

Dance/USA Spring Council Chicago June 15 – 16, 2007

Friday, June 15th

Opening Session with Steven Tepper, author of newly published, *The Creative Campus: Who's number one?*

Interested in re-examining the relationship between art, creativity and higher education.

Last week, he went onto Youtube and searched dance.
There were a total of 611,000 entries, broken down into:
37,000 in Ballet
24,000 in Choreography
16,000 in Hip-hop

It's a time of what he calls the "Curatorial Me." People are experiencing their own creativity through active engagement of existing material. He spoke of the strong surge of interest in amateur art making through access to computer programs, technology and artist's products.

This new trend will be a challenge to our markets.

Today, people define their status by consuming lots of different kinds of culture, instead of the older model of closely aligning themselves with highbrow art. (For example, attending The Orchestra, Opera and Ballet Companies only)

He brought up Richard Florida's book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. This generation wants to make things; they want to forge their identity through their cultural preferences. They also want to live in "funky" cities. They have aspirations to produce art. The current demand in colleges for art classes is extremely high.

What's the role of Non-profits and Dancers?

How can we address the cultural divide?

We will have to re-define our mission.

Unleashing the creative capacity of our citizens. We must produce and present local artists. Collaborate “instrumental choirs” – for example, hundreds of amateur flute players playing together in a park, etc.

Can we make better use of older dancers?

Perhaps have an arts core – like the Peace Corps public arts projects, creating films, teaching in large accessible ways?

He envisions more “citizen art-making” executed side by side with professional artists. Today we mainly present the end product. But now, people are eager to see behind the curtain. There’s a deep interest in looking over the shoulder of the choreographer. More open rehearsals, auditions, and classes are suggested.

Example from Dance community:

1. A dance company that made an edited film with a featured dancer who had a difficult time with a particular jump. The rapture of the audience was palpable as they waited to see if the dancer could do that jump in the actual performance. They clapped joyously when he completed it perfectly. It’s a way into our process.

2. The new Ailey school built floor to ceiling windows in their new studios. Then, they installed a bench on the sidewalk of 9th Ave. so that people can look up at night and watch the dancers take class and rehearse.

Through this opening up of our doors, our process, our art, dance can be a cohesive force in our cultural life.

Anne Dunning – from Arts Action Research

She read the first chapter of Steve Tepper’s book and came up with five points for small to mid-sized dance organizations.

1. Creating Meaning. An active act. We need to engage with “them”. Share the content of what we do. Let people into the process.

Relationships to people are absolutely essential if we want to build participation.

2. Getting around the Gatekeepers. You can't stop artists from wanting to connect to people. Use the technology. She found a website called, "Song to wear Pants to", where the creator invites people to come to his site to make song requests with a twist. He alters the song according to the request of the person. He's been hugely successful.
3. Another example of getting around the Gatekeepers is The Burning Band – a small summer arts festival in the Arizona desert that has become extremely popular. Another is The Mermaid Parade in Brooklyn. Some of the mainstream gatekeepers are making note of this. Sakee Gallery in London – created a website to show new artist's work. We need to think less about the product and more about the experience. What makes a good cultural experience for the people who are going to be there? We could learn from the attitude of Circus performers who care more about how they affect the audience than about their own performances.
4. What we see depends on what we're looking at. Look at the big picture. If we can't find the gates to get in, look at the bigger picture.
5. We cannot underestimate the importance of arts in education.

Larry Rothfield, University of Chicago Co-Founder and faculty director of the Cultural policy Center at the U of Chicago

1. What's trying to be communicated by the dance activity?
2. Used Richard Florida quotes again.
3. Asked people to give them their mail list. Then they mapped the zip codes. They were able to micro manage their mailings and better target people who were more likely to come to dance.

Ken Foster, Ex. Dir. Of the Yerba Buena For the Arts in San Francisco

New strategic plan finally came down to their objective is “with the artists at the core.”

Encourages us to read the book of Steven Tepper. Also Richard Florida’s book.

Ask how can I adapt it to my organization? What does it mean for us?

At Yerba Buena Center they do “cell phone tours” while people are waiting in the lobby– you can turn on your cell phone and have a tour about the building, or, for example, press #4 and get a short video of the artistic director talking about the process of making the work.

He had a few contrarians thoughts:

- The act of engaging or watching a performance is an act.
- Art is not always building up a society but often about breaking down society. About *NOT!*
- All of this butts up against the market place. He worries about the market place.
- All the development of technology “use” creates the need for more people on staff. They now have an IT person, and they also hired someone to just do research and documentation for all the web services they have.

All council session: Connecting with the Audiences via the Press, Web and In –Person

The following notes were an effort to capture the main points and conversations of four speakers: Ted Bale, Suzanne Carbonneau, Rachel Howard, and Douglas McLennan

Ted Bale, dance critic and columnist at The Boston Herald and arts correspondence for The Cambridge Chronicle. Also, Dance Magazine, Dance international, Dancer, “The Dance Critics Association Newsletter, contact Quarterly, and several websites including Edge Publications, Dance Source Houston, and CultureVulture.net.

His opening statement was, “*People do not look for a job in the newspapers anymore*”.

You must have a good photo. Editors will not run an article unless it has a photo. The feature runs from the photo – not the other way around.

Dance Magazine – pitch a story a year in advance. Their website length for reviews is 400 words. Their website is increasing every month. Their magazine is centered on theme issues. You need to fit into their themes.

Rachel Howard – dance correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle. She posts her reviews regularly to her blog at www.rachelhoward.com

She was asked to talk because she’s a blogger. There are more blogs dedicated to dance every month. Go to: “great dance.com” there are 70 mini blogs. Dive in and get a sense of what their individual interests are. More and more dance writers write for free on the web.

She was one of the first writers to blog on dance in 2003.

She paid \$500. for someone to set up her blog design.

Now you can get it for free on Typepad.com and Blogger.com

She takes her San Francisco Chronicle reviews and puts them on her blog. Sometimes she comments on why she wrote what she wrote. She said people seem to like that more than reading the actual reviews.

People discover her on Google because she linked one of her human-interest stories to the NY Times when they also wrote something about that same dancer.

People don’t often want to read a lot on a Blog. She suggests to link to more substantial sites so that people who visit can go and get more information if they care to. A blog helps spread through word of mouth. It’s very conversational in tone. Less formal. Try to upload photos.

Press packets are a thing of the past. It’s too expensive. Put them on your website. Set up a press webpage.

She likes emails that come straight to her and tells her about the story. Then attach the formal press release.

Douglas McLennan – Arts journalist and critic and the founder and editor of ArtsJournal.com, the leading aggregator of arts journalism on the Internet.

Each day he goes to: ArtJournal.com.

ArtJournal.com goes through more than 200 publications worldwide and posts links to the best cultural stories.

He doesn't think arts coverage will exist in a few years in newspapers.

Flee to the niches. People increasingly want what they want, when they want it. They no longer want news from the mass market.

Getting the word out is so cheap now that we can market our upcoming season much more easily. Problem now is how do you get someone's attention?

Now there are 500 things to choose from to do with your free time. People get anxious about which "thing" to do. People want the peak experience. If the only time your audience has an experience with your organization is when they attend a performance or when you send a fund-raising letter then you're in trouble. People want to have interaction with the organization. You have to provide that opportunity. You need to find a way to create a community experience with every thing you do.

Social networking with My Space is where a lot of these ideas are coming from.

Think of yourself as an infrastructure by which a community comes together.

Suzanne Carbonneau – is a dance critic and historian whose writings have appeared in The Washington Post, The NY Times, and others. She directs the institute for Dance Criticism at the American Dance Festival, and has served as Critic-in-Residence at the Joyce Theatre in NY. She's writing a biography of Paul Taylor.

She often works directly with presenters and has found that, At Jacobs Pillow for example, they're finding that the "pre-talk" helps people have less fear that they won't understand the work.

One of the people who gave a pre-talk, had the audience clap out the beat of how Mark Morris approached the music and how he put the steps to the dance. When the audience got to that place, they burst out in applause after each section.

Plant intelligent questions about the work at these talks.

At the Kennedy Center, they experimented with having people put on headphones during open rehearsals and someone dance-knowledgeable spoke about the work as they were watching and listening through the headphones. Very effective.

Suggests narrated classes that are open to anyone. And also, to do the same thing with board members and staff too. They need to have a comfort level in speaking about your process.

What kind of stories are the newspapers interested in now?

Ted Bale– for example he developed a lead story about Giselle – changed it into a “rave party” and asked, “What if you met Prince William and didn’t know it was he?” That’s what Giselle is, basically.

He doesn’t like press releases too rooted in the person’s history or their resume. It doesn’t work well in any paper or newspaper. He’s always trying to change press releases so that it will work for a young reader.

Newspapers are very interested in multi-cultural communities now.
Anything you can do to highlight anything in your press release that is multi-cultural will help.

Ted Bale of the Boston Herald’s - Dos and Don’t

Should look at the Dance Magazine cover. Your photos should make anyone’s *mother* want to go to see the dance. Likes to have it look as though they’re dancing. Sense of movement in the photo is important. High contrast is important. High resolution is a must.

Must respond very quickly when newspapers call. They want photos of the premiere performance, not a photo from a different year or work.

Dance photos bring glamour to the newspaper section. Some editors say, “Thank God for dance photos”, because they’re usually photos of beautiful people that contain movement. We all should get good high-resolution photos up on our website.

He’s still at the Boston Herald; they continue to want hard copies of the press releases. He prefers to keep his hard copies for his editorial meetings.

It is up to the Company to figure out how to make our various events, new works, and performances newsworthy. There has to be something special that has to pull the press into it.

He got an email from Wendy Perron who wanted to know if he thought Dance Magazine should review a certain concert. She wanted a dance critic’s input. Quality is still key. But especially when DM only reviews three or four companies a month in print.

Rachel Howard –(San Francisco Chronicle) Editors want their dance writer’s opinions. Key: be as exciting and artistically valuable as possible.

She likes a non-pushy PR person who sends an email that says, “Just read your article and thought you’d be interested in this. Just saw a rehearsal and it’s about x, and it’ really good.” And then tell her all that she needs to know about the work.

An Independent Film Channel – created a film out of the audience’s films. She was amazed at the quality.

Intellectual property is the number one issue right now. This issue is not sorted out. Free versus locked down with royalties. This panel thought it was going to take a few more years to figure out.

Rachel Howard of the San Francisco Chronicle’s five things you can do:

1. Index your video. What’s in two years will be accessible will be accessible to everyone. Need to participate right now. Make Youtube videos.
2. My Space – to interest people under twenty-five. They don’t use email anymore. They interact using My Space or Face Page. Also, instant messaging. Email is not the way to do it.

3. RSS – Really Simple Syndication. When you update something... need to put it out there.
4. Blogging – a platform to publish to an enormous audience. To make them feel you're tangible and accessible.
5. Second Life –people sit in front and play from all over the world. Real US dollars (1.5 million dollars are changing hands every day.) There are fascinating ways to use this site for marketing your company.
6. Virtual communities – in five years it will be the way of our world.

For example, an artist made a video of the person who was making her guitar. That's a way to have a three-dimensional way to interact.

Need Avatars.

7. Finding ways to do audience interaction that touch you in some way everyday. Multiple levels of stories that help people know you better. For example, how the papers do human-interest stories for sports figures about many aspects of their lives.

Australian Government is giving grants of \$20,000. for artists who want to explore integrating Second Life with real audiences.

Link the coverage to your website.

- She handed out a list of good blogs.
- Suggested to look at Bill t Jones blog. Thought it really good and the right tone for a blog.
- Through "Flicker", take a picture of yourself on your camera phone and it can be fed instantly into your blog.

Insurance

**Robert B. Middleton, Director of the Insurance program for the
Performing Arts, a division of Maury Donnelly & Parr, Inc. in
Baltimore**

Insurance companies need to know about the companies they're insuring.

Best Key rating guide. Make sure they have a secure rating. A+

(Like Chubb, Hartford)

Watch for "non-admitted" printed on the front of your insurance policy.
Don't choose an insurance company with that on the policy.

General Liability:

Event policy – usual premium is around \$350. Can last as long as two or three months.

Property Insurance:

Be sure you have a special form including theft. Replacement cost. With no depreciation.

Coinsurance:

Get Agreed Amount endorsement!

Business Income Coverage:

Pays for the loss of income you sustain due to damage.

Extra Expense:– reasonable and necessary extra expenses.

D&O Insurance: (Chubb – very good)

- Breach of fiduciary duties
- Conflicts of interest
- Mismanagement of assets.

Make sure definition of D&O policy includes covering employees, volunteers, as well as spouses and domestic partners

Workers Compensation Coverage:

-Multiplying rates generates premiums

Experience Modification Factors

-Check your worksheets, audits and loss history for any errors. He's heard that 30% of these worksheets have errors.

Workers Compensation insurer of last Resort

-Don't fall into the "ARAP" trap – you pay 25% more

Umbrella Policy

International Coverage

- Covers you outside of US
- Workers comp should cover repatriation to move dancer to a hospital of choice
- Claims made overseas would not show up in US

When you renew your policy

-Take the time to meet with your agent/broker at least 90 days prior to your renewal date.

-Ask! What does h/she anticipate the pricing to be at renewal?

-Ask! How has your workers compensation modification changed?
Has it been reviewed?

-Ask! Are there other markets that should be approached?

-Ask! Ask yourself, does h/she know my story?

Goal for Dance USA is to create a safety program for Dance Studios, Dance Companies, Dance Academies – reduce cost. Available immediately.

Health Insurance - Adam Natal from **Fractured Atlas Health Insurance**
Typical health insurance program, health saving account, can use it over the year and if they use it needs to replenish.

Saturday, June 16

All-Council Session: Looking to the future: A National Performing Arts Convention (NPAC) Presentation

The following notes were an effort to capture the main points and conversations of four speakers: Teresa Eyring, Sandra Gibson, Marc A. Scorca, Andrea Snyder

The upcoming National Performing Arts Convention in Denver in June 2008 is going to address these issues: (go to www.artspresenters.com for more information)

1. Civic Stature – trying to change the relationship of the orchestra (or dance company) to the community. So that communities begin to understand how important it is to have an orchestra/dance company in the city.
2. Common Cause –

- Need to document the collective knowledge of all the people who attended the Conference.
- Emerging leaders need an opportunity to lead.
- Lot of talk about the erosion of audiences.
- Re-thinking the whole format of the 501c3.

Opera America – Marc Scorca, President and CEO

How to find and train Board members. A board that is able to invest in Opera or Dance in the 21st century. Not looking to the past.

Technology has added to his staff. Now they have to have an IT person, and two researchers; one in the development and one in their marketing departments.

Critical Issues in Dance

Eavesdropping on dance conversations will be online on Dance USA site. Conclusions of the Duke foundation's findings.

1. Generating Operating Support –
2. Audience Development –
3. The creative process -

Copyright Issues

**Advocacy Center at the American Arts Alliance
Denver, Colorado 2008
Wed. June 11 through Sat. June 14, 2008**

There will be a room with 25 computers and participants will be able to give immediate response to legislators.

Exhibit Hall

Wed. afternoon – Power Community Building

Thursday morning – breakout groups

Thursdays – 90-minute workshops to get into the details and how to do it!

Also, three-hour workshops.

Art-Making sessions

Friday – Caucus sessions

Sat. – Closing plenary –

Town Hall – will take action of the issues that came up during the conference.

Arts Education Partnership – Dance USA works with them on policy

**A Conversation with Andrea Snyder, Ex. Dir. Of Dance USA and Ben
Cameron, Program Dir. At the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, NY,
NY**

Ben Cameron said:

Tell him the truth about your company. That way he can guide you to the best approach for your company because it's sometimes a three-year relationship and he wants the company to move appropriate to whom it is.

Grant Makers in the Arts - Board members face:

- Repeating issues
- Under capitalization and too low salaries for artists
- Increasing dysfunction of the 503c3 – and boards
- Generational transfer of leadership – new generation wants more flexibility
- Losing audience, people only plan 24 hours out.

- Impact of technology – audience wants shorter more intense experiences.
- Quest for common meaning will be the most important issue in the future.

There are three pots of money, but then he went on to say,

1. We need to be very clear about why we need to exist at all. What mandates us in the current moment that we've got to go forward?

Duke is doing five-year grants. And four year grants. But that's as far as they go out.

There's a growing momentum of funding that is centralized locally.

They're looking for effectiveness and risk in an organization.

How do we find solutions to Tech change?

What is our value to the community?

What are our core values? (It's something you do even if the check stops.)

Train our boards: Clair Miller of the Non Profit Finance Fund.

Jim Collins monograph – Read “Good to Great in the Corporate Sector”

Three things retired people said they wished they'd done more of: reflective thinking, designing the shape of their lives, and they wish they'd taken more risks.

The consumer as the creator. Value will be co-created.

I will provide an experience for my audience. How can I provide a springboard to allow my audience to participate with their own creativity?

Mathew Keith – gave the Dance USA award to Dr. Richard Gibbs.

**Artist's Focus Session – lead by Edwardo Vilaro of LunaNegro
Dance Company of Chicago**

After breaking up into three different groups, each group came up with three issues they hoped that Dance USA could help solve:

1. Social responsibility – what are we dancing about?
2. Historical cultural honor – remembering to credit our mentors/teachers
3. Best Practice for Choreographer's Fee structure – what do we ask for?
4. Artistic Director Mentorship – where do we go for specific questions?
5. Sustainability-- true to who we are
6. Different models – independent choreographer vs. 501c3
7. Value of the artist – Dancer's self image – feeling valued
8. Dance and the Media – effect /affect

Ann Norris – Dir. Of Community Relations of Dance USA

Alternative model comes up all the time. Suggests putting artist's stories in a booklet that you receive when you join.

Let's change our image as dancers in USA; we need to gather our stories, work toward artists being valued.

Assignment for artists who participated in the Artist's Focus Group:

Write a 5-paragraph story of what we do and how we do it. Perhaps pros and cons of how it's going. What's really frustrating and what's your joy. Your story – your background. What you gained from being at the conference. Send to:

Edwardo@lunanegra.org

All-Council Session: Success Stories! Two Case Studies: Alvin Ailey/TRG and the Chicago Dance Makers Forum

Sharon Gersten Luckman, Ex. Dir of Alvin Ailey Company, and Joanne Steller, VP Consulting Services at TRG

Sharon G. Luckman spoke:

Ailey's Partnered with TRG with a goal of making 3 million in ticket sales this past NY Season, December 2007. They surpassed it!

TRG taught them how to use Demand-based Marketing Management

Increased revenue by one million over 5 weeks.

They changed the way they priced the seats. TRG did the analysis.

There were over thirty-nine performances and they analyzed ticket sales during the run.

They didn't change the prices; they changed the number of seats at top prices and changed location of where other prices were offered.

Held back certain seats until the front seats are all full. Then opened up the back seats at a high price.

Consequently, every performance looked full.

It was teamwork – marketing person, development person, worked together.

Tuesday night is a hard sell for them. Sold the seats at a discount. So at least they got \$20. for a seat that might have gone unsold.

Multi-ticket sales. If people wanted two seats for a Tues. night and four for a Saturday night. They took away all the former rules and restrictions. Found that sales soared.

Group Sales – If you came on Tuesday night, whatever money you have, whatever your budget is, we'll put you in the orchestra. Group sales person was like a rock star.

Question from the audience: *When were you implementing price changes?*

Answer: Before the box office opened for the entire season they already had a good idea of what shows would sell or not.

After the season started they met on a Monday morning after the weekend sales. Made all the changes to seat prices and ads then. They needed to give the box office 24 hrs before changes were made. The changes were consistent through the entire ticket price structure. They started their consultation with TRG in July and they started immediately with their recommendations of what should go in the brochure, ads, etc.

Group sales person was on the phone and on email every minute of everyday from July to December.

On their marketing materials they said, "Ticket prices start at \$25.00"

They did show the different seating sections and prices in the first brochure. When it came time that the demand become clear, then they began advertising just a \$25.00 when people called, they usually wanted the higher priced seat in the best location. Consequently, the higher priced seats went first. They filled out the front of the theatre first, and then moved backward. That way they looked full, the dancers felt the audience's response better (and danced better) and they could alter prices as demand grew.

Complaints? Only one complaint out of 60,000. We anticipated that there would be complaints. The Ailey team designated one person to be ready for customer service. She dealt with 12 people. She also dealt with one board member who called her names.

Group Sales – Their first question was, "What can you afford?" Some groups wanted good seats and to sit together. Some wanted cheap seats. Her first questions were, "What is your budget?" They sold seating from the front to the back.

Subscribers always maintain best seats at the best prices – as before.

The lesson for their audience for next year is to buy early for best seats.

Key to success is to begin your Group Sales campaign early.

How did they communicate this new way to approach ticket sales? They didn't communicate it at all.

Joann Steller coached their one Group Sales person. First step was to send letters to the usual list, then get people to renew. Second step was a purposeful campaign to increase her contacts by *50 a week*. Then she had to dial for dollars. They taught her to say, "Any money you have, we'll get you in!"

Then, after the season had begun and they saw some availability for certain performances, the Group sales person went back to groups that couldn't afford before and sold them.

Chicago Dance Makers Forum – I did not take notes for this information.

Conference finished.

Notes prepared by Jeanne Ruddy, Artistic and Executive Director of
Jeanne Ruddy Dance
and The Performance Garage in Philadelphia
www.ruddydance.org

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