflected the diversity in the country," says DTH artistic director Virginia Johnson. "There's a resonance with Dance Theatre of Harlem that we're seeing as we go out into these communities."

None of this is terribly surprising — since its inception in 1969, DTH has resonated with audiences of all backgrounds. But even three years ago, what happened in Ecuador — or New York, or Akron, Ohio — wouldn't have been possible.

In 2004, financial woes forced the company to cease operations. At the time, Johnson, one of the company's founding members, was serving as executive editor of *Pointe* magazine.

"I remember thinking: Oh my God, this is the end of those dancers' careers, but back then, there was never even a thought that the company wouldn't come back," she recalls.

But as the years passed, that certainty seemed less certain, until 2010, when the company's co-founder, Arthur Mitchell, tapped Johnson to lead the revival.

"I knew there was a need for this company, but what does it look like?" says Johnson.

In 2004, the company had 44 dancers who toured the country with two tractor-trailers full of top-of-the-line everything. The company returned to the stage in 2012 with no elaborate sets and 18 dancers, who check their costumes with their luggage when they travel. Yes, things are much leaner. And yes, Johnson faces the challenge of balancing a grueling touring schedule with the need to develop her dancers and their work. But in many ways, the rebirth has brought DTH back to its roots.

"Arthur Mitchell realized the art form of ballet was pretty exclusive, and he wanted to show there was a place

for blacks in ballet," Johnson says. "He was on a mission to change perceptions — let's look at this art form again, let's look at how ballet fits into people's lives. Is it elite? Is it just something for Sunday dress up? Or is it something everyone can relate to? No matter who you are, no matter your race or class or position in life, ballet can give you something meaningful, something that is uplifting.... One of my goals is to take the art form from the outside and put it back in the center of everyone's lives."

As the company approaches the half-century mark — 2014 marks DTH's 45th anniversary — Johnson is working to take ballet out of the margins through great performances, robust educational and community outreach and the transformative work of the DTH School. Using dance as a launch pad, DTH continues to build community and spark dialogue at home and abroad.

"Dance Theatre of Harlem isn't just about blacks and ballet," Johnson says. "It's about humanity, and we bring the common thread of many cultures to the story of humanity." **1/1**



EMBRACE

The theme of APAP|NYC was "shine." And the message? **Be adventuresome in the field.**

OLD



The 57th annual conference of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters in New York City — APAP|NYC 2014 in January — encouraged presenters to reach out to new audiences, catalyze community engagement, preach inclusiveness, propose ways to break barriers, create new models for collaboration, and promote the simultaneous embrace and confrontation of technological change. In a sentence, the conference said: Reach beyond your comfort zone.

APAP|NYC 2014 featured more than 1,000 world-class artist showcases held around the city, a crowded EXPO Hall of nearly 400 booths, more than 80 professional development sessions and an A-list of keynote speakers.

Speakers and discussants addressed societal challenges such as meeting the needs and interests — and telling the stories — of older adults, people with disabilities and veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, to name just a few groups.

Attendees and organizers alike agreed that business transactions were brisk — there were more meetings than in previous years to connect presenters and artists, and many networking opportunities were arranged in advance of the conference. Additionally, conference attendance was up more than 7 percent over 2013.

The selection of a conference theme of “Shine” highlighted growing optimism in the industry.

“The reason I’m still in this business is because every day, the sun is shining brighter,” said Mel Puljic of FLi Artists, which represents folk, traditional and roots music.

Many agreed that changing dynamics in audience members and artists’ creativity called for renewed risk-taking and open-mindedness.

Anyone following the threads of discussion could come away with a full list of concerns and insights about the performing arts industry. Young artists and some presenters said foundations need to invest in newer forms of art. Some speakers advocated that presenters need to show greater patience for the creative process so artists can devote sufficient time to cultivating embryonic ideas for performance, rather than feeling pressured to reveal a premature artistic concept.

In her closing keynote, actor Fiona Shaw echoed this sentiment, saying that investing in ideas requires patience — that financial considerations ought not be the primary drivers behind artistic ideas, that you never know when an idea is going to shine and that for those who do, more often it will take time rather than an immediate realization.

“You huddle around in meetings, sit around in bars and then you invent an idea and you build it up and finally you have made a sky of stars from what you do,” she said. “You don’t know why something will turn into something that will shine.”

Philip Bither, senior curator of performing arts of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, said, “I like to see that every season has a possibility for failure. Work that might seem like a failure at the end of a week-long run might be a huge success four years later.”

Scott Stoner, director of programs and resources at APAP, agreed with this emphasis on supporting artists’ creativity.

“Presenters tend to want to run with the first big idea. But that’s not the process of getting good art made. There’s a transformation going on right now in how art is getting made and presented. We really focused on artists more than ever this year,” he said.

Ergo: New collaborations that, again, bespoke risk-taking graced the scene. During a pecha kucha — the rapid-fire plenary session that has become one of the most popular events at the conference — the dancing duo of Kyle Abraham, a 2013 MacArthur Foundation “Genius” Fellow and the artistic director of Abraham.

In.Motion, and Wendy Whelan, principal dancer at the New York City Ballet, spoke with mutual admiration for their recent collaboration *Restless Creature — The Serpent and the Smoke*, the development of which thrived amid a creative atmosphere marked by vulnerability, cross-over resources and a fearlessness about artistic intimacy. They advised the audience to “always make new mistakes.”

“I said, ‘Wendy, what do *you* want to get out of this project?’ We were really able to let our hair down,” Abraham said. “We actually pulled an enormous amount out of each other.”

Mario Garcia Durham, president and CEO at APAP, said, “I’m glad that the themes of risk-taking

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ROBERT
WINGATE



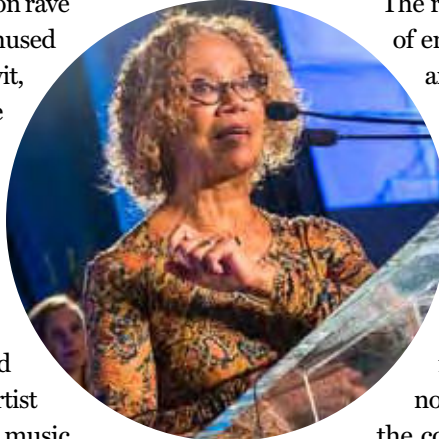
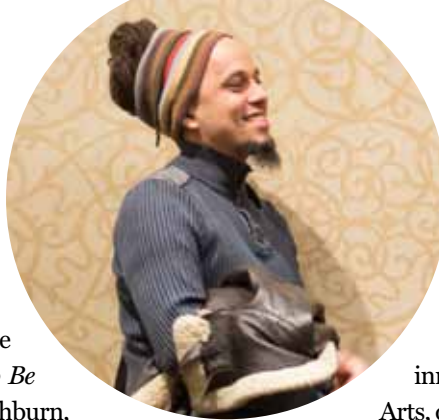
PHOTOS BY
GABI PORTER

and transparency have been resonating here. What you think may be a tried-and-true season may not be a safe bet. There is no such thing as a safe bet.”

The Luminosity Factor, a three-artist plenary session in which performance artist Taylor Mac, comedian and author Baratunde Thurston — author of the book *How To Be Black* — and singer/songwriter Abigail Washburn, an American claw hammer banjo player, won rave reviews. They thrilled the audience and amused each other, with exchanges of improvised wit, dialogue and music infused with incisive social commentary and startling admissions about each one’s lives (and loves).

In a story with a central breaking-down-barriers theme that was emblematic of many others relayed at the conference, Washburn drew approving murmurs from the audience when she told of visiting China and encountering a local artist who insisted that Chinese and American music had nothing in common. She said, “You may be right, but I would sure like to hear your Chinese music.” She convinced him to come play with her, and his attitude was transformed. The lesson learned, she said, was, “It’s not that Chinese and American music have nothing in common. It’s that there’s no such thing as Chinese and American music.”

Many observed that there were inextricable connections between the economic drivers of performing arts presenting and the stress that technological advances can place on them.



“But no amount of technological innovation can increase productivity in the performing arts. It takes the same time to make a Schubert quartet today as it did in 1912,” said Andrew Horwitz of Culturbot and the Brooklyn Commune Project.

Bill O’Brien, senior advisor for program innovation at the National Endowment for the Arts, described one session he helped coordinate: “The room was pretty energized around the role of emerging technology. It’s there not because anyone is bringing it forward, but because it’s in the air, it’s in the water. There is demand there — we don’t have to manufacture it, we just have to figure out how to respond to it.”

Durham added, “As arts leaders, we must stay relevant by changing with our audiences, and though this means adapting to a world that is engaging through technology, there is no experience comparable to the connection between performers and their audience in a live performance.”

In his pecha kucha presentation, Wayne Ashley, founding artistic director of FuturePerfect, told the story of his Disney World summer job that influenced him as a teenager to later create living stages that shimmer, resound, tremble and fog up the air thanks to elaborate architectural and construction techniques, catalyzing art from technological innovation. “I have to be open to the possibility of not having boundaries,” he said.

The livelihood of pecha kucha speaker





Gabrielle Brechner of Wakka Wakka Productions also depends on carefully staged productions. Her adult puppetry seeks to cut through the information overload that she believes is overwhelming society. “There’s so much content out there. And there’s more around the corner. So it’s hard to connect with much of it anymore,” she said.

Attendees also grappled with the question of how today’s performing arts address issues of identity, culture and diversity. For one, the conference rallied presenters and artists who “infiltrate” domestic music offerings with global music.

Celesta Billeci, the Miller McCune Executive Director of Arts and Lectures at the University of California at Santa Barbara, told a boisterous roomful, “To me, if you are a university organization, it is your absolute obligation to bring global music to your stages.” She said offering her community a 10-week continuing education course on the history of the Silk Road and then linking it to performances and meals as part of the Silk Road Project “transformed the thinking” of the participants.

Adham Hafez, an Egyptian choreographer, composer and arts activist, who spoke magnetically but dolefully at a plenary session about how upheavals in his country have affected artists, bemoaned that he has to identify himself as someone whose work is constantly faced with crisis. “What is it to be an Egyptian artist at this point?...I’d like to live to see the day when I’m not asked to go on stage to talk about war and revolution,” he said.

In another session, Baraka Sele, an indepen-

dent producer and consultant, said, “I don’t think of diversity as an idea. I think of it as a movement.” She advocated eliminating terms such as “minority” and “people of color” from the performing arts vocabulary. “I don’t like the term ‘multicultural,’” she said. “It’s a euphemism for ‘minority.’” Some other attendees said they felt as if African American and Latino artists were sometimes being “typecast” into roles connecting to themes of family and culture to the exclusion of focusing on unrelated topics.

Citing a similar dynamic, singer and songwriter Martha Redbone, in a session, said, “When people hear I am a Native American artist, they immediately think of feathers and fringes and flutes. But we may be performing blues and rock.”

Steve Heath of Alma Artist Booking & Management, who led a workshop on intertwining the performing arts and Spanish-speaking audiences and presenters, said, “In most cases, people wouldn’t think twice about bringing in a Russian ballet or a German opera. But somehow they think that if they don’t have a French community near to where they live, they don’t have a chance of drawing an audience for a French performance. We need to change that way of thinking. Art should be an oasis in our lives, regardless of its source.”

Ashley Capps, co-producer of the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival, said, “You’ve got to keep pushing against these stereotypes. All music is ‘world music,’ so far. All bands are ‘local bands,’ you know.”

APAP worked with established annual performing arts forums and festivals in New York



City in early- to mid-January to identify new productions and artists, many of them relating to international themes. Among the collaborators were Under the Radar, globalFEST, Winter Jazzfest, Jazz Connect, FOCUS, PROTOTYPE and COIL 2014. Together they drew an estimated 45,000 people across the city. A China on Stage seminar also pulled 40 delegates from China to discuss promoting dance arts and products with the U.S. market.

The theme of catalyzing community also rang throughout the conference.

On one panel, Claudia Alick, associate producer of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, said, "You're going to need to book artists with disabilities. You're going to have to tell the story of people with disabilities. So hire people with disabilities. It's good for the bottom line. It's the right thing to do, to have diverse actors and audiences."

Alick said one of the most amazing performances she ever saw was an outdoor dance production showcasing the abilities of many people with disabilities on a day when it rained hard.

"It was awful weather. Everyone came to watch anyway. That was one of the most beautiful things I have ever experienced in my life," she said.

Other forums concentrated on such diverse endeavors as working with people in correctional facilities, homeless

persons, single mothers in precarious health, and engaging with older adults. The last of these sessions attracted an overflow crowd.

One light that blazed at the conference was a presentation by Lehua Simon, assistant theater



manager for the Leeward Community College Theatre in Hawaii. She spoke about how art intersected with spirituality.

Simon won a preliminary "five minutes to shine" competition with her passionate presentation, and then re-delivered the stirring remarks to a full house at the awards luncheon. She described how her theater sits on a property that was originally a local temple and later a Christian church. She said that imbuing the arts with spiritual meaning leads to hope.

"I think all presenters would agree that it takes supernatural power to do our jobs," she also joked.

After watching a plenary session, Michael Prentky, a trombonist preparing to graduate from New England Conservatory of Music, said, "I feel like finally after years, artists have been focusing on substance."

At its awards luncheon, to standing ovations, APAP gave a merit award to composer Philip Glass, who spoke briefly. An award for advocacy for the performing arts went to Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts. An award for programming achievement went to Harlem Stage, led by Patricia Cruz, executive director, and Brad Learmonth, director of programming. An award for exemplary service in professional presenting went to Michael and Theresa Holden, founders of Holden & Arts Associates. **||**

SAVE THE DATE

APAP|NYC
JAN 9-13, 2015

Robert Wingate is a writer in the New York City area.





APAP|NYC HAS
INCREASED
ARTISTS' VOICES
AT THE HEART
OF ITS ANNUAL
GATHERING.

Artists in the house

BY BRENNA MCDUFFIE

“GOOD ART IS LIKE WINE.

It takes time to ferment and settle in order for it to stand the test of time,” says Scott Stoner, director of programming at APAP, in defense of artists pressured to rush their work to stage.

For artists at APAP|NYC 2014, having others understand that the making of art can be lengthy and that it is an often-changing creative process is crucial to the most successful relationships and collaborations with presenters, managers and producers — and for their audiences and communities.

The key to ensuring such an understanding? Collaboration bolstered by clear and constant conversation. “Artists need to be more transparent about what it is they’re creating in their work, and the presenting community needs to be better listeners and take time to respect that and then help translate that into getting audiences engaged,” Stoner says. He and the conference committee were responsible for bringing a record number of artists as speakers to this year’s conference, particularly in plenary sessions at the New York gathering.

After all, performing arts professionals gather each year for the largest summit of presenters, agents, managers and

artists in the world.

“What better place to get a feel for the business than here?” says Sara Sessions, a conference attendee from California whose decision to transition from her career as a dancer to one as an arts presenter brought her to the conference this year.

“Business” and “networking” were buzz words during the four-day confluence of makers and presenters of art. But APAP|NYC is much more than a marketplace for business transactions. Structured conversations, plenary sessions and break-out discussions with artists and their work were central to exploring education and dialogue. Conversations about sustaining the arts at all levels and fostering the necessary relationships between communities of artists and presenters were constant and ubiquitous at the conference.

For example: A rapid and exciting exchange of ideas and creative spirit was palpable in every conference hall and showcase at the conference’s Hilton headquarters, as well as at various satellite venues scattered throughout all five boroughs of New York City. Artists joined the mix of industry professionals as performers, panelists, speakers and attendees. For emerging and teaching artists, the conference



was an opportunity for exposure and networking as well as a primer on how to navigate the business side of art.

Inspiration came from Luminosity Plenary Session speakers Taylor Mac, Baratunde Thurston and Abigail Washburn, from 1,000 artist showcases and from celebrity speakers Stephen Schwartz, Diane Paulus, Zachary Quinto, Philip Glass and Fiona Shaw. The increased presence of artists at the conference was clear. Indeed, facilitating conversation about collaboration between artists and presenters was top priority for APAP this year.

“The ‘Shine’ theme was timely in terms of arts professionals needing to be better about talking about their work,” Stoner says. “One of the threads that came through with the artists at the conference was the notion that in order for the arts to truly get out and engage audiences, it has to be a very collaborative process.”

At the opening plenary session, Diane Paulus, artistic and producing director at American Repertory Theater, helped kick off the conference theme by voicing the pressing





need for artists and presenters to be more forthcoming to make the arts thrive in and engage a community.

“If artists can find a way to articulate where they are in the process of their work and share that with presenters, it would help educate the presenters in terms of how to speak to audiences about what they’re going to see and how the audience then can be participants in a process,” Paulus says.

A focus on creating such conversations between artists and presenters took place at the Special Interest Confab, which brought artists and presenters together for a conversation about success, failure and priorities in the arts. In three rooms, artists and presenters held forth while conference attendees moved freely between sessions to catch pieces of each conversation. The event allowed artists and presenters to locate specific points of conflict and agreement, a productive method for getting the full spectrum of the art-to-stage experience on the table.

Indeed, Abby Bender, artistic director of Triskelion Arts, a small arts venue in Brooklyn and a moderator at the confab, rejected the assumption

of antagonistic relationships or lack of communication between artists and presenters.

“In my experience, we presenters, no matter the size or our venue or our budget, are here to help artists realize and present their vision. We want the exact same things as the artist — to facilitate the best possible work, share that work with the public and hope that audiences are changed because of their experience with it. The artists on the panel seemed to feel the same way, well aware of and grateful for the symbiotic relationship between artist and presenter,” Bender says.

Others agree with Stoner and Paulus and expressed that the relationship between artists and presenters could be strengthened by more open conversation. Somi, an East African jazz vocalist and a speaker at the confab, believes that discussions such as the ones that took place during the Sunday event will help artists and presenters achieve mutual goals.

“Often times, both artists and presenters work in the dark and are left unaware of what I believe should be the ultimate agenda of both parties — to create, support and



share art that resonates with various communities,” Somi says. “So let’s keep creating opportunities to both fail and to succeed. Ultimately, that simply gives agency to a more informed creative process and, hopefully, a more inspired final piece of art.”

The Young Performance Career Advancement Program is another tool for engaging artists at the conference. Under the direction of Angela Beeching, YPCA is devoted to educating emerging classical musicians about the importance of professional practices and the artist-presenter relationship to their careers. The musicians navigate the conference and then participate in the one and only showcase produced by APAP: a classical concert that is free and open to the public (often including agents, managers and presenters).

“One of the best things about YPCA is that the artists really start to see presenters as people who care about the arts,” says Beeching. “We want them to understand that the business is about connecting with people and cultivating real relationships.”

Events such as YPCA, special and plenary sessions featuring artists and the confab open space for artists and presenters to have productive conversations and deepen their knowledge about the best way to discuss and build working relationships with each other and, ultimately, with audiences. **///**

Brenna McDuffie is a blogger for the Office for the Arts at Harvard.

WORK
SPACE

Six industry leaders and APAP members open their office doors for a look at their workdays.

Day in the LIFE

BY HILLARY CASAVANT

For these six art professionals and APAP members, workdays are a fine blend of organized chaos, frenetic energy and pure passion for the arts. Juggling meetings, phone calls and a calendar full of events, they've learned to master the beautiful madness that accompanies their work in the industry. Allan McIntyre, Holly Jones, Judith Willington, Joshua Kane, Shantel Dow and Patricia Alberti share their unique strategies for tackling the day head-on.





Joshua Kane

Performer

A solo theater artist, classically trained actor and eccentric storyteller, Kane has studied with a diverse range of mentors including Stella Adler, Marcel Marceau and Bobby Lewis. He has also enjoyed a successful radio theater and voiceover career, working for commercial clients such as Verizon and Major League Baseball.

Location: New York, N.Y.

Current mobile device: iPhone 5s and iPad 3. My iPhone case resembles an antique book, doubles as a wallet and is my one grab-and-go item.

Current computer: iMac at home and 11-inch MacBook Air for the road.

Work space: I have a corner office with a view of the George Washington Bridge and more books than human beings should be allowed. Strangely, I am almost never in it. The space resembles an archeological dig with exposed strata that only I know how to navigate. Most of my work is done

while traveling around New York City. I know where every Wi-Fi hotspot and clean public bathroom is for a 200-block radius.

Sounds: The soundtrack of the city: street noises, car alarms and horns, enthusiastic neighbors and a wide range of music from the cars parked outside.

Time-saving trick: Artificial deadlines and public transportation. Unlike when you're driving, no one minds you reading on the subway!

First work move: I check email and Facebook even before I get out of bed, to see how friends, family and colleagues are doing. Then I prioritize, only to find by the end of the day that priorities shift.

Favorite part of a workday: Composting time, all too rare these days. Time to read, vegetate and be inspired.

Biggest challenge in a workday: Knowing when to stop for the day. Also, when and how to make time to unplug, to exercise, to eat properly.

After work: What is this "after" you speak of?

Best advice received: You don't have to finish; you just have to stop.

In a word: Peripatetically.

Patricia Alberti

Owner

PAM: Patricia Alberti

Performing Artists

Management

Representing a diverse range of performers, Alberti has always tackled her work with passion and diligence. Her clients have responded with an equal show of dedication; some of Alberti's artists have been on her roster for more than 15 years. She says she approaches her work "intently, until I finish, almost no matter what."

Location: Payson, Ariz.

Current mobile device: Verizon cell phone

Current Computer:

Dell Inspiron 1525

Work space: Mostly neat. I cannot stand clutter. Sounds: News. I am a news junkie.

Time-saving trick: Get several people to help me.

Essential gadgets: All of them.

Favorite part of a workday: 6 a.m.

Biggest challenge in a workday: Interruptions in work flow.

After work: Dinner out with my husband.

Best advice received: Treat all clients with respect and courtesy.

Judith Wellington

President and CEO

Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences of West Virginia

Wellington is the driving force behind Clay Center's performance space, art exhibits, science galleries and diverse public programs. Despite an endless to-do list, she embraces each day with joy. "This is truly a wonderful business," she says. "Demanding but worth every minute!"

Location: Charleston, W.Va.

Current mobile device: iPhone

Current computer: Dell laptop and iPad at home, Thin Client at work.

Work space: A mess! No seriously, I have lots of books, journals and papers stacked around. I am a voracious reader and look for other models to emulate. Lots of places are doing phenomenal work, so I try to follow what they are doing.

Tunes: I review most performers on YouTube.

Time-saving trick: I really concentrate and focus on what I am doing. Multitasking is a myth. I am very lucky that I can quickly switch focus from one task to another. This allows for the constant interruptions, which are my life!

Indispensable gadget: My iPad. I used to take a stack of books when I traveled. Now I can just put my iPad in my purse.

Favorite part of a workday: My favorite time is when I see the place in action, particularly when I see kids in the galleries or watching a performance. I firmly believe that cultural institutions change lives.

Biggest challenge in a workday: Too many meetings! We have two conference rooms and some days I spend my time moving from one to the other every hour. Usually I am late.

After work: I go out to dinner with friends. Fortunately I have a group of really close friends who don't care about my crazy hours.

Best advice received: Touch each piece of paper once. When you get a piece of mail, deal with it immediately rather than put it in a pile to "get to later." Great advice; haven't been able to do it.

In a word: Driven.

Shantel Dow

President, Dow Artists, Inc.

Armed with a background in music administration and arts management, Dow has represented international performers from her Midwest rural home for 10 years. She formerly played trumpet at venues throughout the world including the Sydney Opera House and Carnegie Hall.

Location: Russell, Iowa

Current mobile device: iPhone

Current computer: Dell laptop

Sounds: My artists' work or NPR

Timesaving trick: Work plans and a blank [Excel] template I use for all activities associated with my agency. It makes for much easier work and helps me to remember where I am in the process.

Indispensable gadget: Google calendar and Google Docs.

Favorite part of a workday: Issuing contracts.

Biggest challenge in a workday: Reaching presenters/buyers.

After work: Watch my kids' ballgames.

Best advice received: "No" is the second best answer."

In a word: Intense.



Allan McIntyre

Creative Producer

Smallpetitklein

McIntyre began his professional dance career at age 16, working with acclaimed choreographers throughout the United Kingdom. After dancing six years for Smallpetitklein, an award-winning company, McIntyre became an integral member of the administrative staff.

Location: Dundee, Scotland

Current mobile device: iPhone 5

Current computer: MacBook Pro

Work space: My desk is often littered with Post-It notes or reminders and lots of pens and pencils. I seem to claim them from everyone else's desk!

Tunes: Oftentimes, the other people in our office provide the listening material. If I have to really concentrate, I'll pop in my earphones and listen to music. At the moment, my playlist includes Bastille, Róisín Murphy and Kylie Minogue.

Time-saving trick: Learn keyboard shortcuts.

Indispensable software: If Dropbox had to crash, I would probably shed a tear. It has become as important as email for me.

First work move: Open a bottle of water. It forces me to consider how much water I am or am not drinking.

Favorite part of a workday: Near the end of the day, as this is usually when the office is busiest and people are sharing stories of their day.

Biggest challenge in a workday: Getting distracted. If I start a task, I either have to finish it or make a note to finish it.

After work: I've recently discovered the delights of dog walking.

Best advice received: Make lists and appreciate that you might not get to the end of them.

In a word: Collaboratively.



Holly Jones

Associate Director of Development and

Artist Services Coordinator

The Yard

The zealous young dancer received her BFA from Marymount Manhattan College and previously performed with CoreDance Contemporary Company. Jones now serves as a central staff member for The Yard, a contemporary performance center and artist residency in Martha's Vineyard.

Location: Chilmark, Mass.

Current mobile device: iPhone 4

Current computer: MacBook (circa 2008)

Work space: My workspace is clean and organized. I sit on an exercise ball most of the time. The Yard is a really fun, rustic and positive environment to work in.

Sounds: Songza playlists. They are fabulous.

Time-saving trick: Pick three tasks a day, spend 50 minutes on each of them and then take a 10-minute break and repeat until the tasks are done. It is a very efficient way of working when you are pressed for time and need to focus.

Indispensable app: Google Maps. I don't know what I would do without it. It makes getting around NYC a piece of cake.

First work move: I read *The New York Times* arts section.

Favorite part of a workday: When I get to interact with artists and experience new work.

After work: Go to see performances, the gym and cooking dinner

Best advice received: Be the first one to offer help, always encourage the goals of others, listen and keep on smiling.

In a word: Enthusiastic. **IA**

Hillary Casavant is a writer in the Boston area.



Q&A

THE HOLDEN

touch

TWO OF THE FIELD'S SHAKERS AND MOVERS
GARNER THE APAP FAN TAYLOR AWARD.

BY ALICIA ANSTEAD

The announcement of the Fan Taylor Distinguished Service Award is always one of the most exciting moments at APAP|NYC. The honoree is kept secret right up to the last moment. Who will it be? What will the winner, a deeply respected leader in the field, say in this unexpected and celebratory moment? The 2014 recipients were Theresa and Michael Holden of Holden & Arts Associates – acknowledged by APAP and a committee of their peers for three decades of creative leadership and a significant impact on the profession of arts presenting. The Holdens thanked the APAP team, and before our interview, which follows, they spoke of their gratitude to the artists they have “been privileged to serve and support” over the years, to the many presenter friends and partners for their dedication and to their “wonderful staff, who helps us make this work possible.”

Why did you pick a career in the arts?



Michael Holden: Jokingly, I sometimes say it was genetic. Since about the age of 15, my major interest and focus have been the arts. It began as a student (part of which included serving on an Artist Series Selection Committee) then as an actor, director, teacher, artistic director/producer and arts administrator. Thirty-one years ago, with Theresa and a young family, we started Western and Southern Arts Associates, which later became Holden & Arts Associates.



Theresa Holden: I don't think I “picked” it. By the time I was 5, I loved performing, designing intricate magical fairylands and creating elaborate plots of action for the stick-figure residents. I spent lots of time and detail explaining the stories to my family and friends. I suppose it was a bit of destiny to become a theater artist and teacher. And that is what happened. I never was surprised to find myself performing in plays in high school and college and graduate school and then teaching theater at university. This “career” began with imagination and still runs on imagination.

What has surprised you about working in the arts?

MH: The resilience of the audience and its hunger for great work. In recent years, so much has been done to dumb-down and restrict the content of work available to our audiences. But they will find a way, with the artists, to keep a place for meaningful and artistically exciting work. One successful area is theater for youth and families, where the notion of condescending to the audience has been replaced with works that reach the intellectual and emotional lives of the audience and challenges adults and children alike to think and grow. Due to constraints on creation time and budgeting for U.S. artists, the availability of much of this work is limited to international sources.

TH: The incredible power of the performing arts to motivate, to illustrate a different way to deal with a difficult situation, to change people's lives. When I was a young theater artist, the performing arts were first mostly about the artist,

and naturally about “me”; then, through teaching and seeing the influence theater had on young people, I began to understand its power. Later, through my blessed years of working as a teaching artist with Junebug Productions and Roadside Theater, I began to truly grasp that this art form is most importantly about its power to influence its audience, to exemplify the way toward a better life.

What have you learned about your own work from working with artists?

MH: Tenacity, attention to detail, respectful partnership and gratitude.

TH: The importance of listening to and respecting an individual person, a group of students or a whole audience. Many artists are masters in watching, listening, absorbing and respecting our wonderful, diverse world. Without this careful, quiet attention, the performing arts and working in the community will have no long-lasting influence. The work may be brilliant, but its impact will be limited to a brief moment. This transfers to our work as managers who build bridges between our artists and their presenters: Listening and respect must drive our relationships with both partners.

What's the most important business lesson you impart to others in the arts industry?

MH: A clear vision of artistic mission is inextricably tied to successfully producing and presenting the performing arts.

TH: This “business” of the arts, of presenting, cultivating audiences, managing and touring the performing arts is nothing, and cannot succeed, if not built on genuinely *equal and inclusive partnerships*. Some businesses might do this (not many, actually), but professionals in our field particularly must remember and practice and check ourselves about the principle of equality and inclusivity every day, or we will fail our communities and our missions.

Who were your mentors? And how do “pass the torch” to others you meet?

MH: My mother was an artist and teacher. In one of my

earliest memories of the performing arts, at age 8 or 9, I am walking with her on a rainy late September evening to a piano recital. Later, I discovered Shakespeare through touring productions and frequent visits to Stratford, Ontario, with my family. As to “passing the torch” I would urge presenters and artist managers and agents to find work that they are passionate about, and then seek out opportunities within their organizations and communities to highlight and celebrate those artists and their performances. It is important that this action be ongoing, meaningful and supportive for everyone involved. But the essential thing is to find work that you care passionately about to sustain this kind of commitment.

TH: One of my many mentors was Dr. Paul Baker, founder of the Dallas Theater Center and my theater professor in college. He was the first person to show me the importance of uncovering and using our whole creativity and all abilities in what we do as artists – not just our particular “acting chops.” And he taught us how to pass that on to our students, which is covered in his book, *Integration of Abilities: Exercises for Creative Growth*. Other mentors were John O’Neal and the artists of Roadside Theater; from them, I learned the power of story circles for creating community and building art. I try at every chance I can to pass on these tools and ideas to young leaders and to the wonderful companies we work with, which I also continue to learn from. I am so grateful that I get the opportunity to share these lessons in the Emerging Leaders Institute and the Leadership Development Institute at APAP and to learn from our field’s new leaders.

What non-arts event, person or resource do you look to for inspiration?

TH: Grassroots, community activist organizations that know how to reach, serve and respond to their constituents. Our field has much to learn from their principles, strategies and successes.

What is the most pressing issue in the performing arts world in which you navigate?

MH: After 30 years, we remain hopeful. Our hope is grounded in the unflagging dedication of artists to their work. No matter the conditions, the artists will not turn from the creation of new ways to engage, inspire and enlighten us. Their vision and virtuosity will not be silenced. We are proud to serve these artists by helping to share their stories through partnerships that support their vision. Thirty years have taught us that real strength lies in artistic excellence combined with dedicated presentations from presenters who understand and support the creative process. The result of these partnerships is work that enlivens

our culture and touches the lives of audiences everywhere. For the past generations’ commitment and dedication, we are very grateful. And for future generations’ creative visions and innovative partnerships, we remain hopeful.

If you were starting out today, what field would you go into?

TH: Teaching/education. But teaching without walls – teaching all ages and bringing them all together to learn from one another; and policy-building about the role of the arts in education.

What are the responsibilities of arts leaders? Do they carry any extra duties to society?

MH: Arts Presenters has, through the years, provided leadership in encouraging diversity in performing arts touring and presenting. This has included significant work in developing communication between community voices, artistic voices and presenter voices in contributing to the cultural life of communities.

TH: Artists’ responsibility is to fully recognize and understand the power of their art. Artists have long been in the vanguard of society: They often sense and act upon the pressing issues of any moment in history far before other governmental, religious or education leaders. However, this is a heavy responsibility and often fraught with many pitfalls, including fear and over-reliance on funding, both of which can stop their impulse. I am so grateful that many of our great artists, both past and present, have cleared these hurdles and have brought us such brilliant works and such hope. So my wish is for more of our artists to pick up these challenges and build work that shares their visions, dreams and solutions so the rest of us can “see” with them and together build a better world.

What one part of the performing arts business would you like to see change in the next 10 years?

MH: A return to substantial public funding, specifically for artists.

TH: A deeper, much more thorough understanding by all “sides” of our touring and presenting world of each other’s realities: the artists’ the presenters’ and manager/agents’. The lack of understanding and serious knowledge remains vast; the assumptions about the “other” remain flawed. We must break down these walls if we are going to really become partners and accomplish what we all want: to make our communities, neighborhoods, and audiences understand and appreciate the power and role of the live performing arts in the health and well-being of all our lives. **///**

01.11.14

Hello, Mister President

The annual conference is a jam-packed whirlwind for APAP leader Mario Garcia Durham.

BY OLIVIA MUNK

One of the many hats Mario Garcia Durham, president and CEO of the Association of Presenters and Performers, wears is overseeing the organization's annual conference at the Hilton Midtown in New York City. To fulfill this role, Durham greets colleagues, welcomes members, delivers speeches, meets with delegations and drops in on a talk or two — if it's built into his jam-packed schedule. I spent Saturday, the third and busiest day of the conference, with Durham to see what it was like to be president of the organization at its most notable time of the year.

8:28 a.m.

Margaret Stevens, director of executive affairs, bustles around the Hilton Midtown penthouse — Durham's headquarters — preparing for the first event of the day: welcoming various members of the NAPAMA board for breakfast. After a few minutes, Durham shows up in his signature suit, ready to work. Though it is early morning on day 3 of an event many months in the making, Durham is refreshed and at ease. Still, he makes his way immediately over to the coffee and pours a cup; it remains in his hand as he warmly greets guests with a handshake or hug as they stream off of the small elevator in the foyer.

He excuses himself from a conversation about the musical *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* to review the day's schedule with Stevens in the quieter dining room off of the main foyer. Despite a thousand showcases performed around the city as part of the conference, Durham has little time to see them. His conference days are scheduled down to the minute, including travel time on the elevator between the conference on the second and third floors and the relative sanctuary of the penthouse, up on the 45th. Stevens reminds Durham of each event, punctuating long hours with scheduled break time.

Durham slips up the stairs to retrieve a paper copy of his schedule, leaving the bagels and coffee to guests with badges proudly displaying colorful ribbons that note how many years they've attended or if they are a speaker. "He prefers having a hard copy of his schedules, but it's often hard to find a printer," explains Stevens. Durham does produce a blue-cased iPhone from time to time, but only to briefly glance at a text or the time. He continues to greet the crowd, patting Gregory Marks, a member of the San Fran-



cisco Gay Men's Chorus on the back and remarking, "I meant to tell you before, the women at registration love you!"

Eventually, Durham and Josh LaBelle, APAP board chair, climb the stairs halfway and tap on coffee cups to begin a toast to board members for their hard work on preparing the conference in the last few months. After several remarks, applause and laughter, the crowd downs the last of the coffee and meanders toward the elevator. Durham retrieves a briefcase, consults with Stevens one last time and heads out to conference day 3.

10:57 a.m.

After dropping in on several professional development talks, Durham returns to the penthouse to check emails and prepare for a filmed interview for a documentary by Jeremy Dunn on the Artown Festival in Reno, Nev. Beth Macmillan, Artown's executive director, and Jenny Thomas, APAP director of marketing and communications, ensure Durham is camera ready. Thomas fixes Durham's tie. "Craig does this to me every day!" laughs



Durham, referring to his husband Craig Horness, a professional stage manager who volunteers at APAP each year.

Then the interview begins. Dunn asks Durham to describe APAP. Durham lists off the facts with ease: APAP has more than 1,500 members, representing 34 countries. Its primary mission, he explains, is to bring artists to audiences. The conference is comprised of three parts: professional development, showcases and a "trade-show" aspect.

"We do not shy away from the commercial aspect of the arts," notes Durham. The EXPO Hall offers nearly 400 exhibitors, all hoping to contract with presenters to bring audiences to their artists. Durham answers each question concisely, without so much as a stumble; when asked about the future vitality of the performing arts, he becomes animated.

"Performing arts is a primal part of our being," he stresses. He does not feel that the future of live performance is threatened by the ever-growing presence of TV and



movies, since he doubts that the "core experience" of seeing live talent will ever change.

12:00 p.m.

Durham and Thomas head downstairs for the pecha kucha plenary session, one of the most popular events at APAP|NYC. Scott Stoner, APAP director of programs and resources, introduces Durham to the artist-speakers backstage. A lively crowd packs into closely placed rows of chairs in the grand ballroom to hear speakers such as MacArthur Foundation Grant recipient Kyle Abraham and New York City Ballet principal dancer Wendy Whelan describe their work and experience in creating art. Each team of artists delivers a pre-set presentation of slides and/or video timed at precisely 6 minutes and 40 seconds.

Durham nods along and murmurs with fellow board members in the front row as Nick Slie of the Mondo Bizarro performance collective speaks of "site responsive, rather than site specific art," and Adham Hafez describes the challenges facing artists in the political climate of Cairo, Egypt. When moderator Ben Cameron, arts program director at Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, asks the audience to spend two minutes discussing with a





neighbor what aspects of the program moved them as per Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process, Durham politely ducks out and returns to a suite on the second floor for more preparation.

1:50 p.m.

Members form long, raucous lines at the entrances to the three floors occupied by the conference, each wearing the ubiquitous and coveted conference entry badge around his or her neck. Security guards allow only exhibitors inside the marketplace rooms for last-minute set-up. It's almost time for the EXPO Hall.

Durham attempts to head past the crowd and into the third-floor hall, but is halted by a security guard, as Durham wears no EXPO Hall entry badge. A fellow board member explains the situation, and Durham is ushered inside to begin a lengthy and important part of his day: greeting exhibitors.

Accompanied by key board members, colleagues and staff, Durham visits every single one of the 360-ish exhibit booths. He greets each person with a warm handshake, kiss



on the cheek or hug, whether they are old friends or he is meeting them for the first time. The crowd is thick and loud, but Durham manages to move quickly between booths. He only has three hours allotted for these meetings; it takes 45 minutes to maneuver through the third floor, the smallest collection in the lot.

Durham strategically makes his way up one side of an aisle, then retraces his footsteps to say hello to its opposite. The group often has to jog and strain necks to keep up with Durham.



5:00 p.m.

After three straight hours navigating the crowds of the EXPO Hall, Durham heads to the APAP National Leadership Reception in the rotunda for more hand shaking in a quieter setting. Back at the penthouse, the annual Sponsors Reception takes place to thank APAP conference sponsors for their support. Despite having been on his feet for nearly nine hours straight, Durham continues to smile and graciously introduce acquaintances to one another. The rest of his evening allows for little respite. The agenda entails more chats with the press and members, and a briefing with staff. Durham will get up and some version of this day will start all over again.

Once the 2014 conference has wrapped up, the actions will be set in motion to prepare both the event and Durham's jam-packed schedule for 2015. Although the specifics are still to be determined, one thing is certain: The president will do it all with a smile. **///**

Olivia Munk is a staff writer for the *Harvard Crimson* magazine. Her reviews of Broadway shows have appeared in the Theatre Development Fund's *PxP* magazine, and, in 2012, she was awarded the NCTE Achievement Award in Writing.





GABI PORTER/APAP

ADO

One of the greatest moments at the annual APAP|NYC conference is the welcoming of new members and colleagues. After you've attended a dozen APAP conferences, as I have, you also notice other moments, ones that encapsulate a deeper understanding of the meaning of an annual gathering in which the old and the new, the mighty and the emerging all come together to do business and refresh the passion of our year-long work. This page of images captures the moments I noted and celebrated at APAP|NYC.

-Alicia Anstead, *Inside Arts* editor and APAP|NYC co-producer





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A close-up portrait of a man's face, focusing on his right eye which is a striking, bright blue. He has short, dark hair and a slight stubble. The background is dark, making his face the central focus.

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