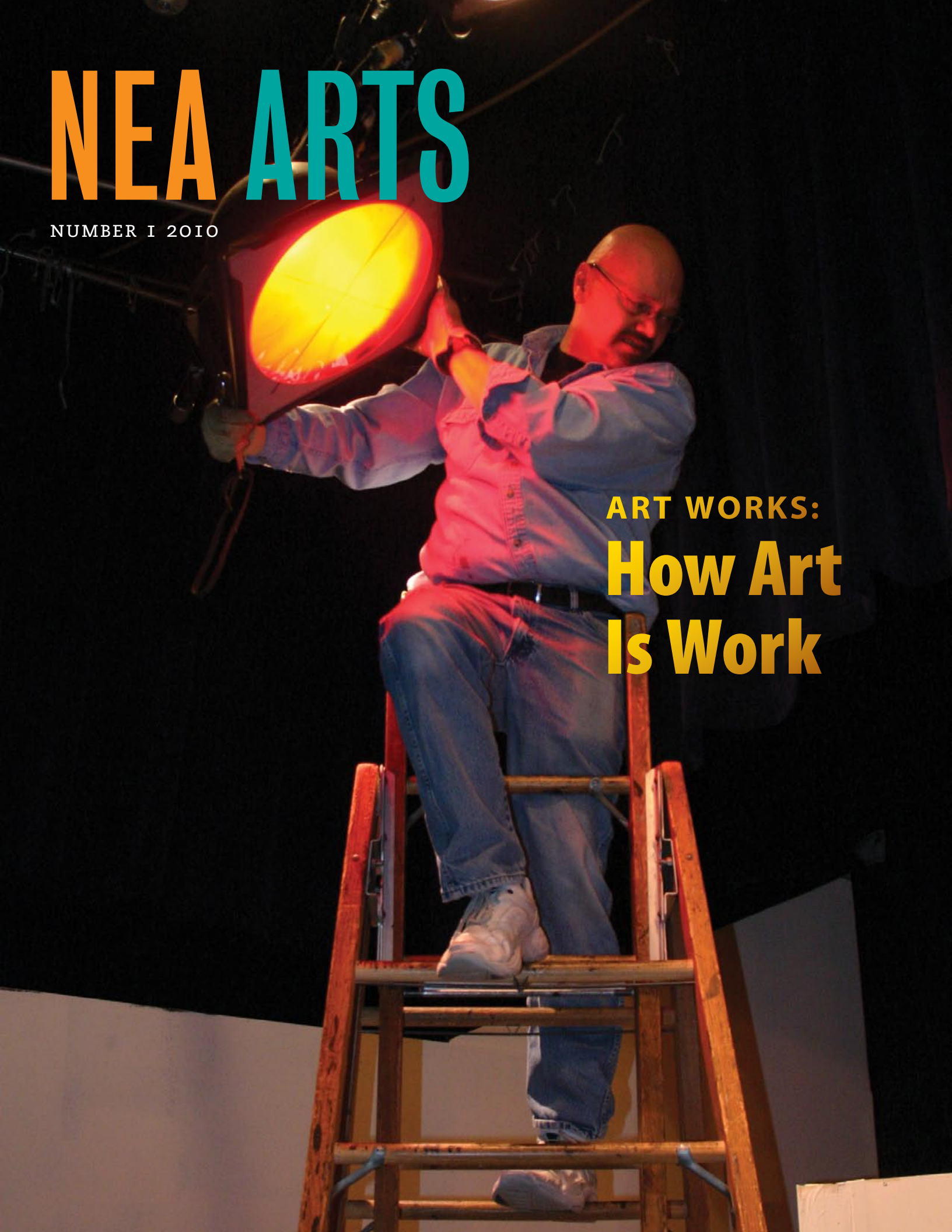


NEA ARTS

NUMBER 1 2010

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**How Art
Is Work**



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ABOUT THE ISSUE

Depending on your lens, art is many things: transformative, evocative, beautiful, provocative. Behind these great artistic performances and exhibitions you experience, however, a great deal of hard work is going on. Dance steps must be learned and perfected, canvas must be purchased and stretched before being painted, symphonies must be written and then scored into parts for each instrumentalist. On a more practical level, babysitters must be arranged to free up time to work in the studio, grants must be submitted or a full-time job attended in order to pay for supplies, sets must be built, hotels and rehearsal space must be secured for visiting artists. When we take in the ballet, the photograph, the poem, we are seeing only the finished product. This issue of *NEA Arts* will look at all the steps leading up to that final product, the *work* behind the artwork.

A couple of months ago, the NEA began the Art Works blog on our website (www.arts.gov/artworks), where we keep track of Chairman Rocco Landesman's travels around the country as part of the Art Works Tour, but also look at interesting examples of how art transforms communities. If you have an example you would like to share, or just want to comment on something you read there or in this issue, please join in the conversation on the blog.

ABOUT THE COVER

Being executive director of a theater company doesn't mean you get to sit back and watch others work, as Michael Cochran knows. At his theater—Market



House Theatre in Paducah, Kentucky—Cochran does everything from working on the publicity to coordinating catering and concessions to maintaining plumbing and setting up lights, in addition to his artistic duties of selecting and directing the plays the company stages. Photo by Jim Keeney



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

Making Art Work

Backstage at Market House Theatre

BY PEPPER SMITH



PHOTO BY MICHAEL COCHRAN

The Market House Theatre of Paducah, Kentucky, produced *Tom Dick and Harry*, written by Ray and Michael Cooney and directed by Michael Cochran, featuring Al Knudsen and Sabrina Beck.

At 12:17 am,

Michael Cochran, executive director of the Market House Theatre (MHT), finally had a chance to return e-mails. His workday started at 7:30 am—with prep for an Intro to Theater class he taught for a sick friend at the local community college—and ended after midnight in his office with preparations for a weekend board meeting. In between,



Cochran wrote press releases and invitations for auditions, met with local arts leaders about a grant proposal, readjusted lamps in stage lights, led a rehearsal for a children’s performance, fixed the stage’s rotating walls, made a curtain call speech for Neil Simon’s *God’s Favorite*, gave a PowerPoint presentation, filled in for the director that evening, worked as tech support, and locked up the theater. He also dropped off and picked up his daughter from school.

That’s a 17-hour day, and while “no day is typical,” long days are not uncommon. Art not only works, art works very hard in Paducah, Kentucky, population 26,307. Still, it’s not uncommon for Cochran to be asked, “What do you guys at Market House do when there isn’t a performance?” The short answer is: fundraise, organize publicity photos, work on ad layout, assist with stage movement and choreography, attend to plumbing and air-conditioning maintenance, review tax laws for contract labor, manage volunteers, work

The Market House Theatre is the largest community theater in the state of Kentucky.

on IT issues, coordinate catering and concessions, and manage hairstyling and makeup—pretty much anything that needs to be done.

Cochran is just one of many arts-minded workers in Paducah. In fact, the week before the board meeting, he was part of a group that left home at four in the morning to drive to the state capital in Frankfort by 8:15 am for Arts Day. It was a long trip for the Paducah delegation, but they had a good story to tell. In greater Paducah, the arts industry is as large as any other employer in the county, as large as Wal-Mart or Harrah’s Casino. “Over 819 jobs are created because of the arts.... It provides over 2.6 million dollars in state revenue and about one million in local revenue. Those returns come from an investment of approximately \$150,000 for the total community,” said Cochran.

Market House typifies the importance Paducah places on arts and culture. Started in 1963 as a little theater group, it has become an important regional theater—the largest community theater in the state of Kentucky—providing arts education to tens of thousands of school children and drawing audiences from a four-state region every year. Last year the theater had 38,683 paid participants in programs and more than 3,500 free attendees. Despite losing one full-time employee to budget cuts, MHT continues to present great theater thanks to the work of a small paid staff, hundreds of volunteers, and the support (both gratis and paid) of many local businesses.

“We don’t just entertain, we change lives,” Cochran said. To those who don’t share his sentiments on art, he cites a recent study of the greater Paducah metro area by Americans for the Arts. “The arts are not just a fuzzy feeling; it’s jobs. Arts and culture generates over \$39 million dollars for our area annually.”

In total, the theater has a paid staff of seven: four full-time and three part-time positions. These arts jobs are real jobs for real people. At the theater, April Cochran, Michael’s wife, serves as education director, overseeing the theater’s Footlights programs for children; traveling performances to schools in western Kentucky, southern Illinois, southeastern Missouri, and western Tennessee; and a theater-in-the-schools program that brings classes to area schools. “About 25 years ago schools began to lose their drama programs due to budget worries and class requirements. We are

now one of the main providers of arts education for young people in our region,” said April Cochran.

It’s interesting to note that the theater also employs those who didn’t set out to have a career in the arts. Business Manager Marsha Cash originally came to the theater as a volunteer when her young son Derek was cast as Pooh Bear in *Winnie the Pooh*. Marsha was looking for a job and enquired at Market House. “I had no idea that people in the arts could use someone with computer skills,” Cash said. She has now been with the theater for 12 years. (Her son Derek served a term as chief of police in their hometown of Clinton. “I think the skills he learned at Market House were a big help to him in dealing with the public,” offered Cash.)

Most people realize that—in addition to actors and directors—theaters need stagehands, technical directors, painters, carpenters, janitors, ushers, and box office workers. What many people don’t realize, however, is the long list of local businesses that make live theater possible. Around town, Paducah Printing, Minuteman Press, Denton’s Garage, Purcell Tire Company, and Hank Brothers Tru Valu Hardware—just to name a few—are all on the list of approximately 30 local vendors used by the theater for an annual investment in the local economy of more than \$500,000. Market House depends on neighborhood businesses for everything from vehicle maintenance to lumber for building sets to advertising banners to support for its yearly financial audits.

When asked, business owners seem to agree that not only is Market House a great client to work for, but working for the theater brings them more business. Proprietors Jack and Natlia Hayden of Creatures of Habit rent and fabricate costumes for Market House. Natlia Hayden noted, “Working with MHT opened a lot of doors for our business. After a while I auditioned for a few plays myself and love the feeling of fellowship that you form in theater. The people I meet come back to us.”

Local businesses appreciate that working with the theater impacts more than their bottom lines. Todd Duff, owner of IVS, a Paducah website branding and design company, helps the theater with its Internet presence and also creates promotional posters. While IVS’s work on the website gets some recognition, Duff finds more important the teambuilding that comes from his office banding together to do something

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PHOTO BY MICHAEL COCHRAN

Marsha Cash is the business manager for the Market House Theatre, one of seven paid staff who along with 300 volunteers help to put on 12 to 18 productions a year.

early in the morning



BY PAULETTE BEETE

'til late at night

THE WORKDAY OF ARTISTS

LIKE MANY OTHERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, each morning Mary Bischoff wakes up between 6:30 and 6:45 am. Bischoff frets over what to wear to work, makes lunch, plays with her dog, and watches *Good Morning America* before heading out. But unlike many workers, at nine am Bischoff takes her place at a dance barre rather than behind a desk. As one of six members of the Eisenhower Dance Ensemble (EDE), based in Rochester Hills, Michigan, Bischoff takes class for an hour-and-a-half each morning, followed by a company rehearsal until 3. At three, she starts her second job as the assistant director for the EDE Center for Dance, which offers dance classes for children and adults. In her administrative role, Bischoff tackles a range of tasks, including program development, staff management, and long-range planning.

Three days a week, at five pm, Bischoff changes gears yet again. “I go in to teach,” she explained. “I teach mostly ballet, but I also direct a student company, which is mostly junior high kids. They learn pieces and they perform in the pre-shows for EDE.” Bischoff’s typical day ends around eight, when she’ll have a second dinner with her fiancé, having eaten her first dinner before teaching class. She confessed, however, that while she likes to spend her evening watching reality TV, she often is also online for at least another hour catching up on work e-mails and other tasks.

Bischoff wanted to be a dancer since grade school. “I never had a single doubt or question growing up as to what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to dance. I didn’t know how I was going to do it or in what way I was going to do it, but I knew that it was going to be part of my life.”

Working with EDE is a dream come true. Bischoff joined the company as an apprentice dancer, after working with the ensemble during their residency while she was a student at Oakland University. “I just was amazed by the company. I thought the dancers were awesome. I put it in my head that that was the level I wanted to work toward.”

Bischoff keeps up her grueling pace almost year round. As an independent contractor, Bischoff doesn’t

Mary Bischoff and fellow Eisenhower Dance Ensemble dancer Demetrius Tabron rehearse for the February 2010 performance of *NewDANCEfest VIII*.

PHOTO BY LYNN FORD

get paid for most of her vacation time, nor can she claim unemployment. It’s a predicament that’s not unusual for smaller dance companies. She noted, “We know about this ahead of time when we get in this company. We’re just advised to budget that money so that it will last.” Bischoff added that the company is currently working out how to hire ensemble dancers as employees to ease the dancers’ financial burden.

As an independent contractor, Bischoff also pays for her own health insurance, a monthly expense that costs nearly a week’s salary. “Some dancers choose to go without it. And that’s kind of a scary thing,” she acknowledged.



Mary Bischoff and her fellow EDE dancers bring Laurie Eisenhower’s work to life.

PHOTO BY RIINA RUBEN

Even with three jobs, Bischoff grosses an average of only \$30,000 each year. Approximately one-third of her earnings goes to job expenses. For a working dancer, this includes everything from gym memberships to stay in shape between gigs to dance apparel and shoes not covered by the company to travel money for teaching gigs to the multitude of muscle creams, foot tapes, heating pads, and other aids that dancers use to care for their bodies.

Bischoff acknowledged that her occupation requires lifestyle trade-offs. “When I got this job, the idea of earning a paycheck, I thought it was amazing. I still think it’s a great deal to get paid for something that I love to do. But I remember moving into my first apartment and thinking, ‘It will never get better than this.’ But now, being a little bit older, I bought a house almost two years ago, which is a lot more money than renting an apartment. Because I want to have a house.... I just have to work a little bit harder.”

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The Business of Books



IMAGES COURTESY OF COFFEE HOUSE PRESS

BEHIND THE SCENES AT COFFEE HOUSE PRESS AND *NARRATIVE*

BY PAULETTE BEETE

Approximately 40 years ago, a young writer named Allan Kornblum spent a life-changing afternoon in the Parish Hall at New York City's St. Mark's Church helping to hand-collate a mimeographed literary magazine. The technology has gotten more sophisticated since then but, as founder of Minneapolis-based Coffee House Press, Kornblum still spends his days hands-deep in literature. A former letterpress printer, Kornblum and his wife started the imprint in 1984 in Iowa;

in 1985, they moved to Minnesota and became the first visiting-press-in-residence at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. As Kornblum explained, "There were lovely aspects to letterpress printing, but there also were some serious limitations. And I wanted to be able to easily reprint a book if it was doing well. I wanted to be able to help authors reach a wider audience, and to

Above, some of the new releases by Coffee House Press in spring 2010.

publish fiction.” Today, from a former bottling house, Kornblum and his team of eight full-time employees annually publish 14–16 books, among them titles such as poet Patricia Smith’s *Blood Dazzler*, a National Book Award finalist, and Sam Savage’s *Firmin, Adventures of a Metropolitan Low Life*, an international bestseller.

According to Kornblum, approximately 3,000 manuscripts make their way to the press each year. More than half are from previous Coffee House authors, allowing for a handful of newcomers each season. Once accepted for publishing, it takes an average of two years—and as long as three—for a manuscript to appear on booksellers’ shelves. Kornblum estimates that the entire process averages about \$20,000 in staff time per title.

For returning authors—as well as some local authors or ones who have been recommended by Coffee House associates—the manuscripts are vetted directly by Kornblum or associate publisher Chris Fischbach. A crew of carefully selected interns vets the rest. Kornblum said, “We ask them to pass books on to us if they either love them or hate them. Usually if they think they’re boring, they are.” He added that, although some manuscripts are reviewed by interns, the entire process is taken very seriously. “We are very respectful with the manuscripts that come in ... even though some of them do seem to come from people who are not, shall we say, well-balanced.... We make sure that our interns know that there are to be no snippy responses or funny responses or irreverent responses to even the goofiest manuscript submission.”

Accepted manuscripts go through a number of steps. There are two levels of editing: a substantive edit in which the content of the manuscript is scrutinized for any weaknesses with plot, structure, or—in the case of short fiction or poems—the order in which the individual pieces are presented. Later in the process, the manuscript is copyedited line by line. Meanwhile, marketing plans—such as scheduling galleys to be sent to reviewers and author book tours—are in development while book covers are designed, book jacket blurbs are sourced, and advertising copy is written. Even the distributor is already involved in the process; the staff has to let the company know details such as the page size, the thickness of the book,

and the type of binding in order to establish mailing and other costs. The distributor also weighs in on the marketing plans, offering suggestions on the title, the cover, or the angle being used to promote the book. Along the way, as it goes through various edits, the book continues to make the rounds among the staff as well as back and forth to the author in the form of

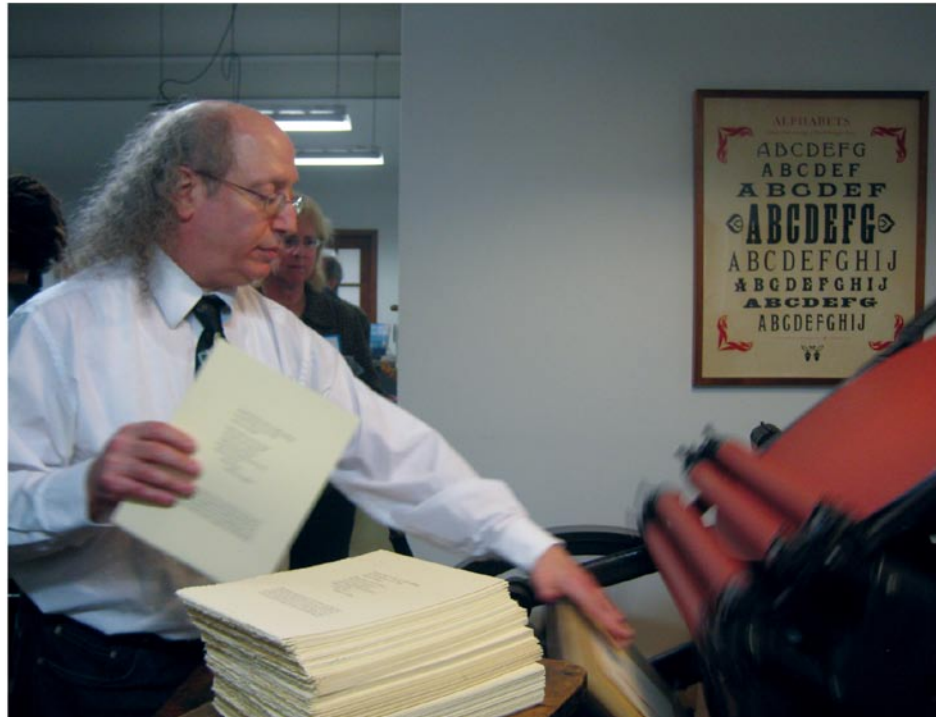


PHOTO BY ESTHER PORTER

Coffee House Press publisher Allan Kornblum prints letterpress broadsides in the press’s office.

page proofs and galleys. “I think most people would be surprised by how much planning is involved and how much coordination is involved with the copy editor, the proofreader, the author, the designer, and our distributors,” said Kornblum. “There are a lot of people who get involved in reviewing each manuscript, checking it, and making sure that it fulfills the vision the author had for the book.... I think people would be surprised at how hard everyone in the publishing industry works.”

While Coffee House Press grew out of Allan Kornblum’s passion for antique technology, *Narrative* resulted from the digital revolution. Editor Carol Edgarian recounted, “When [Tom Jenks and I] started *Narrative* in 2003, nothing comparable was online offering first-rate content—not the *New Yorker*, not

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From the Ground Up

FOR PASSENGERS LUCKY ENOUGH TO CATCH certain Connecticut Transit buses on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, a simple commute can transform into an unexpected artistic experience. Theater groups, spoken-word poets, bilingual storytellers, and even African drummers take passengers by surprise with intimate, on-board performances, delighting them as they wind through city streets.

Artists gone guerilla? Quite the opposite, in fact—such performances are part of the Exact Change program created by the Arts Council of Greater New Haven (ACGNH), which books artists on public buses throughout the area. “It’s our fourth year working with Connecticut Transit and we’re still evolving the project and learning,” said Cynthia Clair, executive director for the ACGNH. “Exact Change is great in that it brings art directly into the community—and it encourages people to use mass transit more.”

Exact Change is just one of the community-focused



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS BARNES PHOTOGRAPHY

The free Twilight Concert Series, produced by the Salt Lake City Arts Council, lights up summer evenings in downtown Salt Lake City, Utah.

As part of the Exact Change program created by the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, riders traveling by bus from North Haven to the New Haven Green enjoyed a performance by members of the New Haven Theater Company during which actors manipulated *bunraku*-influenced puppets to tell stories of journeys and travel.



Local Arts Agencies

Think Artistically and Act Locally

BY MICHAEL GALLANT

programs executed by local arts agencies (LAAs), philanthropic organizations that respond directly to the arts participation needs of the neighborhoods around them. And while initiatives like Exact Change showcase the fun and creativity inherent in LAAs' work, these agencies face a unique set of challenges. Between mandates to nurture highly diverse local scenes, adapt to ever-changing community needs, and find ways to fund it all amidst a down-turning economy, LAA leaders face considerable obstacles moving forward.

"Our mission is to connect artists with the public," said Nancy Boskoff, director of the Salt Lake City Arts Council (SLCAC) in Utah. "Well, that's the short version," she added, laughing.

LAAs often support local arts efforts on a wide variety of fronts. Salt Lake City's Living Traditions Festival, for example, an SLCAC program supported by the NEA, celebrates folk and ethnic artists through

demonstrations, food, and music, drawing 50,000 visitors annually. On a different note, the SLCAC manages the city's public art program, commissioning sculptures to adorn parks and train stations.

For Clair and the ACGNH, arts leadership begins with arts promotion. "We publish *The Arts Paper* ten times a year and give it out free at 200 locations around the community—coffee houses, venues, libraries. There's a column called 'The Artist Next Door,' where we introduce readers to artists living and working in their midst.

"Another area we focus on is support for arts organizations and artists. We do professional development workshops to help our constituents develop marketing and business skills, and we give a lot of one-on-one advice and technical assistance, since some organizations we deal with are very small and don't have professional staffs. They look to us for guidance on many

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DESIGNS

on the Future

The Design and Architecture
Senior High in Miami, Florida

BY SALLY GIFFORD

PHOTOS BY YAMILA LOMBA

IN WHAT LOOKED LIKE A SCENE FROM *Project Runway*, high school students in a fashion design class were constructing handbags from beaded, painted canvas. But this wasn't just an academic exercise. The students' creations were one-of-a-kind pieces to be sold by the global fashion company Fendi, enhancing the original design painted by Parisian graffiti artist André Saraiva.

"They will be quite a precious commodity," observed Stacey Mancuso, principal of the Design and Architecture Senior High (DASH) in Miami, Florida. She could say the same of the students at DASH, which is ranked among the premier magnet schools in the country, and produces students who go on to success



in both college and careers in design and the arts.

NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman visited DASH in early February as part of the NEA Art Works tour to see how cities are putting art at the center of their revitalization efforts. One of the areas he toured was the burgeoning Design District—where DASH is located—home to more than 130 art galleries, showrooms, and design services firms.

DASH's focus on the arts, specifically design and architecture, attracts serious art-minded students. But if you think the students just sit around all day pondering art projects, think again. DASH students take eight courses a year as opposed to the six courses other Florida high schools require, and the school consistently



Blondine Jean, a student at Design and Architecture Senior High in Miami, Florida, working in her fashion design class.

achieves an “A school” rating in the state’s school accountability program. Nationally, DASH received a 2007 Blue Ribbon award from the U.S. Department of Education, and was ranked as the #2 magnet school in the country (and #15 of all high schools nationwide) in the third annual “Best High Schools” report by *U.S. News & World Report*. Not only that, but 99 percent of students enroll in college with many receiving scholarships from top art and design schools. So not only do DASH students work harder, they achieve more.

And make no mistake, making art is work, as senior fine arts student Keith Clougherty can tell you. His film classes, for example, have taught him just how much work is involved in making movies. “When

you’re just watching a movie, it looks really like, ‘Oh, I could do that!’ But then when you think about the scripting and the casting and the filming, editing, lighting, sound—there’s just so much that goes into making a movie.”

The interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum ensures that the students get a well-rounded immersion in the arts. “There are so many different kinds of arts and artists,” said Clougherty. “Being exposed to artists and art at a high school level really prepares you for college and then also for life as an artist.”

Clougherty continued, “I’m always talking about my art, or other people’s art, and commenting on art. You learn what it is like to communicate and react and

Keith Clougherty shows his artwork during NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman's Art Works visit to DASH.

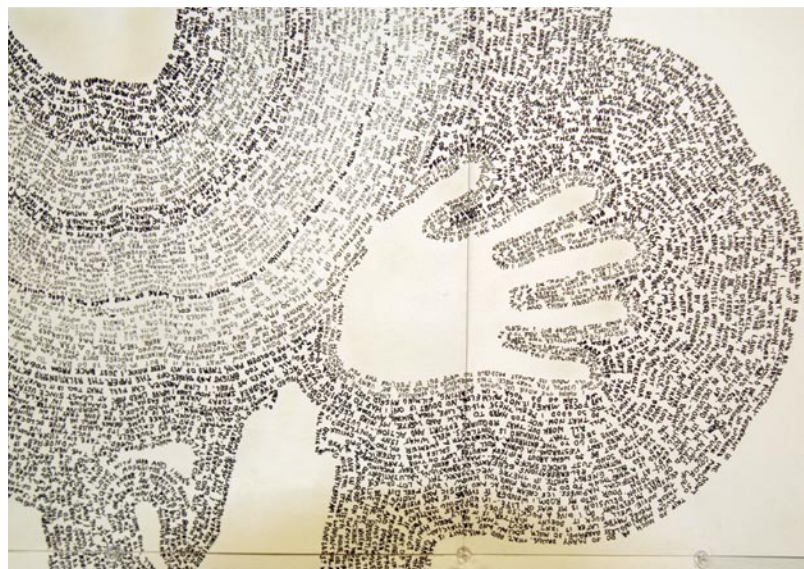


live in an artistic environment. Otherwise, I would not know anything about art, really. It's been a huge help."

Clearly being at DASH has helped Clougherty—he had the distinction of being selected as one of ten Visual Art finalists in the 2009 YoungArts program, a prestigious national competition sponsored by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts (NFAA). As the sole nominating agency for the Presidential Scholars in the Arts, YoungArts selects two of the ten finalists in Visual Arts to travel to Washington, DC, as Fine Art and Performance Presidential Scholars.

Added Clougherty, "Coming to DASH, and really being part of this art community, just in the middle of the Design District, you learn so much from not only the school and what's happening around the school, but the other kids. It's a magnet school, so it pulls kids you would never have met from all over the city."

When asked what makes Miami the perfect location for a school like DASH, Mancuso said, "I've had 25 years of working in the school system to figure this out. What is it that makes Miami different? I think it is that incredible mix of cultures within this city that makes the visual art, the dance, the theater, the music so vital, so strong, so important. I think that we embrace our multicultural in here. I think we're one city



A detail from one of Keith Clougherty's artworks.

that really can say we've done a good job with that." Mancuso noted that roughly 80 percent of the student body are of an immigrant background.

Rosie Gordon-Wallace, DASH advisory board member and director of the Diaspora Vibe Gallery, a local arts organization serving emerging artists from the Latin American and Caribbean Diaspora, agreed that the vibrancy of cultures is part of DASH's success. "We don't have to suppress our culture in order to become artistic. We can enhance a culture by what is out there."

DASH senior Blondine Jean is an example of how



Rosie Gordon-Wallace, Keith Clougherty, Blondine Jean, and Stacey Mancuso.

the cultures merge. A first generation Haitian-American, she incorporates her traditions into her textile work. “I’m concentrating on my Haitian culture,” she said. “The idea of making something out of little to nothing.” Like Clougherty, she is working across disciplines to hone her ability. “We’re taught how to get past our boundaries and just go places where we won’t normally go.”

As Jean has found out, to do that requires sacrifices perhaps other high-schoolers aren’t making. “We came here to learn and grow. If you want to, say, watch a show that you really like, you have to give that up in order to get projects done. Like painting, for example. I lost a lot of sleep learning how to paint.”

Though all the students who attend DASH have talent, what the school administrators are looking for is something more than that—the passion and drive to achieve. The rigorous audition process, which includes presenting a portfolio, drawing something right there at the audition, and a personal interview, helps to identify those students. “One of my favorite portfolios in my career here,” said Mancuso, “was one that was done on napkins, paper napkins, with a ballpoint pen. [It] was a young man who came with his stack of paper napkins. He had those because his father was a dishwasher in a restaurant. And he would go after school and wait for him to be finished, and draw the people in the restaurant. And that portfolio will remain with me forever. It was as worthy as the most refined pristine portfolio that has been presented.”

DASH also offers the students a chance to work with artists in a professional setting through an internship program. “Up to 100 professional mentors work with our students,” said Mancuso, “and our students work with them to gain that true professional experience that we cannot provide in the school site. And I think that gives them a special edge when they go off to college—they’ve actually worked in a professional arena.”

As Gordon-Wallace pointed out, “DASH is about nurturing young people who are on a path to excellence.” And students like Jean want to share that excellence after they move on from DASH—she is considering postsecondary studies in both art school and occupational therapy. She said that she can “teach what I’ve learned here. I could just do anything now—there’s no limit on what I can do. I don’t think I would have felt the same way if I went to another school. I don’t think I would have been who I am now.” 🐦



A detail from one of Blondine Jean’s artworks.



An Asian youth group performing onstage at the Living Traditions Festival in Salt Lake City, Utah, produced by the Salt Lake City Arts Council with support from the NEA.

PHOTO BY DOUGLAS BARNES PHOTOGRAPHY

From the Ground Up

continued from page 11

issues, and sometimes that's just pointing them in the right direction for the help they need."

For LAAs to address the evolving needs of their communities, Clair emphasized the need for open communication. "We interact with our constituents on a very regular basis, and even run into people on the street. So we're constantly checking in with folks. New Haven is a small city, so it happens both formally and informally."

With creative endeavors often running the gamut from folk dance and experimental theater to installation sculpture and fiction writing, providing an umbrella for an entire arts community can prove a daunting challenge. "We look to see if we're touching all disciplines, either directly or indirectly," said Boskoff of the SLCAC's work. "We don't do a film series, but we do support nonprofits that work in film through our grants program. So we always ask ourselves, are we filling a niche in Salt Lake City, or are we helping someone else fill that niche?"

When it comes to staying relevant within a community, small efforts can yield big results. "In Salt Lake

City, we now have lots of people who ride bikes, so at the Twilight Concert Series, which averages attendance of 15,000, a local bicycle collective provides valet bike parking. It adds to the feeling that everyone is part of the community." For Clair and ACGNH's Exact Change, a similar attention to detail—and sensitivity to the more micro needs of her communities—has been key. "Some bus routes have lots of kids, while some others go through neighborhoods with mostly Spanish speakers. We try to program our artists according to the demographics they're serving."

Whether they publish arts papers or sponsor performances, LAAs rely on external funding to do their work, and the methodology of money acquisition unfolds differently for each agency. "Many arts councils have support from local governments," said Clair. "We receive state funding only. Otherwise, we are very reliant on membership dollars and private giving from individuals, foundations, and corporations."

For the SLCAC, a slightly more complex model applies. "We are a municipal agency, so we get appropriations from the city, and we are all city employees," said Boskoff. "But we also have a nonprofit associated with the agency, which makes it easier both to accept certain donations and to pay our artists very quickly—musicians, for example, on the same night

they perform. It was a quirk of history that we have a combination of public and private, and it works for us.”

Given the current economic downturn, LAAs nationwide have been forced to re-evaluate the way they work. “To date, we’ve cut back services where it’s least visible to the public,” said Boskoff. “Quality is still *very* important to us. We have a gallery where we no longer have weekend hours, though we hope to reinstate them. We have a lunchtime concert series daily in the summer that we’ve reduced by a couple weeks. We don’t cut back on artist fees and our programs are still free to the public—we try to support our events on earned income like concessions, in addition to sponsorships and public funding.”

In New Haven, the ACGNH responded to the downturn by directly engaging the community. “We gathered folks in meetings to find out how the economy was affecting them,” said Clair. “There’s a growing realization that the nonprofit arts model, which has essentially been functioning the same way since the mid ’60s, is in need of tweaking—especially after the NEA arts participation study, which showed declining attendance at arts events in traditional arts venues. We can no longer really do business as usual, so we just launched a program with EmcArts out of New York that focuses on innovation. It offers organizations in our communities the chance to dig in deep and do challenging work around this notion of adaptation.”



PHOTO BY HAROLD SHAPIRO

Baba David Coleman entertains the audience at the annual Audubon Arts on the Edge celebration in New Haven, Connecticut, supported by the Arts Council of Greater New Haven.

Though national and state agencies may claim greater economic firepower when it comes to helping U.S. artists, the relationship between LAA and community is a unique and valuable one. “We’re part of the community fabric that we’re serving,” said Clair. “We know the idiosyncrasies of our districts and we find that we’re helping not just our friends in the arts world, but the larger community as well.” Boskoff echoed the sentiment: “One of our hallmarks is that we present the artists’ work in a professional fashion, so the artists feel as good as the audiences do, and there’s a great satisfaction to knowing that our work makes a difference. Salt Lake City has a very lively, talented arts community, and we take great pride in working at the local level to promote that.”

Clair continued: “We’re not just something that is nice and fluffy and entertaining. What we do branches out into everything from working with economic development and youth education to looking at things like, ‘We’ve got empty storefronts. What can we do together about that?’ Not that LAAs have all the answers, but we can be part of the solutions.” 🐦

Michael Gallant is a composer, musician, and writer living in San Francisco. He is the founder and CEO of Gallant Music (gallantmusic.com).



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS BARNES PHOTOGRAPHY

An opening reception for a local artist’s exhibit in the Finch Lane Gallery of the Art Barn in Salt Lake City, Utah.

early in the morning...

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Bischoff also struggles with the perception by others that, as an artist, she doesn't really work. "We are a touring dance company and still, on the road, we'll have people in our hotels or even at a performance that say, 'So is this a hobby?' It's difficult to answer those questions patiently all the time. We all went to school, have degrees in dance, and work extremely [hard].... [This is] what our passion is. But it's also work because you don't want to dance every single day of your life. Some days, you get there and you don't like performing and rehearsal and dancing and using your body. It might be sore or tired or you just don't feel like it, and you have to.... It's too much work to just be a hobby."

Two thousand miles away in Los Angeles, just as Bischoff is starting her first class of the day, visual artist Amir H. Fallah is getting back from his morning workout. Two days a week he is up at 5:30 am, checking e-mail and grabbing a quick breakfast before heading out for a run or to the gym. (On the days he skips

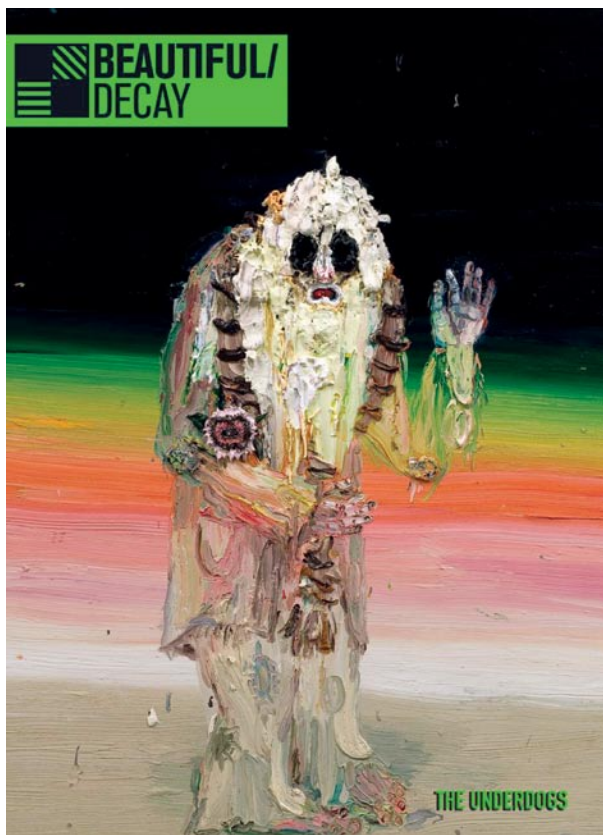


IMAGE COURTESY OF AMIR H. FALLAH

The cover of an issue of *Beautiful/Decay*, an art magazine produced by Amir H. Fallah.



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Flex Your Head (2008) by Amir H. Fallah.

the workout, Fallah lets himself sleep in till seven.) By eight, he is at his studio where he paints or works on other art projects until 10. He then heads down the hall to his "day job" as publisher of *Beautiful/Decay*, a triannual contemporary art magazine Fallah founded 16 years ago when he himself was just 16. As told by Fallah, the majority of his day at the magazine is spent "either on the phone or e-mailing or i-chatting. I'm usually just attached to my laptop."

Fallah discovered the visual arts through skateboarding, which he picked up soon after immigrating with his parents to the United States from Iran. "I came here when I was six or seven. I got really into skateboarding, and I think skateboarding actually has lead to everything that I do now... I got into graffiti art through skateboarding, and in eighth grade I decided I wanted to take art classes so I could get better at graffiti. Once I started taking these art classes, I realized, 'Wow. Art's really kind of exciting.'" He earned an BFA from Baltimore's Maryland Institute College of Art—with 80 percent of his tuition paid with scholar-

ships—and an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles.

According to Fallah, his determination and work ethic are an inheritance from his parents. He believes that he differs from his art world peers in that he is comfortable making money from his artwork. “My parents moved to America in 1987 with \$82, and so I watched my dad work seven days a week for 15, 20 years straight. Now they live in the suburbs of Virginia, and they have their Lexus SUV. But they worked for all of that. So working hard and taking pride in your work was really instilled in me at an early age. You know, a lot of artists feel bad about making money, but I don’t resist making a profit. Everybody should make a living and live comfortably. And if you can do that doing something that you can stand behind and believe in, then, why not?”

Approximately 50 percent of Fallah’s income is from *Beautiful/Decay* and from his partnership in Something in the Universe, a design company. Fallah acknowledged that he never expected to support himself as a businessman. “I never started [the magazine] as a business. It was just a project that kind of kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger.... I never meant to have employees or have to deal with payroll and sick days and all that comes from running a company. It was a lot of trial and error because I was just a stupid painter going to college. I wasn’t a businessman with a business plan thinking, ‘All right, this is how I’m going to make a living.’”

The balance of his income comes from sales of his artwork. Fallah is adamant that artists should be compensated not just for the materials cost of a particular piece but also for the time spent making the piece, just as workers in other sectors are paid for their time. “If you spend an entire month on a painting, if you had a decent job, let’s say for a month you make five or six thousand dollars. Well then, that painting has to be worth at least five or six thousand dollars because you spent an entire month. And that’s not including the time you sit around thinking about it because making art isn’t one of those things where you can just get up and go... It’s not as easy as it seems. If it was, everybody would be doing it.”

Although the day-to-day details of their lives as working artists are very different, Fallah shares Bischoff’s sentiment that the emphasis in the phrase “working artist” should be on the word “working.”



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

The Ultimate Mom Painting (2009) by Amir H. Fallah.

“[Making art] is definitely work with a capital ‘W’ ... I get up and I punch in at my studio and I get down to business. I don’t have any days off from *Beautiful/Decay*. Most artists, they teach and have two or three days a week where they’re just in their studio. I don’t have that luxury, so I get two hours every day to work, and I do it religiously. Most artists I know, I tell them that I wake up at the crack of dawn and paint. They’re like, ‘You’re nuts!’ But I have no choice. It’s either that or not make any artwork.” 🐣

➡ A video of Amir H. Fallah constructing his sculpture *Invisible Triangle* at the Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco, California, can be found on the NEA website at www.arts.gov.



From left: Joshua Clark, Tom Jenks, Rebecca Kaden, and Carol Edgarian at work in the *Narrative* office.

The Business of Books

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the *Paris Review*. But it seemed to us, perhaps because we live in California with Silicon Valley in our backyard, that the technological revolution was going to affect everyone and everything, publishing included. And that if writers didn't get on board, and soon, they would be increasingly marginalized."

With a staff of more than 100, including legions of dedicated volunteers, and an annual budget of approximately \$500,000, *Narrative* publishes more than 350 artists each year. The magazine's contributors include writers of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, such as Amy Bloom, Chris Abani, and Gail Godwin. The table of contents also boasts cartoonists, graphic novelists, and journalists. Though the online model allows the magazine to publish more authors than many print houses, Edgarian maintains that the rigor of the editorial process is the same. "Once we accept a manuscript, we work one-on-one with the writer—editing, nurturing, nudging—to bring forth the best that piece is destined to be. From there the piece goes

through rigorous copy-editing, on into production. Then, instead of binding, the manuscript gets put into various formats, which can include such platforms as audio, video, online, print-on-demand, Kindle, and very soon we'll be launching an iPhone app."

Although Coffee House and *Narrative* deliver their final products in different modes, in many ways the two presses are more alike than different. Echoing Kornblum's sentiments, Edgarian is extremely proud of the attention with which the press reviews manuscripts. "Every manuscript submitted to *Narrative*, whether it comes through a prominent literary agent or from a rural outpost, receives careful consideration. Every manuscript that shows signs of promise receives a response: a note of encouragement, a request for more work, or an extensive collaboration through successive drafts until the piece is right. We do a lot of nurturing of new talent."

Publishing—whether in print or online—is an expensive proposition. Kornblum explains that his press has three primary revenue streams. Income from the press's distributor, which sells the imprint's titles to bookstores, wholesalers, and other vendors, accounts for about 90 percent of sales earnings. In-house sales,

which includes everything from titles sold directly through the Coffee House website to special orders such as to schools, accounts for the remaining ten percent. Finally, the press garners income from selling subsidiary rights—such as anthology, electronic, and translation rights—the profit from which is split 50/50 with the author. Overall, about 70 percent of the press’s budget comes from earned income, though Kornblum said there have been times when it has depended more on grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and other funders.

Funding is also a pressing concern for *Narrative*, particularly as its content is distributed free of charge. After a period of self-funding, the editors began to seek donor support. With the encouragement of those donors, the magazine subsequently looked at generating earned income. “The whole idea of the magazine—to give away premier new work for free, yet pay authors competitively—is pretty revolutionary. It’s a tall order. Through premium content, a nascent advertising program, merchandizing, and contest and entry fees, we’re working to narrow the gap between donated and earned revenue. Only very recently the balance is about equal. We still have a lot of work to do.”

Despite the countless challenges of independent literary publishing, Kornblum and Edgarian have no plans to slow down. And neither is overly concerned about persistent evidence that the literary audience is shrinking. In Kornblum’s estimation, keeping and growing an audience for literature is the publisher’s

National Book Award finalist Patricia Smith at the Coffee House Press office.

PHOTO BY ESTHER PORTER



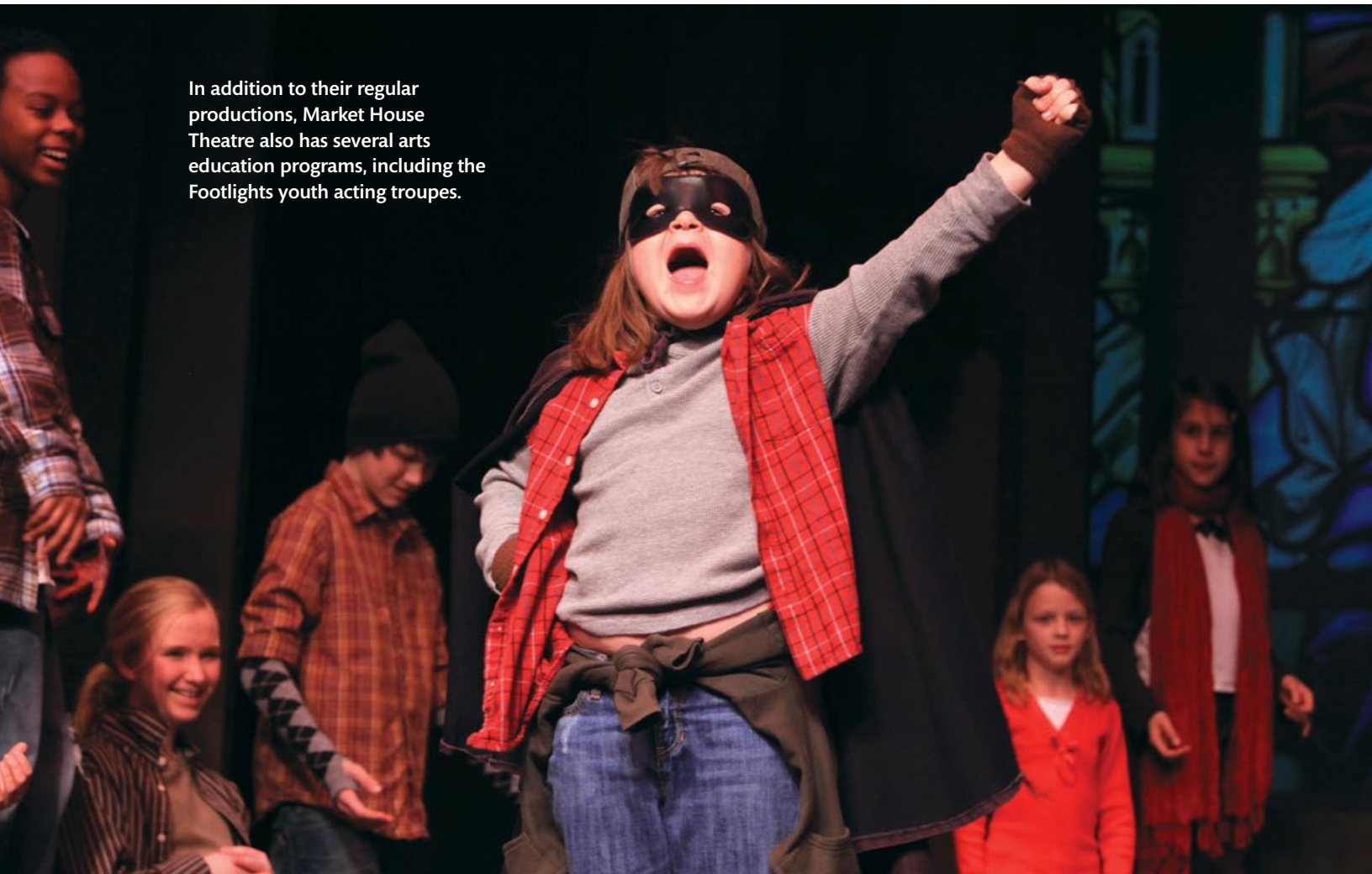
***Narrative* co-founders and editors Carol Edgarian and Tom Jenks with author Robert Stone at an event sponsored by the literary journal in 2009.**

challenge. “I think that books need to get better. Publishers need to explore ways to continue to add value to the books they make. In some instances that might mean returning to some of the design values of the past, in which a book was designed to help enhance the vision of the author and to reflect the beauty and the import of what the author was trying to say.”

Edgarian is equally hopeful that quality material will attract readers. “Give ‘em the good stuff—I mean stories, poems, essay, graphic novels, literary puzzlers, letters to a young author—and they will come. I just have to believe that, and seeing that our readership has grown 50 percent yearly, I think that the stats prove it. The desire, the urgency even, to be told a great story—to be moved, entertained, incited, illuminated—it just never wanes....We are in an enormously inspiring and exciting time. Everything that looks like a challenge is also an opportunity.” 🐦

🔗 An audio interview by Adam Kampe with Hannah Tinti, co-founder of *One Story* literary journal, and an audio interview by Josephine Reed with A.B. Spellman, an author who has been published by Coffee House Press, can be found on the NEA website at www.arts.gov.

In addition to their regular productions, Market House Theatre also has several arts education programs, including the Footlights youth acting troupes.



Making Art Work

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wonderful for the theater. “When we work on a project for Market House, we get to the point where we’re not tracking hours...whatever it takes to get it done. That’s good for our team.”

People like volunteering for MHT, which is good because the theater has around 300 volunteers per year, enabling it to stretch its budget to put on 12 to 18 productions each season. Just like the full-time staff, the volunteers have a strong work ethic.

While occasionally Market House hires musicians or directors, the actors are all volunteers. Despite their significant day jobs, people like surgical nurse Melanie Koch and chemical engineer Chris Schnarr and sales director Fowler Black all take their art very seriously. Black, for example, was a vocal major in college with hopes of a singing career, but economic realities

lead him back home to Paducah. Fortunately his job at the Convention & Visitors Bureau is across the street so that he can walk to rehearsals and then home to his loft on the same block. “When I’m in a play at Market House, I basically live within the radius of one block until it’s over.” Though it is a lot of work, he loves performing with Market House, “Where else would you have the ability to work on a first-rate production and still live in a small town?” asked Black.

“We give people big-city art with a laid-back style of living in Paducah,” said Michael Cochran. All it takes is dozens of local businesses, hundreds of volunteers, a dedicated staff, and a lot of hard work. ♡

➔ An audio interview by Josephine Reed with Danette Olsen of Festival Theater in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin, on how their organization works to put on performances can be found on the NEA website at www.arts.gov.

Nothing Glamorous At All

A Talk with a Working Actor | BY PEPPER SMITH

Jeri Lynn Cohen has been a working actor in the Bay Area for about 25 years, performing with companies such as the Jewish Theatre, Magic Theatre, and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. In a recent e-mail interview, Cohen commented on why she loves her job, the ups and downs of the actor's life, and the importance of the arts.

NEA: *What do you love about your job?*

JERI LYNN COHEN: I love the community I work with. I love surrounding myself with others that are as passionate about what they do as I am. I love working with people that have faith in me, challenge me, are smarter than me.

NEA: *What's the hardest part?*

COHEN: The hardest thing about being an actor is not having any job security. Figuring out what you are going to do in between gigs is challenging and exhausting. Finding the right part-time job that is going to

give you the flexibility you need to go on auditions—or when you need to take time off for rehearsal—and that pays enough and doesn't run you down.

I often feel that working in the theater is not conducive to family life. I am a single parent, and when I am in performance I am constantly patching together childcare, which, if you are doing six or seven or eight shows a week, can be trying.

NEA: *What do you think would surprise people about life as an actor?*

COHEN: That there is nothing glamorous about it at all. That it is hard work. That it's not just the work that can be difficult and challenging but the getting of the work that can be stressful. That you have to remain flexible and resourceful in all aspects of your life so that you can make a life in the theater.

NEA: *Why do you think theater is important?*

COHEN: [It's] more important than ever because it brings the community together to experience a live production. We become more and more removed from gathering together to witness a happening and rely more than ever on computers and technology to tell us the story in a solitary setting. Theater is by nature a community experience and, unlike film or television, it still asks you to use your imagination.

NEA: *Overall, why are the arts important to you?*

COHEN: In this age when school budgets are being slashed left and right, the arts are the first thing to go. This is so wrong because, for many kids, it's the only way into understanding who they are.... Relating to someone's story or a visual image or being moved by a piece of music or movement, responding to it and realizing that you have a story too, that you might want to paint or make music or theater. You can't know it unless you are exposed to it, and you can't be exposed to it unless there is money to bring the arts to the kids or the kids to the arts. 🐦

PHOTO BY KEN FRIEDMAN

Jeri Lynn Cohen (left) in the Jewish Theatre San Francisco's production of Wendy Wasserstein's *The Sisters Rosensweig*.





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Artists at Work

BY SUNIL IYENGAR, DIRECTOR OF NEA RESEARCH & ANALYSIS OFFICE

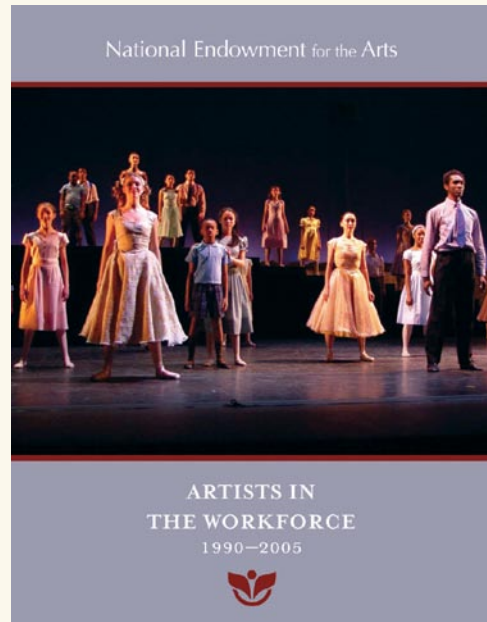
Not long after its inception in the mid-1970s, the National Endowment for the Arts' research office began to capture and report statistics on the artist labor force. The consequences were far-reaching: thanks to those early efforts, the agency has been able to track evolving patterns of

Nearly two million Americans are artists, representing a larger labor group than the legal profession, medical doctors, or agricultural workers.

—from *Artists in the Workforce*

employment and demographic characteristics for 11 distinct artist occupations in the U.S. The most recent fruits of that research have included a profile of artist workers in the new century, a comparison of women and men artists, and analyses of artist unemployment in a time of recession.

Such research would not be possible without the large federal data sets accessible through the U.S. Census Bureau, but in each case the NEA has conducted or commissioned original research to identify trends in how artists resemble or distinguish themselves from other types of workers. In recent years, the American Community Survey has promised a wealth of timely, emerging data about artists. NEA researchers fully expect to mine this resource as they extend the narrative about artists into the coming decade.



➔ Visit the research section of the NEA website at www.arts.gov/research to learn more about working artists in the research study *Artists in the Workforce*.