

**A COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC FORUM ON:
THE STATE OF SMALL TO MID-SIZED THEATERS**
February 17, 2009

DAVID PINCUS

I was going to ask if anyone likes theatre in this audience. (Whoops and calls from the audiences) What do I hear?

My name is David Pincus. I am the Chair of Community Board 4's Theater Task Force and it is my intense pleasure to welcome such a diverse, talented, smart and passionate group of individuals. And I'm talking about you and our panel who join us tonight to talk about the state of small to mid-sized theatre in New York City. It's an important question and before I go any further, I do have to give a shout out to John Martello the Executive Director of the Players Club and his incredible staff, who are providing, what is perhaps now the finest community facility space in all of New York City. I am expecting community board heads and elected representatives to be calling John very shortly to hold all of their meetings here. John, I give you fair warning.

Listen folks, the reason we're here is because this is an incredible moment in time, when forces beyond our control are affecting our daily lives and more specifically for the arts. When we had an amendment called the Coburn Amendment, which if you folks know, it's no more and it's a beautiful thing. The reason that it's no more is that there were hundreds of thousands of individuals and arts organizations who wrote to support restoring \$50 Million dollars to the National Endowment for the Arts funds and it was because of citizen activism. Look at this room tonight folks. You should applaud yourselves because we are all fighting and learning about what we need to do for the arts.

There are so many people here to mention. I just want to say that when I first became Chair of the Theatre Task Force, I asked J.D. Noland, my esteemed Chair of my board, I said "what does a theatre task force do?" and he said, "well, I have no idea." So what I did was I called my good friend David Diamond, who is the head of the Arts Task Force for Community Board 5 and the first thing we did was we called Ginny from ART/NY and we met with her for 2 hours and that conversation led us to Tamara at the FAB Arts District on West 4th Street - there she is - which led us on to Paul Bartlett, who is the head of the Arts Task Force for Community Board 3, which led us to Paul Nagel, our moderator, which led me to Shay Gines of the New York Innovative Theatre Foundation and John Clancy of the League of Independent Theatres. These people and everyone else here at this panel, what they do with their lives, they have dedicated their lives to support small, midsize and large theatre in New York City. What this event is meant to do is to support their efforts in any way we can.

What community boards do is that they advocate on behalf of the beliefs and passions of their neighbors and this is obviously a very very important issues and that is why we want to learn from this event. We want to take from the panel discussion afterwards all the positive solutions

that could come from it, because whenever there is crisis, there is always opportunity. And that is what we want to focus on tonight. What can this community of artists and activists do to support theatre in New York City, which is something that I think we can all agree on is what needs to happen.

In terms of the make-up of this panel, I do have to give just one slight little note; originally on all public materials, we had noticed that Andy Burmeister from the Department of Cultural Affairs would be with us and I was thrilled that Andy was going to there. It turns out that I mucked it up completely and Andy never received my invitation and as a result, if you were expecting the DCA to be here, there are representatives here from the DCA, and everything that is said here is going to go back and be part of the discussion. We are just so honored to have so many representatives including Assemblyman O'Donnell from the state's Arts, Sports and Tourism Board and that committee is doing wonderful things for the arts in New York City and the state. So, our thanks to Assemblyman O'Donnell.

Okay folks, briefly just to let you know this is going to be about a 2 hour event. It's going to be fast-paced and fun and at the end of it you are all invited to go downstairs to the pub and at the Players Club, the finest private club for American actors in all of the world and you can use cash or credit, but there is absolutely no tipping allowed, the sacrifices we make for art. Okay.

And now, it is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you a man who actually gave me my job. A man who believes strongly in the arts and theatre in New York City and a man who fights tirelessly for that and also for community boards, which is a wonderful function of city government. It is a pleasure to introduce to you the Borough President of Manhattan, Mr. Scott Stringer. (applause)

SCOTT STRINGER

That's very nice. Thank you very much. That's a very warm welcome introduction. I don't sing and dance but I'm going to try - no.

I want to first start out by thanking all the community boards involved in this effort tonight. This is an extraordinary group of people who have come together to make change and to really protect an amazing industry in this city. Everybody knows that no matter where you come from, every night there are people in this world - whether its people in Southern Illinois, in Utah and Iowa - there are kids who are talented and want to make their way to Broadway or the box theatres not on Broadway and they are dreaming every single night. They want to get out of Montana, they want to flee Iowa and they want to come right to the center of the universe, which is New York City and when they get here, what do they dream about? They dream about the theatre. This is their goal since they were little kids. In fact, some of you in this audience probably have lived your life on that basis. And the reason that we need all those young talented people to come here? It's just good for business for the city. What makes us different from any other major city in the world? We're the best at this. We're the best at theatre production. We're the best at the arts. We're the best in our cultural institutions. And quite frankly, Politicians, like some Wall

Streeters, have thought this industry would sustain itself. That no matter what was thrown at it, we all thought theatre is going to be here, Broadway is going to be here, Off-Broadway, Off-Off-Broadway, it's always going to be here. There are always going to be creative people and they are able to apply their trade. And let's face it, when we look at big development projects, what's the first thing sometimes community boards do and elective officials do? Daniel O'Donnell knows this – we think of two things: we think of a big development project and we think, "okay it blocks the sun and light of a neighborhood so we have to reduce its density;" and then we question "what about affordable housing?" We sometimes never get around to asking that development what is the impact on the surrounding cultural institutions, the arts, the theatre and if you are going to build, can you insure that you keep these arts institutions in place for the next generation? Somehow, we don't always ask that question. And now, given the fiscal crisis, we're feeling that in a very big way.

So we need tonight to begin a process of coming up with new, fresh ideas. I ask the panel to also think in terms of looking at preserving theatre space small and large (but small) doing that through the lens of land use and zoning. How can government, city council, borough presidents, mayors look at this when we look at how we develop our city from a planning perspective. That is, I believe our best shot at maintaining and expanding dance, theatres and all kinds of different small, you know, "mom and pop theatres" that we love so much. This is where people get their start. This is where people get exposed to the theatre. The stakes here are so high for this economy because, let's face it, the big hundred story 50, 60, 70 story building, the tourists (the 45 million tourists) are not coming here to see our big buildings. They are not coming here to see our large big box stores. That's not why they come here. The reason they come is because they want to see our art and our talent and they also want to get a peek at us. Because we are so different looking and we speak all these different languages and we walk funny and we have this view of ourselves. If you ever listen to Danny O'Donnell and I driving in a car, two New Yorkers yelling at each other - talking friendly - that's what they want to see. They want to see us talking to ourselves on the street.

They didn't prepare notes for me really tonight, so I am now drifting. I'm going to try to get out of this.

I would say that we do need them to come here and we do need to keep New York vibrant. So, think tonight about how you plan a neighborhood or how you plan a borough; how you look at the paradigm of zoning. How you would create enough space and enough certainty that Arts would be part of the economic analysis of a community and don't just look at it through the downtown Community Board. Look at it beyond the borough of Manhattan to Brooklyn, to Queens, the Bronx and Staten Island. Think about an artists community thriving, beginning to thrive in the South Bronx and then come above 110th Street sometime and see the little theatres and the excitement that is going on whether it's dance or whole different cultural pieces of work that happen everyday on a shoe string budget.

Help us identify tonight a revenue stream. Help us identify tonight the goals that you want our elected officials to aspire to. And at the end of this, create a document that will hold your friends, the elected officials you like, to a higher standard. So the next time an elected official

comes here to great applause, they will also be expected to tell you what they're actually doing. You have to hold us to a higher standard. Too many times, because we are progressive Democrats and we are liberals in a liberal city, we get a pass - and I would say this about myself. I want you to give us a roadmap to the products you expect. We can't do this alone. We have to do it in coalition. It has to be a multi-racial coalition, meaning different neighborhoods. It also has to be an inter-generational coalition. We got to energize the young people and we got to put them together with the older folks and then we got to be able to campaign to keep our small theatres at the top of the priority list when it comes to a recession and difficult times.

I was just glad to be here. I want to just shout out to Anthony Borelli - this is a great panel. He is the Director of Land Use and Zoning in our office and I want you to ask him about some of the work we've been doing with Speaker Quinn in terms of making sure that we get commitments from developers for small arts space and back office space. I hope he's going to talk about that. That's a success story, what we've been able to do in the Hell's Kitchen community. You should know about that because I think we should expand it. And then I want to just pledge to work with all of you in the coming months on this issue. This is a very huge crowd - you should see yourselves here - if we can get this crowd to become part of the group that's going to make this happen, I promise you, I promise you, that you will keep this issue alive in the '09 election and in the 2010 election and eventually people are going to get it, that theatre is good for business, good for the next generation, good for people who look at New York in a way that makes us the most exciting place on Earth.

Good luck tonight with the panel. Get to work. Thank you.

DAVID DIAMOND

Thank you Scott, Manhattan Borough President for being here. My name is David Diamond I am the Chair of the Theatre Task Force for Community Board 5. I've been on Community Board 5 for about 17 years and I've seen both of our communities go through a lot of changes. I am also one of the founders of a theatre and I've been working in the theatre myself for over 25 years in the city and I'm the founder of a theatre called the Barrow Group, which now has its home on West 36th Street in a building with the Workshop Theatre and the Abingdon Theatre. You could call it the Theatre Building and the Theatre Building is kind of an amazing space in that 3 small theatre companies moved into a part of the city that had virtually no night life or any kind of activity after dark. It's the Garment Center, but since we moved in, there are now 2 more theatres on the block, there are high end restaurants on the block, there is a hotel on the block. I mean this neighborhood has changed. And it only changed after the theatres moved in. So that is just a little taste of what theatres bring to a community and how important it is to keep them in our communities and keep them growing.

Seeing all of you here tonight, I am really gratified to see everybody here. It dawns on me that we have 2 very important advantages when it comes to looking at the issues we are facing and those are, our community - the fact that all of us can work together to affect change and because we are theatre people, because we are artists, we have our creativity. So my challenge to all of us

is that we use our best assets, our creativity in working out ways to address the issues that we have. So that is my challenge to us.

Now it is my great pleasure to introduce somebody who is no stranger to both creativity and community, formerly the Executive Director of Theatre Communications Group, before that he was the head of the theatre program at the National Endowment for the Arts he was the Associate Artistic Director of a theatre and currently serves as Arts Program Director for the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. It is my pleasure to introduce to you Mr. Ben Cameron. (applause)

BEN CAMERON

Thank you. Thank you everybody. It's hard to remember that just one year ago Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama were still locked in a dead heat for the Presidential Nomination, General Motors was happily cranking out hummers, Sarah Palin was unknown outside of the frozen north and the Dow Jones closed at 12,348 – 5,000 points higher than today. How much can change in just one quick year. With the devastating plunge in the national economy we now face a future collectively that feels more uncertain, more paralyzing and more daunting than any in my life time at least and certainly we know that theatre and artists have felt the plunges as acutely as any. Already, many of you have seen individual giving drop late in 2008, comparable drops in government and corporate giving are likely to be felt this year indeed – a year in which both those sectors could go into freefall. And in foundation giving, where I work at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the drop will begin to be felt although the erosion will be more gradual since many foundations, like our own, base giving budgets on a 24 to 36 month average of assets, meaning that the true drop won't be felt until 2010 or beyond.

Already many of you have taken 10% to 15% preemptive cuts in current year budgets and are planning to take as large a cut again for the coming year. And let's face it, we can all sit down together and recite the litany of traditional solutions; staff down sizing, hiring freezes, reduced programming – whether in number of shows, scale or length of events, elimination or radical reduction in employee benefits – if there are any that have it in the first place, hikes in ticket prices and at last resort fire some, list that feels to many of us futile and insufficient. As an arts community therefore it is absolutely right and imperative that this is the time we come together to explore vital new strategies for the future. We have to be thoughtful, sincere and committed about partnerships and collaborations, shared services, reduction of duplicated efforts, the possibilities of mergers, including potentially mergers across discipline lines and mergers involving complimentary rather than duplicate of organizations – like a playwright development program merging with a producing theatre. As David's already said, we have to be creative in substance and approach and I hope tonight we take seriously the words of Bill Moyers when he says “creativity is easy.” It means four things; you show up, you really show up – senses vibrating, you listen deeply, you speak the truth and you let go of predetermined results.

In a time when scarcity of resources can heighten the competitive urge and it can be really easy for us to turn on one another, we've got to elevate the discourse on the arts ecology,

remembering that praising theatre while disparaging dance or opera or arguing for the avant garde while disparaging the mainstream or pleading the case of the small at the expense of the large advantages nobody and harms us all. The future is very, as Barry Nalebuff at Yale said is about “coopitition” – cooperating to grow the pie for everyone, even while it’s inevitable that we will compete for our piece of it. And frankly, as has already been said, this week has proven the strength of that approach, with the return of that \$50 Million dollars earmarked for the arts in the Federal Economic Recovery legislation. An earmark, that was eliminated by the senate, but later restored as a result of focused advocacy, activism and a carefully articulated sense of our importance to our communities. We need to grab every lesson we can from that; the value of a strategic, coordinated message, the value of data in building our cases, the power of celebrity spokespeople on our behalf - thank God, Robert Redford called Nancy Pelosi (I’m telling you) and the dedication not least of all of our boards and our political allies.

In this time we have to approach law makers, not with palms outstretched, saying “this is what we need from the government”. We need to approach the government competent and proud, ready to articulate what we will do for the world. Because we are not part of the problem, we are part of the solution. We will employ. We will reach into the educational system. We will stimulate tourism and more. Arguments based on action that establishes us as participants in solving problems not in creating them.

All this said I’d be remiss if I were to suggest that the financial is the only crisis that we face. Even before the economy bottomed out, we were getting together annually to talk about; annual audience erosion, lamenting the decline of subscriptions, the growing rate of CHURN – for those of you that know that term - and the tendency of single ticket buyers to purchase at shorter and shorter intervals of time. We were bemoaning the rampant effects of technology – technology not only as competition for leisure time, but as a shaper of consumer expectations psychology, training us all to believe that we could shop at 8:00 at night or 3:00 in the morning and that custom make products will arrive at our own homes. Advantages of consumption that we in the performing arts with set curtain times, set venues, attendant inconveniences a price in transportation and more simply can not reach. And we lamented the affect of technology on economics, asking what will it mean when we ask a young person to pay \$40, \$50 or \$60 for a theatre ticket, when that young person is used to downloading culture on demand 24 hours a day on the internet for .99 a song or for free? I could argue to us all that the crisis we face in the arts is not financial at all. We are in a seismic fundamental redefinition of culture and communication in this country – a redefinition that has left the recorded music industry in disarray. It is threatening bookstores and newspapers and traditional broadcast media and in a world of technology, changing demographics and globalism, the crisis we truly face is a crisis of relevance and urgency, the financial merely redefines the resources we bring to bear.

Now if you entered this down turn on a wave of growing audiences, growing contributions, growing surpluses and growing visibility, you might not recognize yourself in that description and God love you, this time, may be for you, about hunkering down and staying close and just getting through. But if you heard in your past about chronic undercapitalization, chronic undercompensation and if you are engaged in the struggles I briefly described, the road ahead, both individually and collectively is different. And perhaps you too will heed the words of

Abraham Lincoln just as Barack Obama did in his inaugural when he quoted Lincoln saying “the dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present as our case is new so must we think anew and act anew.” And you might actually find hope in the words of ecoactivist Van Jones when he said recently “sometimes it takes a breakdown to produce a breakthrough.”

The groups that are most likely, I think, to survive in the community are those committed to the breakthrough – to essentializing, to become rigorously clear about our values, questioning every organizational assumption that guides them, optimizing their assets based on success whatever that means to you – not just financial – and making conscious choices about what they’ll stop doing in order to free up the time, the resources and the energy to experiment in absolutes for the future. And to that end, I urge all of you to be prepared to answer four questions: what is the value of my theatre for my community, (harder) what is the value my theatre alone has or my theatre has better than anyone else – because in this economy duplicated and second-rate value is unlikely to stand, third how will my community be damaged if I went away tomorrow? If we can’t answer that, the only supporters we’ve got already sit in our seats. And fourth and finally, how can my organization in my community be optimally structured, managed and behaved to be my community’s best conduit to the theatre? A question that invites us to question every assumption about how we behave from rehearsals to tech rehearsals to pricing structure and more. And frankly successful groups we see all over the country are asking those questions. They are moving beyond paradigms of assumption to paradigms of engagement, seizing the true lessons of the internet that it’s not just broadcast, it’s social networking and co-creation and it’s not audiences, it’s partners in creativity. Our job is as much social interaction orchestration as it is to produce plays. Many are embracing the counterintuitive, as you know Michael Kaiser encouraged you to do. He says in a down turn, increase the money you spend on artists and programming that’s why audiences love you and increase the money in marketing saying “you can’t save your way to health”. Many are consciously becoming more risk positive and by this I mean “risk” not “irresponsibility.” Pushing past your comfort zone with your best knowledge, your best information, your best council because we know a business that does not risk does not grow. A relationship with a husband, wife or partner that does not risk, does not grow. The performer who does not risk, however technically proficient, never achieves the true artistic moment for which we all live and work.

Whatever the route you take, I urge you to seize it creatively, energetically, putting aside resources to tackle new initiatives to stretch us in unforeseen ways. And if we do this collectively, I think we’re not going to look back on this as an ordeal of survival, we’ll look back on this as a true renaissance. By that I mean what Doug Rushkoff called a “collective renegotiation of old ideas to reach a new consensual reality.”

Let me close by saying, no one in the theatre field is better positioned to lead us to this renaissance than you are. Unencumbered as many of you are – unencumbered by permanent facilities, facilities that often entail debt, maintenance and depreciation. Many of you have the potential for nimbleness, and fleetness and virtuality that your larger colleagues will envy. Working outside of prescriptive labor agreements that bar technological access to performers and performances, many of you can actively lead the way in new technologically mediated performance and connection with audiences. Working with young people, as many of you do,

not through ancillary outreach but through true collaboration, you are at the forefront of working with the future for the future, understanding its emergent dramaturgy and its way of connecting and convening. You are the first to see technology not as a threat but as a liberator, recognizing that we all now have the same tools as the fortune 500 companies and the future is going to be less-and-less about who has the most money and more-and-more about who has the best idea. And let's face it for many of us in this room, the old systems didn't work and rather than standing in fear about what we are about to lose, we stand poised to reap the benefits of the change that's on us. Many of you are aligned with growing movements in social justice or education or in the environment or the innovation or illiteracy and more.

Paul Woodrow in *The Necessity of Theatre*, a book I will always thank Anne Bogart for sending my way, said we need the theatre because it's a double act. It's a double act of watching and being watched, a sort of contract of mutual responsibility, teaching us to pay attention so that we will know when to care. In an age where computer games outsell music and movie recordings combined, when the average young person, before he graduates from college or before she graduates from college has spent more than 10 thousand hours playing video games – that's 417 days 24 hours a day – games that too often teach us to be self serving, violent and impervious to suffering, theatre teaches us compassion, empathy and humanity. If we have ever been in a time when we have to confront the perils of a market mentality uninformed by social conscience and the emptiness of financial enrichment without spiritual fulfillment that time is now. If we have ever had the opportunity as a society to redefine the bottom line from profit alone to a new triple bottom line; good for business, good for people, good for the planet, that time is now. If ever, as today, in the face of that announcement, you probably heard it in the subways, “please report any suspicious behavior or individuals to the authorities nearest you” an announcement that teaches us to look at our fellow human beings, especially if they don't look like us, with hostility and fear and suspicion, we need the theatre, the theatre that teaches us to come together to look at our fellow human beings with generosity and curiosity. And we have never needed it more than we need it now.

As we work together let me urge you to make this the beginning of a longer journey, of a conspiracy in the Latinate sense of breathing together, in which you embrace and applaud not only each other, but the colleagues who by virtue of size or discipline sit outside this room tonight, remembering that wherever we work in the arts that we do it for one reason: we honor the past, we commemorate the present, we shape and we change the future in a way that does honor to all and violence to none.

If we wish our nation to be a healed community, let's begin by manifesting the community we wish to see tonight. I salute you all as activists for larger good in this quest. I promise you the hand of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is outstretched to you now and for years to come and I thank you for your kindness and patience in listening to me tonight.

Thank you and God speed you in your work.

It is my great pleasure to yield the stage to one of the greats of this and any other theatre chapter in America's history, the founder and Artistic Director of the Living Theatre, the great Judith Malina. (applause)

JUDITH MALINA

Thank you. What a wonderful company to be speaking to. My goodness. Here we all are together, finally. It has been a long time that we've been divided – various and rivals. What a terrible word “rivalry.” And now we are all together because there is a crisis and we recognize it.

The Living Theatre has always been in crisis. (laughter) Always. I think that one of the reasons that I've been asked to speak here tonight is because I'm probably the senior crisis person in the room. The Living Theatre was incorporated in 1945 and we have been going strong ever since. We've seen all kinds of trouble and all kinds of difficulty. So far we've overcome them all because we just closed our latest production day before yesterday, our revival of *The Connection*. We continue to work under very difficult circumstances. And we'll talk about that, about the difficulty and about not being smashed by the difficulty, but considering every difficulty and challenge that we had to overcome. We've had five venues in the New York City area over the years of our existence and all of them; we've been displaced from – sometimes dramatically, sometimes economically. As soon as we are displaced from somewhere, we start to look for our next venue and if we can't yet make it, we go out and we do street theatre so that we don't have to stop working and doing what we love and what we need to do and we continue under those circumstances. So in once sense you don't get discouraged by anything, but we can be encouraged by the fact that here we are, all of us together and finally, finally we can find the solidarity to have some strength – the cohesion to really make it work for all of us because all of us suffer from all this terrible financial needs and difficulty of communicating our real purposes. Everybody here has struggled with those questions. And now we have the possibility to find some new tactics, some new forms –the Living Theatre is always looking for new forms on stage, for new forms of creative work that the actors together can collectively invent. And now we need to find a way that all of us in solidarity can overcome the difficulty of the current crisis.

My associate Brad Burgess who is a sports fan has something to tell us about the possibility of some other forms of support of each other the way they do in the sports world and where we can learn a little bit from the possibility of the richer supporting the poor, of the powerful supporting those that are struggling. And I think we should look into the possibilities of new forms just as in the theatre. The Living Theatre is always looking for new forms for reaching the audience, new forms of improvisation, new forms of dealing with words and movement. So we have to find new forms, new forms of supporting ourselves, new forms of supporting each other. That's what I'm pleading for tonight and I'm very very happy to see such a large group of people expressing enthusiasm and hope.

Thank you.

PANEL DISCUSSION SECTION

PAUL NAGEL

Hi, my name is Paul Nagel and I'm going to be moderating this evening's panel. I want to first introduce the panel. We have Ginny Louloudes Executive Director of ART/NY; Anthony Borelli, Director of Land Use from Manhattan Borough President Stringer's office; Kevin Cunningham, the Executive Artistic Director of Three Legged Dog; John Clancy the Executive Director of the League of Independent Theatre and the co-Founder of the New York International Fringe Festival; Katie Denney the President of SNEAC (Student Network Exploring Arts and Culture) at Wagner NYU; and Tamara Greenfield, Executive Director for the Fourth Arts Block.

I did want to acknowledge some people in the audience; we have Assistant Commissioner Kathy Hughes from the Department of Cultural Affairs. Thank you very much for coming. Daniel DeServo from the Land Use of the City Council. We have the Director Head of NYSCA's Theatre Program, Robert Zuckerman, and of course a great friend of the arts, Assembly Member O'Donnell.

I also want to thank community boards 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for pulling this together. Anybody who has had experience with community boards knows what that implies. So specifically thank you to David Pincus, David Diamond, Paul Bartlett, Paul Sipos, Brad Hoylman, Harold Reed and David Gruber.

One of the reasons that we are here is because it's important for artists to be involved in the political dialogue in a way that we have here-to-fore apparently not been. Even countries that seem to be far ahead of us – Italy, Canada – Italy's Berlusconi just cut their cultural budget by 1.3 Billion Euros over the next 3 years. Howard up in Canada slashed the Canadian budget for 46 Million dollars and called the culture sector “grant seeking whiners” – that was in October of this year. So, even in places where culture seems to have been advancing it only takes a political wind to shake all of the ground beneath us and we must become stronger than that. We must have a political foundation that isn't subject to those winds and that is part of the charge that I see here for us tonight.

How many people in the audience are from the cultural sector? And how many are from government or community boards? We need to change that proportion. I wanted to just quickly give the government and community board people a snapshot of the theatre industry. So, anyone on the board, starting with Tamara, who has either a theatre company or theatre clients, would you rate the current health and stability of your organizations: excellent, good, fair or poor.

TAMARA GREENFIELD

Well, I have 16 member organizations in Fourth Arts Block, so its hard to generalize about everybody, because I think they are facing very different challenges, but I would say it's fair to good and I don't know if all of the organizations would mirror that, but I think we've seen that we have in general pretty low ticket prices. We have some core loyal audiences and those audiences continue to come based on the interest and demand of that show. Even some of our

smallest groups have had sold out houses recently. So, in terms of audiences, I don't think that we've seen a huge change yet. That may change in the next six months, but in terms of funding, that is a different story. So there we've seen a significant drop off. However we do have a lot of small theatre companies that don't get a large amount of contributed incomes. So in some ways, they've always been working close to the bone and they're continuing to work close to the bone through their own means of raising funds.

JOHN CLANCY

The League was – we inaugurated in August with 65 charter members, The Living Theatre being probably the most celebrated. So, like Tamara said, it would be kind of hard to generalize. It's, I think, a lot of our members are younger theatre companies and they've become very entrepreneurial, very savvy. So they are making it, but if I had to rate the whole sector, I'd say it's fair to really really really awful. Part of the dispiriting problem is exactly what Judith was saying, 60 years and you get kicked out and you're struggling and you're going back. Well, these younger theatre companies are looking ahead and trying to imagine sustainability. It is not even a question of "Well let's strategize. Let's make our 5 year or 10 year plan." Just try to imagine sustainability. "Will we still be able to be in this space and be doing this 2 years from now?" So, it's awful.

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

Yeah, I mean, I guess that is a good way to put it. We kind of shifted in October, I think, from strategic to tactical footing. We're in okay shape. You know, we're good at turning, you know, the organization around to meet crises. In a lot of ways, 3LD was born of a major crisis, 9/11. What happened this time round, the effects of down turn in 2001 for example, after 9/11, we're seeing the same things that happened then over 9 months – 12 months having happened within 6 weeks in some cases. So we are in difficult shape right now and the artists that we work with – we have about 500 a year come through 3LD – are also moving forward, but when you start talking about what it's going to be like 6 months, 18 months out it, you know, looks very difficult and very different than it looked just 6 months ago.

GINNY LOULOUEDES

I'm going to sound, the first time in my life I think, optimistic. We have 350 theatres. The largest theatres with budgets in excess of 5 million dollars are struggling. They were the first ones to tell me that they were struggling and they have been responding very quickly. I want to give a shout out to Anne Dunning, who is here tonight and to her partner Nello McDaniel and their partner George Thorn who has been working with ART/NY for about 14 years. They taught a number of our theatres like HERE and New Georges and Page 73 Productions and the Present Company to stay lean. We worked with Elena, when she was dealing with Theatroium and suggested that perhaps encumbrance of a lease and a space and perhaps she should just produce. I would say that the 180 member theatres of ART/NY with budgets under \$100,000 a year and the 250 members of ART/NY who produce in spaces that they don't own are probably the healthiest because they don't have to worry about rent and maintenance. And let me tell you as a land lord of 2 spaces and about to be 3 and a house I own it's a bitch. You know. So you don't want to aspire to that. We have been teaching people – I guess we've been preparing people for what you are calling a crisis. I see it as an opportunity. I don't use the word crisis except in my email files

where I put all these documents called “Fiscal Crisis.” What I really think this is, I agree with Ben, this is the beginning of a new era. We’re going to look back on this as a turning point. I’m sure Judith will agree with me, that as she said, she was very brave and probably the first one to do this. Nobody handed her a Broadway theatre. So she found a space and turned it into a place where theatre was made and that is how we got a black box. There are a lot of spaces in the city right now that are empty, that are vacant. Someone would be very smart to turn those into spaces where art can be created. The really smart people like Anne Hamberger and Peculiar Works and Judith sometimes worked outdoors and didn’t need spaces. They went site specific and boy that was brilliant cause your set is right there and all you really had to worry about was the weather, not that that wasn’t anything to worry about.

I would say the mental health of my membership... I’m concerned. I would start with me. It’s not easy because we are in an era where there is no history we can look back on as a guidepost. We don’t know. When the end of the Roman era came, when the Roman Empire fell, we don’t know what their theatre companies did. You know. We just know that in the Middle Ages, theatre was done in churches. That may happen again. I don’t know, but I do feel hopeful.

At ART/NY we are in the process of undergoing a huge reassessment. I don’t think in 5 years theatre is going to look like what it looks like now. I think we will be working very differently.

PAUL NAGEL

In terms of theatre space and access to it, we are very lucky to have Anthony Borelli here on the panel. Could you speak to some of the things the city can do to help groups who currently – or policy changes that might be enacted that would help theatres stay in their spaces.

ANTHONY BORELLI

Sure. Hi, good evening. I think, first it is important for everyone here to understand very basically what the city’s land use review process is like and what it is. Often when you see developments going up, you wonder, “How is that happening? How are they allowing that to happen? I can’t believe they are doing that.” Most of those projects go up without any opportunity to publically comment one way or the other. But a small number of projects begin with a review by community boards. After a community board takes a look at a proposal and develops a recommendation it’s then passed along to the Borough President’s office. After the Borough President develops a recommendation, it moves on to the City Planning Commission. The City Planning Commission makes a decision one way or the other. After that it goes to the City Council and the Council Members and the City Council decide what it wants to do with the project. Ultimately after that, it goes to the Mayor.

I wanted to lay that all out to you. There are a lot of little details and timelines and deadlines and parameters, but I wanted to lay that out to you because there are a number of players involved in the land use process that this community should be engaging with, every step of the way. So when the community board hears a development or hears of an opportunity to develop city owned property in East Harlem, let’s say the community board, at the very beginning can say, “hey, you know, that old abandoned school is not a school any more. It really ought to serve the local needs and among the top of that list are artists housing.” So in East Harlem, for example,

PS109, a city owned property, abandoned for a very long time is now undergoing the land use process. A land use process to transform it into 100% affordable housing for artists and their families. Many of those artists will be theatre related folks. So that school could have very well been an affordable housing project. It could have been a cultural facility of another sort. It could have been sold to a private developer. But because the community and the local council member and the Borough President were aware of all the priorities, that project from the very beginning – and I should also say the Mayor’s office and the housing department, they were all well aware of this need and they lobbied from the very beginning. As a result, it is now going to be 100% affordable housing for artists.

There are other examples of that. I’ll just give you two more and then we can move on.

Another example is - there is a building in Battery Park, the Battery Maritime Building. It’s this old historic building. Ships use to go in and out of it. I’m not quite sure where they came or went, but it’s an historic building. Within it there’s a great public hall. The city wanted to develop it and wanted to realize some revenue from it. Part of the RFP called for the maintenance of the public hall as a public space forever. As part of the original application the developer wanted to make something akin to a food court that was open to the public. There are plenty of food courts downtown. There are plenty of places to go for lunch. The local community, the local council member, the Borough President said, “hey, why not make a space for artists for exhibits, for the performing arts?” So we had this long discussion with the city and the Economic Development Corporation and eventually we managed to get a commitment from the developer not to build a food court, but instead to provide space for free for local artists and cultural groups to exhibit their work and perform their works. That’s a big win. We would not have known about it if we were not hearing about it from the community constantly about their needs.

The last example, there is a major project on 125th Street in East Harlem, two and a half city blocks. The city wanted to redevelop it for primarily commercial and residential development and the community wanted to get involved in the discussion of how that development should happen. It forcefully convinced the Mayor to basically stop a redevelopment process that begun a number of years ago and to start over and include the input from a community task force. That community task force included community members, community board members, the elected officials, but it also had folks from the arts community. Now, as a result, the RFP was designed in a way to reflect priorities for the arts in that community. So the ultimate project, in addition to affordable housing and in addition to open space and in addition to retail, it will have space for a cultural user – a significant amount of space. Now we don’t know who that is or who has the money to occupy it and there’s lots of issues, as we heard about – operating expenses and the like. But as a result of the community’s engagement in that public process and as a result of knowing what the community wanted and what their needs were, that project will include a cultural space that will have some sort of theatre related use in there. None of those things would have happened if we didn’t happen to be tuned into what the local needs were.

And those are three examples. There are probably a hundred that we missed. And that is one of the reasons that I’m here today is to basically argue for your greater involvement by all of you

and engaging in the public process in making that roadmap as my boss Borough President Stringer said so that we can be held accountable as government. There is no reason that we should not be informed and there is no reason why you should not prepare a platform for us to be judged on. So....

PAUL NAGEL

And I think part of the issue is that there is no sort of central information bank for culturalists to know when these opportunities are coming up. And that might be something that we want to think about demanding.

John, in terms of space, how much of it an issue for your members and what do you think could help them?

JOHN CLANCY

It's a very large issue. I'm a director as well and a playwright and I think the – and there are a lot of members here as well – the way I was framing this is a theatre company without a space is a football team without a field. It's difficult to get much better. It's difficult to be ready and to just walk out there and do your best work. The dream of many theatre companies, many young theatre companies, is – and it is a dream for all of them – is to rehearse and perform in the same space. To have a – I'm seeing heads nodding here – and it seems like that's also a hundred zillion dollars. It seems, you know, like that's the same level of reality of that vision. So I think it's critical. I think it's critical. The idea of some sort of an announcement or awareness that these spaces are available, that's a great idea. To be very simplistic, I'm hearing wonderful things “we're in a renaissance, this is an opportunity” I'm hearing these things and – it's great, the enthusiasm, but nothing will change if we don't do something here and I mean, we the people in this room, who are here working together. So very simplistically, for me, if I were to be able to tell my members and every other theatre company, 99 seat theatre company or smaller that the existing cultural institutions, the existing theatres are going to share the space with you. “There's a lobby here, you know, you can rehearse in the lobby when we're dark and we'll rehearse in the main room.” If the city – I walk by, you know, Essex Street Market, is basically sitting there and if the city said, “you can have this until we, you know – sweat equity.” We build it up and it makes it sort of – I know this is very simplistic, but for me the fact that we need space – and frankly I think we need space before we need money – we need space, and there is space. That's the bridge – that's a very practical bridge we should be thinking about tonight and going forward.

PAUL NAGEL?

I want to interject 2 ideas I usually bring up doing these kinds of panels. One is that it takes – it is unbelievable how few people it takes on message to move a politician, if the message is sophisticated and unified. It's very very local. Keep that in mind. And I forgot what the other one was.

So the Community Board Task Force members gave me some ideas. One of them has to do with this, in terms of sharing. Apparently – I was approached, when I was sitting here, by FIT, which has facilities available and doesn't have a mechanism for making the community aware. So one

of the community board members suggested a clearinghouse for groups that are looking for potential partners to facilitate economy of scales to locate theatre space and broker usage.

GINNY LOULOUDES

Newyorkspace.com already exists. So I just think you should just - somebody should reach out to them. I think they would have a mechanism for facilitating or brokering the sharing as opposed to just renting. Shouldn't be hard.

(audience says they can not hear her)

Sorry, there is a thing called newyorkspace.com, which actually, ART/NY helped create by giving a list of all the spaces we were aware of. So if the FIT person or community board person would contact them and if they need help, organizing their space, they could contact ART/NY and I'll get someone on our staff, who understands how to do this to talk to them.

TAMARA GREENFIELD

I was also going to say there's a lot of different city facilities and I don't know if they would directly connect to NYC Spaces or city spaces because it's not necessarily in their core mission to do that, but trying to start help broker some relationships between community based organizations and the facilities in their neighborhoods. There's empty swimming pools that sit empty for eight months of the year – which, you know, maybe isn't going to be the best in January, but in September or October that might not be a bad rehearsal space. I've produced dance performances in that dance performances in them and they're great. I think there's recreation centers. I think we can also be looking at industrial zones and whether artists are welcomed in those industrial zones and if there's incentives to help them have space in them. I think often artists do end up going into industrial zones. So I think there's a lot of potential brokering that could happen and sometimes that could be done on a community board level in the neighborhood, between city agencies that have facilities and spaces and community groups that could maybe have a long term relationship with that facility. So...

JOHN CLANCY

Doesn't that sound like something the theatre task force would be the most sensible people to locate the spaces and then – I mean, not to throw work onto somebody else's plate, but – is anyone here from NYSpaces, New York Spaces? Because my understanding is those are finished spaces right? Those are ready to... right? Their rehearsal spaces and performances spaces already and we're talking about nontraditional spaces.

GINNY LOULOUDES

Chashama. I would certainly make sure you talk to Chashama because Chashama has access to every major developer in New York City and when there's a space that is empty Chashama usually gets to curate something in the space. I've been told that for theatre it is tough because many of the lobbies or the storefronts don't necessarily have restrooms that are available, but I'm sure that in that building there's restrooms, because the doormen in those lobbies have to go somewhere. So we just need to find a way to get that next step and say to Chashama, "can you

give us not only a lobby, but we need a bathroom with a key, just that one and then where can our audiences go?” And I think Chashama’s just gotten the Brooklyn Army Terminal which I happen to live near. It’s huge. So I think that would be the first place to start.

JOHN CLANCY

Yeah, same idea. Yeah, absolutely.

PAUL NAGEL

So the idea tonight is to be a sort of wide ranging brainstorming discussion, not to come up with “the” strategy, but to just to service some ideas. I think we’re doing well so far.

Kevin, I want to ask you, a lot of the lower Manhattan’s cultural have just finished recovering from 911. You know in the last year or 2 and here we are again at another crisis point. And I wanted to ask Kevin for ideas in terms of lessons learned about what went well with the 911 assistance and what didn’t work with 911 assistance and what advice you would give to funders and government agencies this time around.

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

Well, I mean it actually feels a lot like it did after 911 for us in a lot of ways. We’ve been up for 3 years now and this year we finally broke even on rent and utilities with our license and activity with artists. So we just got sort of to the first floor, you know. And that’s good, but we’re seeing some patterns that we also saw after 911 that are quite alarming. Two things happened to us. First thing that happened to us was a lot of people told us that everything was going to be okay and you’re going to be able to rebuild. That turned out to be true. It took four to five years longer than I’d hoped, but one of the first things that happened is the foundations retracted away from us. Foundations that had been supporting us for years pulled away and withdrew their support. The second thing that happened was that government offered to come in and then came in three to five years slower than promised and at about half the scale. So, there’s some very dangerous, sort of conditions that can develop long term out of those kind of problems.

We recently, just a couple of weeks ago, we pulled together with 11 other groups in lower Manhattan because, you know, we see trouble coming. We pulled together a group, an ad-hoc group that we’re calling the lower Manhattan arts leadership group. Part of what we are doing is to try to look at, you know, what we’ve been through down there and what we might do and what we might recommend that others do to avoid some of the pitfalls that we experienced and are still experiencing from 911 and the down turn 2001 recovery. One of the things that we’re doing is that we’re getting our numbers together. We’re making an argument for the number of jobs we create. Twelve organizations are creating 972 jobs down there for example, to get, you know, altogether we are 14, you know we generate 14 million dollars in revenue for the, you know, for the city and it’s a small area and a small number of relatively small groups. They range from 29 thousand dollars a year to about 2 million a year in revenue or in expenses. But the other thing is that yes there is always opportunity in disaster. We built 3LD of the 12 thousand square foot, you know, state of the art facility during the last down turn. There are opportunities that can come if you are, you know, if you move forward. Our strategy was to keep doing what we were doing by the way, you know and let the art lead what we do and that worked pretty well.

There is going to be a need for intervention in the next couple of years and if we just say to ourselves, “we’re agreed” with people that artists will somehow make it somehow. We will. I mean it’s true, we probably will. But you know, as Ben said earlier, you know, this system’s been broken for a while now. I think, for example, there’s an argument to be made that we need to have support from the government and the city government based on the revenue we generate for the city. You know as opposed to, you know, as opposed to the way that we are doing things now, which is kind of, it’s ad-hoc really, you know. We also need to start making a much more articulate argument for our intangible value that we bring to the city. It’s a hard thing to articulate. It just is. It’s really difficult to put numbers to it. 3LD is going to be working with an economist from Australia named David Throsby who’s actually been able to create mathematical models that fit into standard economic models to actually put numbers on this sort of thing. I don’t know if it’s going to do any good for us to do that. I think it’s a lot more important that we learn how to speak about ourselves, you know.

What we learned was we had to completely change our model. We had nothing and so we had to create an asset, a hard asset that could generate revenue for us because we knew that the gifts that we had been beneficiaries of were, you know, 12 years were not going to be there. So we decided to do the counter intuitive thing and take over a building and create it and what’s happened is that, you know some work can be done on the street or can be done in an empty swimming pool. New York is, New York is known for its high quality art work and some theatre can’t be done that way. Some work has to have a good equipment base. It has to have a place for the audience to be. It has to have a comfortable place for artists to sit and work. And so we completely changed the way we think about resources at 3LD. With the help of the city and the state, presently, and the help of a lot of foundations, you know, we’ve been able to put together a system where we’re seeing artists do more with less and that is also our focus. Our focus is, you know, we use technology actually to try to reduce the cost of production. We teach artists how to use these new technologies too. We’re seeing a 30% to 60% reduction in production costs in some cases with a doubling of the scale of the production. The artists that are able to do that, international producers see them and they are able to increase their touring income and their give income goes up too.

You know, we can talk about survival but I really think we need to keep pushing at this point also for recognition of the value we bring to the city and we have to insist that we are to be taken seriously. You know, we’re not a bunch of bohemians that get up at 3:00 in the afternoon get drunk and play around. The people I know work 12 to 16 hour days, support families with 2 and 3 jobs and contribute, you know, and you know, we need to stand up.

GINNY LOULOUDES

With all due respect, as someone who works hard and puts in many hours and supports a family, I have to say the city of New York does more for the arts than any city in this country.

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

That’s true.

GINNY LOULOUDES

I think you've benefitted greatly from the city, I think most of us at this table have. I think it was very brave of our commissioner to take on the status quo and to take money away from some of the cultural institution groups and to put that money into the program area to eliminate those of us who were line itemed and to make us all go to panel to qualify for money. Were it not for the restructuring of the Department of Cultural Affairs, this room would feel very different, because many of you got your first 25 thousand dollar grant, ever from DCA. So I think we have to be clear and fair about DCA and I think also the minute – we all applauded Ben then when he left the room, we all went back to 2006. We can't ask for more money from anybody because there's no more money. It's gone, guys. When he talked about his payout – I spoke to a funder on Thursday who told me that he's frightened to death about 2011 because if his payout is 30% of what he has now and every foundation has 30% and government goes down which we know the state, as Danny will tell you, is in a huge crisis. Every day the deficit gets bigger because of the interest. The city is luckier because Mayor Bloomberg has a rainy day fund. But we have to be realistic. You are an RND – you're an RND space for RND work. You are very vital. We're not going to be able to build 6 more of these, probably for some time. I think we have to think outside of the box about how we create work and how we do it using your model, but using Tamara's model as well because there was some great theatre produced in a hotel in their pool that tourists went to. So I think we've got to get so far out of our comfort zone that we've got to stop thinking of theatre as seats and people. Melanie Joseph is taking people on a bus around the Bronx this summer to do a play about the South Bronx. She's taking you there on a bus. That's what I'm talking about, when I say I'm being optimistic, but I'm also scared to death because we're going to have to do our work and we're going to have to barter perhaps because money isn't going to be there. It's just not going to be there.

PAUL NAGEL

I actually disagree a little. I think that there's hundreds of millions of dollars coming down to the states and the cities and I think that there's no reason that that money can't be going into cultural projects as well as any other economic development or small business.

GINNY LOULOUEDES

I don't see that happening. Where do you think it's going?

PAUL NAGEL

We're going down to Washington on the 13th to find out.

GINNY LOULOUEDES

No, no, no, I mean, where do you think – Maybe Danny can answer that. Do you, do you see money Danny, that we're... ?

DANNY O'DONNELL

Good evening everyone. I'm Danny O'Donnell I represent the 69th Assembly District from 85th Street to 125th Street and I'm a member of the arts community in Albany.

I think some of that money is coming. I recently circulated a letter to my colleagues asking the speaker to create an annual capital fund for the arts, which has never happened on the state level

and I was shocked about how excited my colleagues were about this concept and not just from my New York City colleagues. They understand the way arts works particularly outside of New York City. The way the Adirondack Theatre Festival reclaimed Glens Falls, New York. I have a personal – it's my sister-in-law, so I'm happy about and that's how I know that. If you go there now, there's a functioning hotel and functioning restaurants and functioning all this stuff that a decade ago was all boarded up. And so that's not really the arts capital of the world, Glens Falls right, so people know that it works. So some of it, I would say is political will. Some of it is making the cases that you've all made about why it's important and the multiplier effect, but you know, in the end I think some of it is going to come. I think that it's going to be - it's never going to be enough for the people in this room and it's never going to really trickle down to many of the different groups that are here. So the question is if you don't have a space, if you don't have this, how is an arts capital budget really assist you? In other places outside of New York City where the real estate values are significantly different, it may be a little bit easier than it is here, but I think some of it is coming, but I can assure you that once I manage to push that through you'll all call me complaining that it's not enough. But call and complain it's what I like to hear. I think some of it's coming, but it's not going to be enough.

PAUL NAGEL

In terms of national policy, I want to ask Katie from SNEAC who works on these issues and is a fellow policy wonk, like myself – How much of this is national and where to the theatres fit in in national policy talk, as far as you can tell?

KATIE DENNEY

Well, just to take a step back I – SNEAC, in case you haven't heard of it, it's a student organization at NYU, Wagner and we have over 200 members, graduate students studying arts administration from, any where from PRAT to Columbia to Steinhart and Tisch and I'm sure that many of those students are interns working at theatre organizations. I can assure you that come graduation and May that many of them are very concerned about what they are going to be doing upon the retirement of those internships.

We at SNEAC have been focusing a lot on national policy, hosting a national arts policy event earlier in the fall after the – after we found out about the Obama national arts policy platform. Again just a few weeks ago – actually Ben Cameron was there – we had a full day colloquium on international cultural exchanges and on the national scale. So when you hear people talk about Culture Czar, when you hear people talk about the national platforms, in my experience at these discussions at NYU, I haven't really heard that much specifically talking about theatre. When you hear, you know discussions most people are talking about the cultural exchanges. You hear about music. You hear about the, you know, the arts and artifacts. You hear some talks about, you know, visas and Kevin was just saying earlier about a cultural exchange program that he's working on specifically for performing artists, but for the most part it's, it's really absent from the conversations that I've had. It's really been focusing much more on the visual arts. So I don't know – and that's a question for the panel, that I'm very humbled to be around these great panelists - but you know, is it appropriate to be on the national scale? I mean we are talking about community boards, small to midsized theatres that are embedded in their communities. Is this something that we should be focusing on in our communities, in our states or is it

appropriate to be the task of some sort of a Culture Czar, as they call it? I wouldn't know the answer to that, but I can say it's not something that people are talking about so much in the discussions that we've had.

PAUL NAGEL

Okay, so theatre is absent from those national policy discussions. I want to put a pitch in quickly for a group that started an Obama house party for change on December 14th, an ad-hoc group of about 60 people who are agitating for a national cultural policy. It's called Arts Policy Now and the website is artspolicynow.com and you can go there and read the platform. We're calling for a cultural unit in the office of urban initiatives to strategize those monies correctly for culture and then also a separate department of culture with the secretary of culture. So I just wanted to put that quick pitch in.

We're going to stay on schedule so we're going to open it up to the questions that are coming in from the audience. I think anybody who wants to jump in and answer any of these.

PAUL NAGEL

Some aren't questions. Some are just statements. This is kind of fun. "We need support from the New York Times to lower advertising rates to make it possible to publicize over time."

"What about insurance issues when using spaces?"

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

Well, I mean, I have a little bit to say. There are advocacy organizations that have set up to vet insurance access for small arts groups that are affordable. A lot of the smaller groups that work at 3LD use Fractured Atlas. It costs about \$300 and they have, you know, a good liability insurance that meets our needs and their needs for, you know, the six weeks to four months that they work in our space.

JOHN CLANCY

Yeah, can I just point out that that's usually the question when looking at nontraditional spaces. Usually – the only two real barriers are security costs or keeping a receptionist there and insurance. That's – you can solve that, you know and those costs are a fraction of what the rent would be. So again it's like – yes there are some issues, some problems, but they're all solvable. You know, they're all solvable.

PAUL NAGEL

Okay, there's a question here, "How many small theatres have closed? Any foundations that fund theatres going – that are about to go out of business or artists about to give up?"

There was also a

JOHN CLANCY

I'm moving to Berlin. I don't know about giving up.

PAUL NAGEL

There was also a task force idea; there use to be an interagency – a city interagency group that would intervene when loft dwellers were endangered and they were wondering if the group thought it would be a good idea for there to be some sort of task force that could – that – people who were having C of O issues or other city agency issues some sort of ombudsman task force that could step in when it looked like there's going to be a problem with the lease or losing a space. Do you guys want to respond to that?

JOHN CLANCY

Great idea.

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

That's a good idea. Yeah. The last one that I was aware of, you know, we basically just sort of banned together and helped – a lot of people helped the Ohio deal with their issue, you know, for example, but, I mean, that's how it's done sort of on an ad-hoc basis and sometimes you're just swept out by yourself. So it would be good if there were somebody speaking....

GINNY LOULOUEDES

It took us 3 years to get a C of O for South Oxford space, but we were diligent and I would say that it is a good idea to have a task force because (audience says they can't hear her) It is a good idea to have a task force. It takes years to get a C of O you can get a TCO, which is a temporary C of O. It's very important since the Happy Land Social Club caught fire. It has become imperative that you have a C of O for all kinds of issues and I think it is something that does need to be looked into. It's a combination of building codes and fire codes that are sometimes contradictory and duplicative. We worked on this fifteen years ago and we tried, but the Fire Department wouldn't budge. With a new administration we should do it again. It would be something I'd welcome another group helping us with because it's a lot of work, but it is very important.

PAUL NAGEL

Okay, "How can we activate the funding community to dig deep rather than step back at this time?"

GINNY LOULOUEDES

I will say this, I have been asking a number of funders to do just that and I've been stunned by the – many funders are not looking forward at their portfolios. Some – actually the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation just sent their grantees a letter saying that they are digging in and will be giving money to their current grantees only. There's another foundation that shall remain nameless that is asking other foundations to create a fund to help groups that are suffering. So through advocacy and talking to people, this can happen.

Funders are scared because they've taken the hit, you know. Imagine a big pension fund and that's their fund that they've lost a third of and so their trying to struggle with how they're going to serve their missions and what they are going to do. I'm not saying it's – I think somebody needs to alert them. We've been trying to.

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

The problem is – The Lower Manhattan Arts Leadership group made some recommendations that we tried to send to some of the foundations at the Grantmakers InThe Arts and I think they heard what we said. One of the things that we recommended was that the foundations look at the possibility of creating funds that would number one give artists flexible grants and number two give them slightly increased funding between the next eighteen and twenty-four months, in the hope that it would give some of the groups an opportunity for some of the groups to shift their footing. I mean, what I was talking about earlier – I totally agree with Ginny by-the-way about the DCA and also about the need for all the different kinds of work to be done. What's going to be needed is, we're going to have to start looking at the way we use resources, the way we share and cooperate with each other and also, one of the things that we can do because we're in New York, which is in a lot of ways, the center of the universe, is to try to open up our resource scale to an international scale. Even small groups can aspire to this or try to do this, especially if we cooperate with each other. So if there aren't enough resources here, maybe it's time to look at a larger resource pool or look at the ways we use resources.

TAMARA GREENFIELD

Yeah, I was just going to say also, I think collaboration and creative partnerships where we can find ways where we can share resources that funders can fund together and benefit many groups at the same time, they're going to be looking for that and I think the more that we are leading that process and not the funders, the more they'll actually be meeting the needs of the arts organizations rather than us trying to twist ourselves to fit a new grant profile because they need to see those resources go as far as possible. So that's definitely something

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

Which we're good at.

PAUL NAGEL

Yeah, I mean, as it says on the briefing paper, one of our calling cards is being lean and mean, which is not necessarily an advantage when you're doing across the board cuts. Suddenly it becomes the big problem.

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

I mean, can we – this is an issue actually we should talk about a little bit. One of the, I mean the idea that we can cut our way – I mean, Ben said this too – that my organization, for example can cut its way out of this, right? We already have pretty much suspended over hire for a while. We work - already work at the bone right? It's just a habit now. You know, and we looked at making substantial cuts that would have some kind of effect on our day-to-day operating reality and what happened was, everything that would cut enough to effect our operations would also cut our ability to generate revenue and money. So, you know, we are already at that point right. So this is why or part of the reason that the group that we work with recommended some kind of intervention over the next eighteen to twenty-four months to give us time to think and change our footing.

GINNY LOULOUEDES

How many of you have had your board giving increase in response to having your contributed income decrease?

PAUL NAGEL

One, two.

GINNY LOULOUEDES

That is one of the biggest – in a nonprofessional national survey was done by a friend of mine who called around and found that cities where there were fewer arts organizations board members were putting in much more money. I think one of the things that we have going against us in New York is that there's so many of us that many of us share 3 or 4 board members with each other. So, the ability of that individual to give more when their own savings has been diminished becomes a problem. I think the other thing that has to be looked at is the role of boards and their purpose because we've been through good times with our boards, but we need to figure out how boards play a role in bad times.

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

That's one of the reasons we suggested the foundations for example because all of us also see a precipitous drop in individual giving in the last – since October really. Actually it goes back into earlier into 2008. The foundations are hit also, you know, we're seeing, you know, in the Chronicles of Philanthropy last month 10% - 33% hits, but this 33% hit to a 6 billion dollar fund so there's still flexibility for a while anyway or we hope. The government is going to move slow. That's just how it is. So the only real opportunity for some kind of short term intervention we saw was through the foundations cooperating.

PAUL NAGEL

Alright, we're going to switch gears here. Anthony, some smart person in the audience has asked "Should we expand the 421A program for low income housing to include ground floor cultural infrastructure?"

JOHN CLANCY

Yes we should.

ANTHONY BORELLI

What does that mean? The 421A program is a – right well it's an affordable housing tax incentive program. The question was could you expand it to cover ground floor

PAUL NAGEL

Cultural infrastructure.

ANTHONY BORELLI

Well, I think the idea is – the 421A will give you a tax break if you provide affordable housing. The idea is should you get a tax break for providing something like theatre space or cultural space as part of your project, that's a very interesting question. Obviously that would require lots

of policy making in cooperation with government and elected officials and if that's an item on your road map please list it and perhaps create a task force to figure out how to create such a thing. It's not a bad idea. We incentivized – through development – we incentivized things that we think are desirable all the time; affordable housing is one of them. There are – actually are a couple of zoning mechanisms that incentivize the development of theatre space. There's something called a theatre bonus on 42nd Street. Those of you who live in Manhattan Plaza, and I know there are at least a few of you here, across the street there is a big development site. It's empty. The developer, in exchange for providing 3 new theatres for the Signature Theatre, we hope, will get to build a little bit bigger than they'd otherwise be able to with the zoning laws. There's a zoning bonus similar to that on 125th Street in Harlem. Recent rezoning included something called a Arts, Entertainment and Cultural bonus in exchange for a little bit extra density or a little bit extra floor area for you know luxury residential, you have to build a theatre space or a space to support arts and entertainment on 125th Street. So, there are ways that zoning incentivizes the development of the kind of spaces that the theatre community needs.

There are other interesting zoning mechanisms that address theatre specifically in midtown in the theatre subdistrict in Time Square. There are programs that couple the preservation of listed theatres with new development. So, if you build a building and you tap into, you know, this air rights pool, you're – let me step back a little bit. Certain developments in Time Square are required to give a little something back to the theatre community. In some cases it's cash to build into a fund that can be used to support theatre and theatre related uses not just in Time Square, but throughout the city. Right now, there's a fund, it's a few million dollars in total right now. It probably has a few more million dollars in total after other developments are built. There's a group called the Theatre Subdistrict Council the Borough President is part of it, the city council is part of it, the community is part of it. There're right now reviewing applications for large and small grants – one hundred thousand dollars, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to help theatre related educational programs. There's a new development in Time Square, some of them have to give a little something back to the theatre community in terms of physical space. There's a project on 47th Street that has a few thousand square feet of office space that's intended to provide below rate for non-profit theatre companies at their offices. Lastly there's another project that – a similar development that instead of office space their providing non – below market rate for rehearsal, for theatre rehearsal space. So, there are different types of zoning incentives that exist already that are intended to produce amenities for the theatre and for theatre related uses. They are not tax incentives, I think that's a whole other level of discussion and obviously involves....

PAUL NAGEL

Which we're about to get to.

ANTHONY BORELLI

Great..... Alright so that's it. So I guess I'm done on that.

PAUL NAGEL

Alright, actually there's four different questions asking whether the city or state would entertain tax incentives for commercial landlords to lease space to theatres. I'm happy to report that

actually Council Member Gerson has legislation that has been drafted that was sent up to Albany this year with the council's legislative priorities. It's probably not the best year to be trying to do this but it's also probably going to take a lot of political organizing and support. The legislation basically would create a property tax abatement for commercial landlords that rent to nonprofit theatres.

So, you have all fallen into our trap by giving us your emails. So, as this new movement progresses we are going to be working to make sure that you guys are kept apprised of that. We also have another tax bill to like to quickly mention, which is to try and help small professional live music venues that would create a business tax credit, like the film tax credit for venues under 250 for live musician related expenses and it would be refundable, meaning that groups could collect up to fifty thousand more than they owe in state tax, state corporate tax.

Kevin and I both sat on a round table with Assembly Member Englebright, who's the chair of the Cultural Affairs Committee and Ginny was on that as well. Englebright is aware of the legislation and interested in discussing it. So, it's not pie in the sky. I believe that one of the elements we need is public policy intervention in a number of different areas and that's something that government really hasn't gotten its arms around and that's a conversation that we're going to have to direct.

Okay a couple of questions ... sorry, grandpa needs his glasses. "How can theatres take advantage of fundraising dollars that are being directed toward green environmental projects and how can theatres take advantage of funds available for efficiency upgrades through the federal stimulus package?"

Does anybody know?

GINNY LOULOUDES

I mean, there are a number of theatres being built, one – I'm building one called [Archstone Clinton ?]and it has to be green and [Cresky ?] gives you a little bit of money to go green and the benefits of going green are long term so you spend more up front in materials and in the long term your utility bills will be lower. So I think we need to think more about sustainability. Broadway actually has a sustainability program called Broadway goes green, if you're interested.

There's been a lot of questions about why can't small theatres get recognized more with tourism and I would like to just mention that my colleagues George Forbes and the Off-Broadway League did something really remarkable. He spent one year as a member of the convention visitors bureau NYC & Company and through them got a sponsor for Take Your Seat, I think it's called, and they've had national and international press and advertising and they're just about to see how they do with sales, but they're branding Off-Broadway. The more diverse you get, the harder it is to brand, but I think – I went on their website and I was disappointed that there was no – I clicked Off-Off-Broadway and got Second Stage. So, I think we need to get more involved in that, but I do think that we can market – I just think that we haven't been involved with NYC & Company but I think, certainly there are a number of people who come here from Germany

and they're looking to go to 3 Legged Dog they're looking to go to LaMaMa and The Living Theatre. I think we can do that.

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

That's, I mean one of the things in this, the 2005 study that's buried in there is that the international tourist don't come here for Broadway, they come here for Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway. You know we need to make that argument. I think we just need to educate somebody.

PAUL NAGEL

Alright, here's a – “If we know that there is space in Harlem that seemingly no one can afford, then what can our city do to help to a company into that space - one that will preserve the cultural and artistic tradition of the area?”

ANTHONY BORELLI

What? Can you...

PAUL NAGEL

“If we know that there is space in Harlem that seemingly no one can afford, then what can our city do to help to a company into that?”

ANTHONY BORELLI

It's a private, well it's – Well, if it's a privately owned space and the landlord doesn't want to rent it to a non-profit theatre or a theatre company that can't afford market rates, I don't know what to do. If there's a specific space in mind and it would be appropriate for a theatre or some theatre related use, I'd like to know about it. I mean, we can make phone calls. We can

(audience member: eminent domain the city takes spaces all the time)

Right, it's a very vague question. The question was if there is a space in Harlem that's not being used for anything, why can't you know...

GINNY LOULOUEDES

No, there's a space that's being developed. I think it's the Victoria 5. I'm not sure. That's a huge space. It's very expensive for the groups that they've tried to lure in.

ANTHONY BORELLI

Okay. So I guess if there's a specific space in mind and you'd like to engage in a conversation about what ought to be there, if it's part of a public review process, I'd want to know about it. I can certainly interject your concerns and there are other people who may be involved as well that's part of the public realm. If it's not, there are other things that can be done to convince private owners to try to do something responsible with their property. So, without the specifics, that's the best I can do.

AUDIENCE QUESTION & ANSWER

PAUL NAGEL

Alright. We've been asked to move to the live question and answer now, so if you didn't get your question asked, there are microphones on either side of the stage. We're also going to keep all of these cards as part of the record and go through them, but why don't you feel free to step up to the mike and either make your statement or ask your question.

BRAD BURGESS

Hello. I'm Brad Burgess, Administrative Director of The Living Theatre. I just want to start off by adding some of the financial impact that Kevin was talking about and comparing all these billions of dollars that we hear about to what our own reality actually entails in our community as arts and entertainment that includes commercial theatre as well as not-for-profit. That for me is where a lot of where our solutions can come from, how commercial theatre can work with not-for-profit theatre. Not only that, but the fact that we're hearing talk about "an" advocacy group or "a" task force. What we need is many task forces. We need multiple task forces for all the different kinds of tasks that are. For anyone who runs a theatre, you know that you wear very many hats. I help Judith run the theatre. I help take care of Judith. There are people that have 9 different jobs at The Living Theatre and they don't have time to be on these task forces. So that is another problem, which is why we need an advocacy group. We need to start some sort of not-for-profit union or some sort of not-for-profit culture society that can act in between these meetings, with people from these panels who have one common interest and that is the culture of the city and constantly keep track of these task forces. So we need an advocacy group to monitor the progress after this meeting, which so far hasn't produced any new ideas. I also want to say, one of my suggestions for how to improve our financial situation is related to the subdistrict budget that you're talking about. You say it's a few million. Well, *Shrek the Musical* had a \$20 million dollar budget. *Thriller the Musical* will have a \$12 million dollar budget and *Spiderman the Musical* will have a \$40 million dollar budget and they will all be opening in the first quarter of this year in this financial crisis. So I don't believe that there is no money, at all. I think that is totally erroneous. There is a lot of money. There is a lot of money, you know, but what we don't have, which is something that the sports world has – it's unfortunate that the gentleman to the left here is related to sports and tourism – is revenue share and luxury threshold. On those 3 shows that I just listed you, if we – for budgets over a million dollars – these numbers are arbitrary just for impact, to explain kind of where I'm going at – if over a million dollar production budgets like these were charged at the same rate that teams like the Yankees are for their sports budgets, we would raise 22.5% by the way. With that 22.5% we could fund 100 small to mid-sized theatres in the city of New York, just on those 3 productions on that rate. So you see how even the numbers are very workable on that scale. They have the money. The people from this community create that community eventually. It comes from all of us. You know Al Pacino was just on *Inside the Actor's Studio* regaling about Judith and Julian and *Paradise Now* being the most exciting thing and life changing. I feel as though that our peers in the commercial arts world are the ones that do have the money. We need some sort of advocacy group to watch out for those of us that are not-for-profit that, you know are not commercial like they have Equity and SAG and all these groups that can go on strike and make demands that we don't have. We're all just wandering vagabonds surviving on our own. That's what we need. That's what we need from this group of people because I don't know how to do any of that.

PAUL NAGEL

Alright. Okay. Well, we totally heard that.

DAVID PINCUS

I just want to respond to that gentleman. Right now there are advocacy groups in place. They're called the Arts and Theatre Task Force of your community boards. The community boards are in place right now 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. We meet every month.

PAUL NAGEL

And 6 wants to join.

DAVID PINCUS

And 6. After word of this meeting gets out I'm sure that we're going to have most of Manhattan that wants to be involved in this situation. If you go to the websites of your community board; just google "CB1" and google "CB2", google "CB3", you'll find a calendar of events and on each of those calendars there are public meetings, which you are all invited to. You can not have a community board meeting without members of the public invited. So in fact, our theatre task force if you're in – whatever neighborhood you're in find out who represents you at the community board. Come to our meetings and show up. The only way this thing is going to work – all these wonderful ideas that we are talking about is if you show up. Show up and we'll work with you. Thank you.

JOHN CLANCY

I'm sorry and just really quickly too, LIT is set up as an advocacy group rather than a membership group. It's a 501c6. So we're responding to exactly that idea. So, www.litny.org and check that out, but absolutely man. Could not agree with you more about the commercial, tapping into the commercial as well.

CHRIS PELHAM

Hi, I'm Chris Pelham, Director of CRS a downtown presenter of Off-Off-Broadway. So we have LIT now. We have ART/NY obviously. What do you guys need to do more?

JOHN CLANCY

Really for us right now, we're....

CHRIS PELHAM

You're already working your asses off.

JOHN CLANCY

Sure. We're very young. We just – well it's probably the same Ginny, tell me, is community engaged members, community engaged members, you know who are ready to show up who are generate the ideas. I mean I see my job as Executive Director as executing what the membership has decided and just facilitating that.

CHRIS PELHAM

You know, I'm a little guy in the scheme of things here, but I don't get any requests for help. I don't get any emails. I'm a member of ART/NY. I'm not yet – I only found you a couple of days ago.

JOHN CLANCY

That's great. It's good to see you.

CHRIS PELHAM

Maybe you guys can ask for more help. You know.

GINNY LOULOUEDES

I guess I look at it differently because I'm benevolent despot. I don't believe in a lot of people – actually, that's not true. I work – we had task forces over the summer. We're now in the process of surveying all the members to get fiscal data. Then we're going to do focus groups on the data. What we are hoping will come out of it will be some major major major new ideas for ways that we can all work differently. I mean thinking about taking – starting from a blank slate and saying “What do we really need to produce the work? What do we really need to make it happen? Do we need longer rehearsal periods? Do we need to restructure the way we deliver our performances? Should curtain times be different? Do they all have to all be at 8 o'clock or 7 o'clock?” And these are just some of the obvious questions. If you'd like to be involved in the task force, email me.

The problem is that we are a staff of 12; 3 people work on facilities, 3 people try to raise money, 2 people in membership and one of them is also answering the phones and we too are killing ourselves to raise money so we can pay our bills so we can keep your affordable rent, keep your rent affordable. So it's hard. It doesn't help to have lots of people working for you if you don't have anybody to manage you. So I would say what you should do is contact - a few of our board members; Cathrine Porter's here, Liz Jones is here, Alison Blinken's here. If they'll raise their hands maybe you can talk to them. We have theatre committee meetings and we can happily include you in on those meetings.

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

But the other thing that you can do is organize yourself. So, I mean, we're going to be – when Ginny comes and asks us for information, the Lower Manhattan group that we formed ad-hoc is going to be able to respond to her very quickly and we're going to be able to represent a number of people, but we're small enough to be able to move and do things with and for each other.

PAUL NAGEL

And I think also the other element that's been missing here is the open line of communication between government and the groups and we're creating that now. There are a lot of different efforts underway and the trick is not to be duplicating efforts and the trick is to be networking correctly. We want you to just, as we send the emails out and move this movement forward be cognizant of that and be strategic about the time that you can give and where you can give it best.

We'll come up with ideas for involvement and a mechanism for feeding ideas to us that we haven't heard before.

FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER

I'd like to get 2 snapshots, if I may. One is in regard to an ancillary problem - of course you may need a whole second panel for this - affordable housing for the individual artists. We have of course Manhattan Plaza and I just heard today about this new complex that's being built up in East Harlem, you know, how much does this figure into current conversations? Secondly, and I hate to put you on the spot because you were kind enough to ask my question, but it never got answered and if there aren't specific answers maybe you could send me somewhere. Again how many theatres have actually closed? Where do things stand now as opposed to last year? How far down has the money dropped? If you don't – and again I hate to put you on the spot, but if you can send me somewhere, I'd like to get something close to hard numbers.

GINNY LOULOUEDES

We send out our survey – ART/NY sent out our survey to its members on Friday night by email, so you should have it already. If you're a member of ART/NY, you'll get it. We hope to have it analyzed by March... I have to give a preliminary report to a funder by March 17th. So I should be able to distribute something to the members by the end of March. I'm sorry it can't be faster, but I really believe the data is the truth.

FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER

And about affordable housing?

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

During the – right after 9/11 we tried to get information on how many small businesses folded and it, it doesn't come. It's hard to track.

PAUL NAGEL

It's not something that behooves the government necessarily to track.

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

We have to do it ourselves.

PAUL NAGEL

We're going to have to do that ourselves. And Shay – The New York Innovative Theatre is walking up to the microphone to talk about a study that they conducted on lost theatres.

NICK MICOZZI

Hi. Thank you. I'm Nick Micozzi from the New York Innovative Theatre Foundation. You probably know us from the IT Awards, the Innovative Theatre Awards for Off-Off-Broadway. We did conduct a survey which was released in December on the status of Off-Off-Broadway spaces. It's not – it wasn't an extraordinarily scientific or far reaching survey, but it was the first of its kind. The numbers we have – we looked at theatres in New York City between 2003 and 2008. It looked like about 35, 36 theatres have closed in that time. There are about 5 that are on

the ropes. Justin Krebs just told me that the Tank opened up again. Congratulations Justin, that's great. You can read this study at nyitawards.com. Just click on the survey's tab.

PAUL NAGEL

Also, everybody's invited to stick around afterwards and we are going to come down on time, which is very impressive. The bar downstairs is open and hopefully you can stick around and get some of this business done on a one-to-one level. Melody?

MELODY BROOKS

Yes, I'm Melody Brooks, the Artistic Director of the New Perspectives Theatre Company and I think this has become my job at every one of these meetings, a task force about small theatres, is how do we use this opportunity, because I do see it as an opportunity, and we've had a very little tiny bit of discussion about change. I'll echo this young man, though not quite as vehemently that I haven't really heard anything new, that we need a fundamental restructuring.

As someone who's been doing Off-Off-Broadway theatre in New York City for more than 20 years, people have always taken people around on buses and done theatre in swimming pools, in tiny little spaces. That is not new. So, as somebody – New Perspectives has been around for 17 years. There's many of you in this room that I know have been doing this probably longer than I have and we heard that Judith when she couldn't get a Broadway theatre got a black box theatre and we've been doing it for 60 years; making do, finding our audience, going where we need to go. What has really now fundamentally changed, I think in the last 20 years, is the corporate model doesn't work for non-profit theatre. We have been stuck in that model. In addition that model, with the unions as if we're junior commercial theatres, so we're stuck with that. I've heard the gentleman from the Duke Foundation say we have the opportunity to work outside of the union structure, well many of us have companies with lots of union members in and we could say "sorry we can't work with you anymore because now's our opportunity to hit the big time if we go all nonunion." So, I think that there is a meshing of things that have to come together to here, fundamental radical change in the way in which theatre is perceived. It's not about curtain time. We're already doing that. It's not about location. We're already doing that.

At least the 350 theatre companies with budgets under a \$100,000 or maybe a little more than a hundred thousand dollars are doing a radical amount of things. You know, bringing our communities into the door. We've gotten very very lucky. We lost our space to the theatre subdistrict fund 2 years ago. I'd like to know – there's been very little public discourse about the use of that fund, which I actually spoke to you about that at St. Luke's when that was being discussed Anthony at community board 4 meeting. The next thing you know, there's all these RFPs coming out for very large grants, yeah, but if you don't have a combined budget of \$250,000 you can't even apply for it so... Again to me, it's that same old model of what constitutes professional is based on your budget. It's based on an unrealistic expectation of staff.

This group, we are professionals. We've been doing this all our lives. You want to talk about fostering the young people and getting them in the room. If they can't eat, if they can't – if they don't have a salary – I want to ask how many people have gone out of business. How many of you lost your other job, the one you actually survive on, not your theatre jobs. Right? We haven't

even begun to address that. I don't know what the answer is and I know this panel is not about the answer and we were asked for about the strategies. To me, that's got to be the overwhelming – we need a new path. We need, you know, not just to figure out if there's millions. Yes, there is. How we going to get them is one thing. I agree with John completely. We need space almost before we need money, even if it's free space because then we can make the money happen. We're very good at that. So the government has to get involved. Tax incentives for private real estate people are way more advantageous than the theatre subdistrict fund because it's 3,000 square feet in a 46 story tower that they got to build an extra 4 stories for for giving 3,000 square feet for an office to the theatre community. You know, it's ridiculous. So a tax incentive like for affordable housing, way more effective.

PAUL NAGEL

I would also say that one of the paradigms that we have to change is the way that city – is this on – that city and state and federal governments look at us in terms of businesses, especially in terms of small business and economic development incentives because there's organizing language about revenue and organizing language about jobs that disqualifies us from a lot of that unnecessarily and it's up to us to stand up and make that argument.

MELODY BROOKS

It's also the funding community which has needs to radically change, in terms of breaking everything down by an artificially imposed budget. The New Persp – we're good at getting millions really in in-kind donations really in the city of New York but that doesn't count because that's not cash. So when a foundation looks at the size of your budget, it's only looking at cash – thank you to the DCA – and I know that Kathy Hughes is here – for finally allowing us to put in-kind salaries in what the real cost of doing business is because we're not using it in cash. If we all added in the serious – and there could be a formula for it. It doesn't have to be you know, every gift that your mother gives you to put on the stage, but staff, space, whatever we would have million dollar budgets, some smaller theatre companies, but what does it really take. So I would even suggest that as a basic starting point, before we create a whole new model, but just look at the reality of the one that we've got. That if your budget is under \$100,000 you're not professional or if you've got to have \$250,000 to apply for certain other kinds of grants – and I understand that the whole change in the funding stream in the last 25 years and people looking for accountability and all those things, but there's got to be a better way. Someone mentioned flexible grants. It's a start, but there'll never really be enough grant money for everybody that's in this room so there's got to be other ways of incentivizing financial support for the arts that doesn't necessarily have to be grants.

PAUL NAGEL

Thank you very much.

ALI FARAHNAKIAN

Hi. My name's Ali Farahnakian and I'm the owner of the People's Improv Theatre, the PIT. We've been around 6 years, going from 6 to 7. We have 4 full time employees with health insurance because this country still hasn't seen fit to give health insurance to its citizens. We have over 30 part time faculty members. We put over \$300,000 in payroll last year and \$150,000

in taxes and we still don't have a certificate of occupancy and I don't have a solid lease right now. We're going month-to-month. The good news is we're use to living in limbo now. That's how it goes. Tomorrow when we have our staff meeting, no one here's going to help us get our C of O, we're going to have to do it ourselves. The only victims are children, the elderly and animals and the rest of us are volunteers. We volunteer to do this. We choose this life, but there's ways to go about finding revenue streams. That's one of the reasons I came up here. If you're a theatre you're going to afterwards, you're going to go someplace to have a drink. That place is probably going to generate more revenues off of you than you do that night yeah? Now when I was in college, I was in a fraternity and I was the treasurer and we wanted a new dollar changer on our Coke machine. They said "we don't give dollar changers to fraternities and we don't put new Coke machines in to fraternities." I said "Okay. Do you have the number for Pepsi?" The next day we had a brand new Coke machine with a dollar changer. So you find a tavern by near where you go and where you have your theatre and you go to that tavern and you say "listen, we want you to be the official tavern of our blahblahblah theatre." They're going to say "Well, we don't know. You've been coming here anyway." Well there's another tavern B that does the same thing. "Okay, because I just handed you \$26,000 - \$52,000 dollars a year right there." Cause that's what we did. We went to a tavern and said "Look, I don't want to be in the bar business. That's not why I got into this, but we're going to go drink afterwards. Do you want our drinking revenue?" Right now it's going to take 6 to 9 months for the residential market to catch up to the financial market. Rents are already dropping for the first time in New York City. We're looking at a 2 bedroom apartment and they wanted \$3,500 for it with 2 bathrooms. I said, "I'll give you 31." He said, "33." They're dropping and they're negotiable. Already they're inappropriate. Even \$3,100 is inappropriate, but they're negotiating. See the problem is that there's 2 kinds of landlords. There's the landlords that own the places outright because someone gave it to them or they bought it prior to 2000 and the ones that bought it after that who own a large mortgage. The ones that own the large mortgage is what – they have to pay what's called market rate and the rest of them piggyback on market rate. If you own a theatre space, what you do is go and find a landlord that has a space and owns it outright. So all he's paying is basically taxes and maintenance. You have to work with that person to try to get him to go from what he's willing to take, what he needs to begin with and in 10 years get to what he wants. When you deal with a broker, make sure what you realize is the broker does not work for you. They are bringing a sheep to the farmer to be fleeced. They make their money off of adding to the rent that you will pay over the course of 10 years and they'll try to make somewhere in the order of \$100,000 over a 10 year lease. So you have to say to them "we want to negotiate the commission." Alright? You've got to call these places. You've got to call them directly and try to talk directly to the landlord because no one's going to do it for you. Someone even handing you a check is not going to make anything different. You've got to get a space and I agree with what Clancy's saying.

Theatre should be done everywhere; in the streets, on buses, in classrooms. The only time that society moved forward was when we went from being hunter gatherer to farmer. I mean this is one of the most beautiful spaces that I've seen in New York City. I ride my bike by it all the time and I'd kill to have a theatre like this, but all the wood and craftsmanship like this is going into bars. They're not going into theatres. You want to see this level of woodwork, this level of craftsmanship, go to a sports bar because it's not going into theatres.

I hope the things I'm saying will help you. Start teaching classes okay. If you've got a theatre find a way for you to start teaching classes at a level where you can help to bring some income to your instructors or people who work there and a way for people to learn what you're doing. If you want a space – I don't know how many people The Living Theatre has, try to get \$500 to a \$1,000 each and for \$50,000 to \$100,000 I believe you can negotiate a lease on a 2500 square foot space in New York. There's an art gallery in the lobby and a 50 seat theatre space. Alright? Because, don't leave it to the hands of any of these folks. God bless 'em they're doing their things tomorrow. Everybody has to go to work and whisper to each other about things. They're going to start a whisper campaign okay. They got their own agenda.

This city, 400 years ago the first Dutch ships showed up here in 1609. They did not build a house of worship for 17 years. This city was built for one reason and one reason only that's to generate revenues. It's to make money. So lose the moniker artists, add the moniker of "I'm a businessman, who happens to be an artist" and you're going to go a lot further. If you're ever by the People's Improv Theatre, Wednesdays all our shows are free. ThePIT-NYC.com. Long live microtheatre. We're on 29th Street, 154 West 29th Street between 6th and 7th, ThePIT-NYC.com.

PAUL NAGEL

For people having C of O issues, you should know that the Borough President's office can be helpful. I know our office often helps groups with C of O issues. There's someone right now that we're helping. So think of your council members and your Borough President as a resource when it comes to these issues, I think.

CAROL POLCOVAR

Hi. I'm Carol Polcovar. I'm the Artistic Director of the Fresh Fruit Festival. We've been around 7 years and we have had the advantage of having no money to graduating to next to no money, which made us have to open the doors that people are now suggesting be opened. One of the doors was collaboration. Many theatres start out with their own sort of ego driven ideal and sometimes it's very hard to open up to other organizations. We collaborated out of desperation and also with people we found along the way. I think it would be a wonderful thing if there were a way to know, not to trip over a collaboration because "I met this person and they said that," but to begin to think in terms of collaboration and begin to expose that so that we know who needs what and maybe we can have a fifth. That's all I have to say.

RICHMOND SHEPARD

I have 2 quick questions I'm very short winded. Okay. I am Richmond Shepard. I have a small theatre on 26th. It used to be the Vineyard Theatre. I am a capitalist for-profit operation. I don't look for grants. I've never gotten a grant. How do I fit into – that's my first question, how do I fit into what all of you are talking about? I do take an occasional gift. I also am open for co-productions, collaborations, other theatre companies using my theatre and there are 2 or 3 – we just started our 4th year and there are 3 theatre companies that use my theatre regularly and we're open to co-productions. How do we get that information for you, whoever you are, to everybody that we do have time open that we do have space open and are willing to do co-productions.

GINNY LOULOUDES

Are you listed on nycspaces?

RICHMOND SHEPARD

I have no idea what that is. Is that NY or NEW

GINNY LOULOUDES

NY I think.

JOHN CLANCY

NYSpaces. NYCSpaces? NYCSpaces.

RICHMOND SHEPARD

Also can't the Fringe go north of 14th Street? I'm on 26th.

JOHN CLANCY

Look, you don't need to be a non-profit to be a member of LIT New York. You could join and you should call Martin Denton, I'll give you his number and you should do a little quick podcast and you will be swamped. You will be absolutely flooded.

LAUREN SCHMIEDEL

Hi. I'm Lauren Schmiedel and I'm the Managing Director of Urban Stages and I feel like the greatest thing that is going to come out of us all meeting together like this is actually getting together, either in small groups or large groups outside of this and outside of holding you all accountable. I think that, you know yes, we do all have 9 separate jobs and jobs on our jobs and we all work 20 hour days during production and try to get things done, but if we leave this room and say, "it's their responsibility to get us out of this situation," then we are the ones that are going to be responsible for our own downfall. So you know, I hope that there's a way for us all to get each other's contact information that we've given at the door so that we can start to form some of these different partnerships and collaborations. Fresh Fruit called me the other day to try to get some space and we're trying to, you know work on that. So I think that, you know I would just charge for all of us to really work together to try and solve some of these problems and not rely on millions of dollars to trickle through in 3 years, but to actually find some creative, outside-the-box solutions to these problems and work with the government in clearly defined articulated ways to actually get our messages across and work with politicians as opposed to stand up and say "we're art, we're important." That's it. I don't think that message lands. So....

PAUL NAGEL

We'll make sure there's a mechanism for continued...

LAUREN SCHMIEDEL

Thank you.

JOHN CLANCY

And can I just quickly say. Can I quickly - just echoing that. I think that's so important, is that enthusiasm and excitement are very motivating things but they're not as motivating as frustration and if you – really. Very seriously. Just charge everyone to hold onto your frustration, your frustration at the large situation, your frustration at “well, I came here tonight and yeah I got something. I that, but what's next?” You know “these guys, this community board together, this is great.” We should have this - let's have this conversation every week until we actually begin to get some solutions. Hold on to the frustration.

PAIGE MCKENZIE WELBORN

Hi my name is Paige MacKenzie Welborn and I'm here representing the Green Theatre Initiative, which is a hybrid non-profit started in 2008 dedicated to inspiring theatres to go green. This is a new solution. This is a creative solution and it's a new idea. We believe that if theatres become leaders in the sustainability movement it will make theatres sustainable economically, socially and environmentally in the future and we really believe it's the future of making theatre relevant. If you are interested you can go to greentheatres.org and I invite you all to start thinking about how you can take advantage of this to get outside-of-the-box. Thank you.

PAUL NAGEL

One more quick wrap up.

PAUL BARTLETT

I'm brought in here to wrap things up and to bring it to the next stage.

Basically I'm Paul Bartlett and I'm Chair of the Arts Task Force for Community Board 3; Lower East Side, East Village, Chinatown. We started our task force about a year and a half ago and as you heard, the Theatre Task Force of board 4 started recently.

Now this was hosted by five community boards. Now what's significant about that is we have a lot of groups that represent a lot of theatres and there is something different that just happened here tonight, that hasn't happened in New York City before and that's that the community boards of the local communities, see the value of theatre and the arts. Basically something that happens in New York is that we have a very large city administration and they didn't know what to do with the priorities of neighborhoods and communities. It's just too big. So they formed community boards and the arts has not been involved in community boards up until recently in any big way. Well, we are now and what we can add differently to this is, when you all form arts organizations and lobby the government, that's what you are, arts organizations. What we can do on the community board level is make you a priority of each neighborhood and the priority isn't just an arts task force, it's all the community. It's the entire community saying “look,” like us in the lower east side, “we need theatre and arts in the lower east side.” So it's the entire board. And when we go – The other unique thing about community boards is that the public officials and elected officials are accountable to us. We're suppose to represent what the priorities of our

neighborhoods are and what we are going to articulate in boards 1 – 5 is that arts and theatre is important in our districts.

Now when we ban together we're saying "arts is a priority for lower Manhattan." And if it gets bigger-and-bigger, it means that we're not the lowest on the list. If you look at about the money that NYSCA has or the NEA has, it's nothing compared to the city and state budgets. We can get more money, but we can only do it if we ban together politically and say "this is our priority." So what we are asking you here tonight is when you get an email from us and say "look, we want you to come to this community board meeting, cause we have a vote on a resolution to make arts the priority of our neighborhood," we need you to come out. Because you saw very few hands come up here from the community boards. We have to convince other people on the board that this isn't true, what's important. So, you are going to get a call and we may try to collectively meet again. This was kind of a launch of some sorts. You have a certain amount of problems and issues. There's a multitude of different situations at different theatres that call for different solutions. We need more innovation and creativity in the solutions. So this is the start. You can email myself or the RSVP person for this email announcement or submit to us or keep track of things, but we will be in contact with you.

The other thing you can do is spin off new groups, that gets together in these gatherings and say, just like Kevin did down in lower Manhattan with 11 groups. Find 15 groups. Find groups in your neighborhood, especially non-profit arts groups. You really need to ban together. Because together, we're big and together politicians will be accountable to us, but apart, were those - somebody said before, we're those whining groups wanting more and more money. We got to get together and say "look, we're important to New York. We're the number 2 industry – arts and entertainment after finance, insurance and real estate. We are why people come to New York." So they got to invest in us. We believe we are part of the stimulus. This is - the type of economy we want is an economy with art. So we really have to get that message across. And I think we can do it.