



DAILY DISCUSSION GUIDE • JUNE 12, 2008



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**“Will art ease
us into our
inevitable
future with
new thoughts
and new
ideas? ...
Move, move,
amongst each
other.”**

*Anna
Deavere
Smith,
June 11, 2008*

Welcome back to the second day of the NPAC Caucuses! Yesterday we discussed a vision of a vital performing arts community; today we'll identify and begin to prioritize the opportunities and challenges we need to address in order to move towards our vision.

The National Performing Arts Convention kicked off yesterday with a general session on the theme **The Power of Community Building**, a theme that will resonate through the week.

After a vivid performance of Native American dance and music by the Denver March Pow-Wow, Ann Meier Baker and Marc Scorca, the co-chairs of the National Performing Arts Convention, formally welcomed the delegates to the Convention. They asked everyone to be a participant in this new arts community, not just an observer – noting the enormous potential of bringing together so many different people from so many parts of the performing arts community. Dana Gioia, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, then spoke encouragingly of strong bi-partisan support for the arts, evidenced by the largest increase in the NEA budget in 28 years at a time when most government budgets are being held flat.

Prize-winning actress, writer, activist and teacher Anna Deavere Smith asked us to look at how we segregate ourselves, in all definitions of the term, and asked us to envision an artistic community on a piazza across from city hall, in tents, sharing ideas. She declared that the arts have long been a part of the development of society, quoting South African Justice Albie Sachs: “A jazz musician wrote our constitution in music, long before a lawyer wrote it in words.”

Bill Rauch of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival urged us all to move out of the comfort zone and into the community, “one handshake at a time,” creating connections and collaborations that would bring people together to create art and leaving them with a greater understanding, and trust, of each other. “All art,” he reminded us, “is based in community.”

And Mayor John Hickenlooper talked about Denver's efforts to merge art and the community, noting that “The lines between life and culture are blurred” and that “Art can happen anywhere.” Performing artists from the Denver arts community demonstrated the Mayor's words with a cross-disciplinary and non-traditional performance.

DISTILLING THE IDEAS: THE THEME TEAM PROCESS

-OR-

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER YOU LEFT THE ROOM?

To move the work from day to day, the theme team must find the common threads among the many discussions, distill them down to the most frequently occurring themes, and draft language for those themes, all while remaining neutral. Here's a look at how they work:

- While you talked at your tables, table facilitators were working to focus the discussion and to summarize the group decisions onto worksheets.
- Simultaneously, Theme Teamers were roving the room, listening in on conversations.
- Themers gathered to review the table facilitator worksheets and identify common ideas across all the rooms.
- In a labor-intensive process, the themers worked with AmericaSpeaks staff members to read through all of the sheets, sort the responses, count how frequently each issue came up, and note the ones that appeared most frequently.
- The most prevalent themes were copied onto Post-Its, posted on charts and reviewed, identifying overlaps and culling out the list of common themes.
- The group vetted the list against their experiences during the caucus and verified the final results you see today.



Photo © Glenn Ross

THE PROCESS BEGINS

At the end of the Opening General Session teaching artist and NPAC Convention consultant Eric Booth challenged the audience to engage in improvisation and join in the discussions. He then presented a draft vision statement that proposed a better future for the performing arts – one that embraced all disciplines, all communities, and functioned at an optimum level.

Shortly after the opening session, delegates gathered in the assigned rooms to launch the discussions. The conversation was divided into three areas: feedback on the initial language and evaluations of how the performing arts community has been most successful and least successful in reaching this vision. Each table was also given the opportunity to share some of the insights that they had reached at their table in a section called “Call-Outs.”

At the end of the day, the Theme Team convened to condense all the comments from the hundreds of participants (in a process described at the left); what follows is a summary of what you, the caucus delegates, concluded.

Nothing will be lost. While we can't discuss together all the many ideas that were generated on Wednesday, NPAC is archiving everything and will be producing a comprehensive document in the future.

FEEDBACK ON THE VISION

- The vision covered all the bases
- It is too long, broad, and vague – needs more inspiring, less corporate language
- It needs a clearer audience
- We need to clarify what “fully supported artists” means
- Sustainability is a great idea, but it needs more definition
- Even more emphasis should be placed on education, including lifelong learning
- The vision should include an international component
- The vision needs to speak about artists, not just institutions
- It needs a statement on artistic quality and excellence
- The vision should address relevance of performing arts to people's lives
- And, finally, it should speak to diversity and inclusiveness

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HOW HAVE WE BEEN MOST SUCCESSFUL IN REACHING OUR VISION AS A COMMUNITY?

- We're getting better at demonstrating value and advocating for the arts as a public good
- Strong arts education – especially “filling the gap” from cuts in arts education programs
- Innovative approaches for sustaining our organizations in a difficult climate
- Collaboration across disciplines and outside the arts, especially at the local level
- Improved access for audiences (e.g. programming, pricing, and venues)
- High quality artistic activity and work

HOW HAVE WE BEEN LEAST SUCCESSFUL IN REACHING OUR VISION AS A COMMUNITY?

- Failure to communicate and connect the relevance and value of arts to the larger community
- Lack of advocacy for public policy that strongly supports the arts
- Unsustainable business and financial models for institutions and individual artists
- Artists are not fully supported financially (including health care) and in other ways – “we don't take care of our chief resource”
- Lack of meaningful collaboration—“more competitive than collaborative”
- Behind the curve—we're not taking advantage of research, technology, and new marketing techniques
- The nation's diversity is not reflected in the arts we present, our administration, and our audiences
- Unsuccessful in making the case for the arts as a core activity in education

THE PROCESS CONTINUES...

Friday we will continue our work, building on today's decisions.

Thursday (10:15-11:30 am) What are the most important opportunities/challenges for our community to address in order to better reach our vision?

Friday (10:00-11:30 am) What are the strategies we need to follow in order to advance our vision?

Saturday (10:00-12:30 pm) Which strategies will we commit to?

Each day you'll be seated with a new group of performing arts professionals and a new facilitator. We hope to see you at all the meetings, but if you miss one, you're always welcome back. Join the flow of ideas, see what insights you find for yourself, and broaden your network. You'll sit down with strangers, but you'll stand up with colleagues.

FURTHER FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Overheard by our roving themers at various tables:

"There's been a fundamental shift to seriously consider audience participation and engagement in a new way. Moving the art from 'pedestal' to 'participation' makes the art more relevant and valued."

Kim Motes
Executive Director
Minnesota Schubert Performing Arts
and Education Center

"How we help each other and mentor each other in the performing arts surpasses what I see in other industries and sectors."

Shadi Mogadime
Senior Marketing Director
Arizona Opera

"We need to get back to expressing why the arts are inherently essential to human existence, and communicating why the arts are not separate from who we are."

Monique Moss
Third Eye Theatre
(National Performance Network)

"We haven't managed to convince society that artists are equal contributors to the public good."

David Saar
Artistic Director
Childsplay, Tempe, AZ

Caucus and Town Meeting Schedule

Add your voice as we work together to create a vital performing arts future.

Miss one meeting? Just come back the next day!

Thursday: 10:15 - 11:30am

Friday: 10:00 - 11:30am

Saturday: 10:00 - 12:30pm

(including closing session)



Based on where we have been most/least successful, and looking to the future, what are the 3 most important opportunities/challenges that our community needs to address in order to better reach our vision?

NPAC would like to thank the many people who have made these caucuses and the Town Hall possible. There are so many of them that we will be breaking the facilitators list up and running it in alphabetical order over the four issues. The second group follows:

NPAC Town Hall & Caucus Table Facilitators Stephanie Adams-Ball • Gerrett Ammon • Theresa Anton • Sarah Benuti • Jackie Bhuyan • Carole Birkhead • Sheila Bisenius • Sage Crump • Talia Davis • Susan Edmondson • Mary Anne Fleet • Bruce Freestone • Denise Freestone • Kelly Graham • Holly Hickman • Theresa Holden • Deborah Horne • Kate Hutter • Mara Isaacs • Joan Jeffri • Chris Jennings • Susan Knight • Richard Lane • Paige Larson • Melinda Laz • David Lazaroff • Allison Leigh Job • Dale Johnson • Michael Johnson-Chase • Arthur Jones • Russell Jones • Marion Kahn • Wendy Kelman • Timothy Kennedy • Paula Kimper • Paul King • Louise King Lanzilotti • Marda Kim • Greg Knowles, Ph.D. • Kati Koerner • Philip Koester • Kim Konikow • Ben Krywosz • JoAnn LaBrecque • Richard Lane • Karen Zeller Lane • Rebecca Lazier • Jack R. Lemmon • Robert Leonard • Sue Levine • Christopher Libby • Ruby Lockhart • Evan Luskin

Room Facilitators Kathy Brantigan, Jim Copenhaver, Henry Fogel, Russell Granet, Jonathan Katz, John McCann, Barbara Neal, Tina Poe, Obermeier, Clark Strickland, Chris Wineman

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