

Imagine Maryland

Date: August 13, 2008
Location: Creative Alliance
3134 Eastern Avenue, Baltimore
Forum: Arts Presenters Focus Group Meeting
Facilitator: Morrie Warshawski, Angela Lohr, Carla Dunlap, Sharon Blake
Scribe: Elizabeth A. Bentley-Smith

MAJOR THEMES

What we value about Maryland: Economic stability, liberal environment, climate, history, topography.

Major Issues of Concern:

- Audience development (leisure time competition, graying audience, how to attract youth)
- Technology
- Space (for rehearsals, for “edgy work,” midsize venue in Baltimore)

Next Five Years:

- Collaborative marketing
- Educational partnerships
- Transportation solutions
- Corporate funding
- Better use of new technologies
- Flexible staging areas

Suggestions for MSAC:

- More training/ technical assistance
- Increase corporate support for the arts
- Help build future audiences
- Help spaces become ADA compliant

QUOTES

“Better understanding of rural underserved communities”

“Support arts through collaboration.”

“Connect artists and audiences better.”

“[I’d like to see] a corporate funded arts fund administered by MSAC...to make organizations give tax deductible donations leading to a pot of money that can then be divided amongst all arts organizations.”

“There’s a fine line of reaching out to the young audience, which are not donors, and the standard audience that are donors, without creating a divide.”

“There’s a reduction in leisure time...competition for entertainment dollars with movies, videos, sports...and lack of major audience development of teaching kids about the arts.”

RAW TRANSCRIPT

Introduction by Megan Hamilton, Program Director at the Creative Alliance

- Welcomes attendees, and discusses upcoming performances at Creative Alliance

Introduction by Sharon Blake, MSAC Arts Presenter Staff Member

- What is Imagine Maryland?
 - Strategic plan...provides details regarding timeline
 - Don’t forget to complete the on-line public survey

Introduction of MSAC Staff: Angela Lohr, Carla Dunlap, Elizabeth Bentley-Smith, Sharon Blake

Morrie Warshawski, Consultant

- Introduces the idea and purpose of strategic planning
- Described his experience with presenting organizations; Napa Valley Opera House
- Process of today’s meeting
 - A series of questions that are constant for all meetings
- The end to this process is to take the information gathered at the regional meetings and forums, along with interviews and an economic organizational review, will be collected then analyzed to complete the specific goals and strategies for MSAC.
- As a note, the transcript from this meeting will be available on-line within 10 days.

❖ **1ST QUESTION → WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT MARYLAND? WHAT MAKES YOU STAY HERE? WHAT DO YOU VALUE MOST ABOUT MARYLAND?**

- Variety...of everything...culture, sports...can find anything
- Great topography
- American miniature...great immigrant populations that lead to diverse culture

- Demographic that supports the arts
 - Great climate
 - Have a very liberal environment that allows edgy presentations without major flack...Baltimore is progressive...access to NYC and Richmond...Philly...Pittsburgh...Eastern Shore
 - Value history in the development of the State
 - Great architecture...beautiful built environment
 - Low overhead...inexpensive place to live with great culture and easy access to other cultural centers
 - Liberating arts circumstance...because there isn't a lot of money to fight over it leads to great collaboration and edgy design
 - Aesthetic cohesion and continuity within Baltimore as a focus on productions
 - Opportunities for employment...economic stability and health
 - Gorgeous mountains
- ❖ **2ND QUESTION → WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ARTS ISSUES FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT HAVING TO DEAL WITH?**
- No performing arts center in Garrett county...cultural divide between the mountain people and the city folks who have moved to the western region...issue of space
 - Reduction in leisure time...competition of entertainment dollars with movies, videos, sports...lack of major audience development of teaching kids about the arts
 - Need to create an appreciation for local artists...fragmented media market
 - Aging of audiences and volunteers
 - Changing of how the performing arts center is viewed, WWII mentality is no longer applicable as TV has crept into society and people are no longer interested in going to the theatre...how do we convince a live event is better
 - Issues with less art incorporated into school's curriculum...live art is no longer considered a good field trip...decrease of performing groups in the schools...disconnect between audience and performers, etiquette issues
 - Technology disconnect with future audiences
 - Look at audiences with different values/segments rather than demographics
 - Evolving development and techniques to reach audience...no more subscribers, but rather single ticket deals...how arts are viewed and reviewed...fight against the virtual world that has no consequences
 - Reinforcing the arts in the young generation and get them from the underground audience
 - Explosion of arts programming...the depth of the cultural scene is increasing at such a fast pace, that leads to more competition for audiences...need to get the message out to other areas about what is going on in Baltimore
 - Issue of edgy venue space needed...no central space to get data on venues available in the city/state

- Need for financial development via endowments and greater federal/state/local government support
- Fine line of reaching out to the young audience, which are not donors, and the standard audience that are donors without creating a divide

❖ **3RD QUESTION → WHAT SPECIFIC (PRACTICAL) CHANGES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN YOUR COMMUNITY WITHIN THE NEXT 5 YEARS?**

- *(Break into two groups to discuss and present top five)*
- Group 1
 - Collaborative marketing...found in Baltimore but needs to be more statewide...national awareness of the arts
 - Educational partnerships...matching schools with specific arts organizations that will partner students and ultimately families...adopt a school
 - Transportation solutions...some type of culture bus to allow students to get to the shows
 - Corporate funded arts fund administered by MSAC...to make organizations give tax deductible donations leading to a pot of money that can then be divided amongst all arts organizations
- Group 2
 - *Taking advantage of new technology...you tube, blogging, ion arts...using for rather than against us*
 - Greening of performing arts centers...take the leadership roles in training us and our audiences
 - Arts administration training...how to write press releases (i.e. market), specific to HS
 - Collaboration of the performing arts centers and education/schools
 - Flexible staging areas...create a flexible performance venue that are more mid-size and relatable to their environment

❖ **4TH QUESTION → HOW AWARE ARE YOU OF MSAC? AND DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF MSAC? IN WHAT WAYS HAS MSAC MADE A DIFFERENCE TO YOU?**

- Staff is very ingrained and active in the community...aware of what is going on...they are always part of the conversation...MDCDP is good, but bad
- Some inequities across the state, but that seems to be not as great as in other states
- Appreciate leadership in getting a presenters organization

❖ **5TH QUESTION → WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR MSAC? WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THEM DO IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS?**

- Training of arts management for those who are unable to pay for it...how do you get an executive director...professional development

- Greater sources of funding for organizational development...get involved in helping spaces become ADA compliant...so what else can the organizations do if it doesn't meet certain grant requirements
- Tapping into more corporate support with MSAC acting as the leader...especially for those who focus on under-served audiences...used Montgomery County as an example of matching funds by county government and profit orgs
- Art postage stamp that costs extra cents, similar to breast cancer research...MD license plate
- Helping to build future audiences through family interaction

❖ **PLEASE SAY FIVE WORDS IN SUMMARY**

- Enlightening experience tremendous potential
- More access for people with disabilities
- Better understanding of rural underserved communities
- Partnership, collaboration, technology
- Better awareness of richness of resources
- Glad to be here, and looking forward
- Thanks, education, kids are key
- Celebrating diversity, building community
- Support arts through collaboration
- Nice to meet you all
- Best used of resources
- Connect artists and audiences better
- All of the above
- Create roster of Maryland audiences
- Reinventing the arts

- ❖ Thank you for coming...