

THE ART OF BEING GREEN: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN  
PERFORMING ARTS VENUES

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
The Masters of Science in Arts Administration Drexel University

By

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Drexel University  
2014

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## ABSTRACT

Southern California is an environmentally minded region, but theaters in the region are not publicizing environmental efforts. This study looks at what steps two large, national tour presenting theaters, the Ahmanson Theatre and the Segerstrom Center for the Arts, are taking to decrease the venues' environmental impacts and what other productions and theaters are doing that these venues could emulate.

Interviews were conducted with representatives of the aforementioned theaters in addition to speaking with other U.S. based performing arts organizations' representatives that are promoting environmental stewardship. The findings are that the Southern California venues are taking steps to reduce impact, but do not promote efforts in any coordinated or strategic approach.

Based on the success of arts organizations that promote environmental efforts, the recommendation for the Ahmanson and Segerstrom is to promote efforts as well to lead to decreased expenses, increased ticket sales and patron donations, and positive goodwill for the organizations.

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my family, friends and colleagues who supported me during this long effort.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank Dee Martin, Jeffrey Upah, Tim Dunn, Ian Garrett, Adam Meltzer, Molly Braverman, Susan Sampliner, Jill Kratish and Terri Trotter for the contribution of their time and knowledge toward this research. I would like to acknowledge Sacha Terrill, Dr. Xela Batchelder and Julie Hawkins for their support during this process. Thank you to the many colleagues who have supported and encouraged me to complete this work.

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## INTRODUCTION

As I traveled and lived in various areas of the country and have been influenced by almost four years of work in environmental communications, I have seen few areas as environmentally minded as Southern California. California is a leader in environmental policy, and its citizens take environmental issues very seriously. They have rallied behind efforts to ban plastic bags in stores and lead the country in hybrid vehicle ownership.<sup>1</sup> Residents want to see all businesses take action to reduce their carbon footprint and negative impact on the environment.

With this in mind, I started to wonder about how going green was impacting the arts community, specifically at the Los Angeles and Orange County venues where I go to see national touring productions of Broadway shows. I wondered what efforts these theaters are making, and how the touring community is tackling the related challenges.

I always think of arts as a source of good. Just as the arts serve other community needs, environmental stewardship seemed like it would be a part of an arts institution's ability to do good. When I began searching for information

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<sup>1</sup> Mueller, Joann. "Who Buys the Most Hybrid Cars? Northern Californians, Report Says." *Fortune.com*, January 3, 2013. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/joannmuller/2013/01/03/hybrid-landscape-looks-wildly-different-across-the-u-s/> (accessed June 27, 2014).

about environmental efforts at theatrical venues, though, I was surprised by the lack of information in existence.

The only comprehensive report I could find was a look at London's theatre industry entitled "Green Theatre, Taking action on climate change," created by the Mayor of London's office.<sup>2</sup> It is an action plan in partnership with the Arts Council England, led by the Mayor's commitment to a 60 percent reduction of London's greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2025. Theatre is just one of many industries that will contribute to this reduction.

The action plan lists three reasons for going green. First, London's theatrical productions and venues are world-renowned and while they are not a large contributor to carbon emissions, their actions and messages can be extremely significant to the theatrical industry and their audiences. Second, reducing energy consumption through improved efficiency saves money. Third, talent contributing to the theater industry is eager to make a difference, and being an environmental steward will contribute to attracting top talent.

The action plan, which is geared toward commercial and subsidized theatres and arts organizations, gives many practical tips for saving and reducing emissions, as well as the payback time of the actions and the percentage of carbon dioxide savings per venue. It also cites examples of seven success stories, including building sustainable theatres, refurbishing theatres, replacing lighting, helping technicians reduce theatres' carbon footprints, a five-year program to

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<sup>2</sup> Mayor of London, *Green Theatre – Taking action on climate change* (London: Greater London Authority, 2008)



make a venue carbon neutral, designing stage lighting, and the benefits of recycling. The plan also lays out where venues can start on the road to reducing their environmental impact and provides other resources.

In relation to New York City, the center of the United States theatrical industry, I could find very little material on any venues or productions acting to reduce their environmental footprint. I could not locate an action plan or a report on the environmental impacts of productions or theaters.

I found a news article, “Photo Preview: Henry Miller’s Theatre on West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street” from BroadwayWorld.com, which details how the Henry Miller Theatre, operated by the Roundabout Theatre Company, became New York City’s first LEED-rated theater. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is an environmental standard set by the United States Green Building Council. To receive this rating, the venue was built with air filtration, carbon dioxide sensors to maximize fresh air supply, Forest Stewardship Council-certified wood, high-recycled content wall panels and baseboards, locally sourced marble, waterless urinals, a minimum of 25 percent of materials locally sourced, and a minimum of 85 percent of construction and demolition of the old facility located on that site was diverted from landfill.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> BWW News Desk, “Photo Preview: Henry Miller’s Theatre on West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street,” published May 4, 2009, <http://www.broadwayworld.com/article/Photo-Preview-Henry-Millers-Theatre-on-West-43rd-Street-20090504#> (accessed August 12, 2012).

I visited Roundabout Theatre Company's website<sup>4</sup> to look for more information regarding the Henry Miller Theatre, which has since been renamed the Stephen Sondheim Theatre, and found there was no information regarding the Roundabout Theatre Company's environmental efforts and only one mention on the Sondheim Theatre's webpage that the venue, "reopened as the first LEED-certified Broadway theatre, raising the bar for environmentally sustained design and construction of performing arts venues."<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, Lincoln Center, New York City's famed performing arts facility, built and opened a new theater in 2012 called the Claire Tow Theater, which, like Roundabout's venue, is LEED-certified. On the Claire Tow Theater's web page,<sup>6</sup> there is a link to learn more about the venue's LEED certification efforts.<sup>7</sup> It's not a lengthy document, but one page details steps taken to achieve LEED certification, including sourcing 45 percent of materials used in construction from recycled content, recycling 77 percent of construction debris, and integrating daylight sensors, high efficiency lighting and air conditioning equipment, improved glazing and other steps to improve efficiency.

The Roundabout Theatre Company and Lincoln Center Theater have similarities. Both are highly visible theaters in New York City, are recognized for

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<sup>4</sup> Roundabout Theatre Company, <http://www.roundabouttheatre.org/> (accessed August 12, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Roundabout Theatre Company, "Your Visit - Venues & Theatres: Stephen Sondheim Theatre." Roundabout Theatre Company, <http://www.roundabouttheatre.org/Your-Visit/Venues---Theatres/Stephen-Sondheim-Theatre.aspx> (accessed August 12, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Lincoln Center Theater, "About the Claire Tow Theater." Lincoln Center Theater, <http://www.lct.org/aboutClaireTow.htm> (accessed May 13, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Lincoln Center Theater, "Claire Tow Theater – LEED Certification." Lincoln Center Theater, <http://www.lct.org/content/press/Green%20Initiative%20Page.pdf> (accessed May 13, 2013).

producing high quality theater, and have the ability to influence their audiences. They are dependent on members for funding of their programs and initiatives. Lincoln Center Theater sees value in listing their environmental efforts on their website, while Roundabout only mentions it in passing. Roundabout stated that their venue's LEED-certification raised the bar for environmentally sustained design and construction of performing arts venues. How?

When searching for scholarly works on the topic of environmental efforts in theaters, I once again did not find much. Garen Checkley, a student at Northwestern University, wrote "Green Theatre – Why and How the Theatre Community Should Go Green."<sup>8</sup> His work focused on the importance of environmental efforts for a theater. He discusses how it could benefit the theater in cost savings and motivating giving and suggests that many efforts including marketing and mission should be taken into consideration. He concludes that the place to start a green movement is with the theater's employees, leaders, patrons, supporters, and board of directors. Checkley also states there is "no set way to proceed," but while every facility is different, there are commonalities among venues that make it possible to band together.

Venues that present Broadway national touring productions in the Los Angeles/Orange County region of California often bring in the same touring shows. These venues touch thousands of theatergoers every time productions are on their stages. As a theatergoer at multiple venues in Los Angeles, including the

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<sup>8</sup> Checkley, Garen, "Green Theatre – Why and How the Theatre Community Should Go Green" (Senior Honors Thesis, Department of Theatre, Northwestern University, 2010)

national tour presenting Ahmanson Theatre and Segerstrom Center for the Arts, I have not seen or received any messages about the environmental stewardship of these institutions or venues. With all the enthusiasm and growing movement to engage in environmentally friendly practices in California, why am I not seeing or reading about what two of the most well-known and highly attended performing arts venues in the region are doing to lessen their impact on the environment? Based on location and the mindset in the region, I have to believe that both the Ahmanson and Segerstrom have taken steps to green their operations, but what are they?

By the nature of where the venues are located, I believe national touring venues in Los Angeles and Orange County are taking the initiative to decrease the environmental impact of their facilities and the productions that play at their venues, but they are not publicizing the efforts being taken, to the detriment of audience perception and their ability to be an industry thought leader. In this thesis, I will investigate environmental actions the theaters are taking, steps touring productions are taking to reduce their environmental impact, and the feasibility of collaboration efforts between venues and productions.

## CHAPTER ONE –VENUE

Two of the largest and most high profile performing arts venues in Southern California are the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles and the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Orange Country. Both of these venues host Broadway series of national touring productions. The Ahmanson is located on the campus of the Los Angeles Music Center, a multi-venue facility, and its Broadway series is presented by the non-profit organization, Center Theatre Group (CTG). Segerstrom Hall is also located on a multi-venue facility and its Broadway series is presented by the non-profit Segerstrom Center for the Arts, which also manages the facilities.

In an area of the country perceived as being environmentally responsible, a leader in environmental policy, where residents value environmental action,<sup>9</sup> it makes sense that both venues would be taking steps to reduce their environmental impact. Yet, although these venues are taking actions, they are not talking about it.

The Ahmanson is located on the campus of the Los Angeles Music Center and is taking unpublicized steps toward reducing its environmental impact. In an

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<sup>9</sup> Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, Jui Shrestha, “Californians & the Environment,” *PPIC Statewide Survey* (July 2013).

interview with Dee Martin, manager of office services for the Los Angeles Music Center, she shared many steps taken at the Center.<sup>10</sup> In the venue, all lighting has been replaced with low-voltage, high-efficiency light sources and exit signs have been replaced with LED lights. The venue has further reduced energy usage by turning the lights off during the day and when a show is not going on. The air handler motors were swapped out with high efficiency motors that use less energy. The engineers regularly review the start and stop time for the air handler and air conditioning to make sure it is being used efficiently. In the restrooms, toilets have been replaced with dual flush commodes and waterless urinals to reduce water usage, and hardwired-sensor controlled paper towel dispensers have been installed to decrease battery waste and lower paper towel use. The facility also has changed the type of hand soap to a more environmentally friendly formula that requires less water to rinse compared to other soap. Additionally, bins have been placed throughout the theater for patrons to recycle their programs.

Outside at the Music Center, many steps have been taken to keep the grounds beautiful and energy efficient. Lights on plaza trees have been replaced with LED lights. To decrease water use, artificial grass was substituted for real grass, and in areas where watering is still needed, irrigation controls have been installed. Sidewalks on the vicinity have been replaced with rubber sidewalks to allow for tree growth. In the past when roots would grow under the concrete sidewalk, it would cause the sidewalk to lift and buckle and eventually the

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<sup>10</sup> Dee Martin, manager, office services, Los Angeles Music Center, interview by author via telephone, August 17, 2012.

sidewalk would have to be replaced. With the rubberized sidewalks, the sidewalks bend as the roots grow under them and also can be lifted and removed temporarily so that the roots can be cut back. The parking garage underneath the venue went through a full lighting retrofit and has parking spaces with charging designated for electric vehicles.

In the staff offices toner cartridges are recycled. A battery collection program is offered to recycle batteries from work and employees are encouraged to bring in batteries from home to recycle as well. There are ongoing recycling programs for employees and tenants who rent space at the Music Center. The Center offers employees an old light bulb collection and in return provides new energy efficient light bulbs

On Earth Day, the Center hosts an electronic waste drive for tenants and employees. At that same time employees are asked to bring unused or unneeded office supplies to a designated area where any employee who has a need for the items in their office or home is invited to take these items to maximize their reuse. Also, on-campus events for employees are held where they are given high-efficiency light bulbs and reusable shopping bags.

The Music Center has a “green team” in place to help communicate and encourage participation in the employee-driven programs. The green team gathers every so often to talk about opportunities for “greening” as well. Finally, all

dining facilities on the grounds are recycling/composting food waste as of early 2012.<sup>11</sup>

The Segerstrom has taken action as well. It has taken advantage of local electric company incentives to change out lighting to more energy efficient LED and CFL lamps, which contributed to a 30 percent decrease in electricity use over a three-year period.<sup>12</sup> A recycling vendor who does off-site sorting has been retained in addition to the Segerstrom's internal sorting through having receptacles for white bond paper, plastic and metal beverage containers.

When it comes to paper usage the Segerstrom has stopped mailing hard copies of their magazine *Revue* and now only offers it online. The Segerstrom recycles all unused programs, flyers and collateral and now offer programs online so patrons do not have to take a program with them. The venue also is considering smartphone ticketing, which will further decrease paper and printing usage and costs.

Another unique recycling effort has been taking some of the large street banners that are hung from area light posts and having them made into totes. These totes were sold to donors.

Like the LA Music Center, the Segerstrom also has a campus-wide Green Team, which consists of staff who drives Green initiatives in the administrative office. The Green Team was instrumental in significantly decreasing Styrofoam

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<sup>11</sup> Dee Martin, manager, office services, Los Angeles Music Center, interview by author via telephone, August 17, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> *Revue*. How Green is the Center? June/July 2010.



cup use in the office, and in implementing a more robust recycling program that includes batteries and portable electronics.

The Segerstrom encourages employees to look at alternative commuting options by offering access to dressing rooms for staff to change if they bicycle to work.<sup>13</sup>

As an affiliate of the Broadway Green Alliance, the Segerstrom proudly presents shows involved with Touring Green, an industry initiative aimed at offsetting the impact of carbon emissions related to transporting sets, instruments and theatrical equipment. It includes the tours of *9 to 5: The Musical*, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, *Mamma Mia!* and *Mary Poppins*.<sup>14</sup>

The Segerstrom took proactive measures to conduct studies regarding switching to waterless urinals and installing solar panels on the rooftop, but found that both were too cost prohibitive to enact without underwriting, grants or other assistance.

Both the Ahmanson and the Segerstrom have undertaken impressive efforts to lessen their environmental impact, but other than one article from the Ahmanson's self-published magazine, *Revue*, which was published in the June/July 2010 issue, I could not find anything publicizing the environmental efforts these venues have taken.

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<sup>13</sup> Tim Dunn, director of public relations, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, e-mail message to author, September 17, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> *Revue*. How Green is the Center? June/July 2010.

It took more than a month of inquiries with the Segerstrom staff<sup>15</sup> for Tim Dunn to be able to gather information regarding the Segerstrom's environmental efforts, indicating that they don't have anything readily available to refer to that demonstrates the full spectrum of their environmental stewardship efforts.

All information regarding the Ahmanson was based on a one-on-one interview I conducted with the LA Music Center's manager of office services, Dee Martin. The nonprofit organization that presents the national tours that appear at the Ahmanson, Centre Theater Group, leaves the environmental concerns to the Los Angeles Music Center. According to Jeffrey Upah, general manager of Ahmanson Theatre at Center Theatre Group, "the facilities maintenance and energy efforts are all provided to CTG by the Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County. Any green efforts or plans for additional sustainability for the future are managed by Los Angeles County (Los Angeles Music Center) representatives." He went on to state, "since CTG is a tenant with very responsible landlords, we follow the environmentally-sensitive practices prescribed by Los Angeles County, and our CTG initiatives lean toward safety issues and making certain that the work conditions are at their best for everyone who works on productions, whether this is in the offices, in the rehearsal rooms, in the orchestra pit, on stage or back stage, and including Front of House."<sup>16</sup>

When I asked Martin about any reporting of their environmental efforts, she said the L.A. Music Center has a recycling consultant who reports for the

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<sup>15</sup> Twenty three e-mails between Segerstrom staff and author, August 13 – September 18, 2012

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Upah, general manager, Ahmanson Theatre at Center Theatre Group, e-mail message to author, July 30, 2012.

Center, and while the information is not public they do share the results with Green Team members. She said she would check with her boss to see if she could share that document with me, but later responded to me via e-mail that, “We are not able to release any recycling reports or in-house written communications at this time.”<sup>17</sup>

I pursued another Broadway touring venue in Los Angeles, the Pantages Theatre, to learn about its environmental efforts. The venue had presented multiple extended runs of the musical *Wicked*, which is known for its “Green. For Good” campaign.<sup>18</sup> I was denied interview requests or any information regarding their sustainability practices.<sup>19</sup>

When I spoke to other organizations that are advocating green practices in the arts including organizations that are based in Los Angeles and The Broadway League’s Broadway Green Alliance, they were unaware of actions being taken at these venues.

Upah at Center Theatre Group deferred any questions regarding their environmental activities to the L.A. Music Center, so I was surprised to hear from the Center for Sustainable Practice in the Art (CSPA), a Los Angeles based organization with national scope, that the funding that started a number of CSPA’s programs came from CTG and that CSPA’s director, Ian Garrett, did consulting work on the renovation of one of their other theaters. Garrett pointed

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<sup>17</sup> Dee Martin, e-mail to author, August 28, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> NBC Universal, “Green. For Good.,” <http://www.wickedthemusical.com/page.php?#GreenForGood> (accessed on August 26, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Benny Aguayo, marketing manager, PR & communications, Pantages Theatre, e-mail to author, August 7, 2012.

out that, “the result of this coordination with the Center Theatre Group is very much responsible for the founding of our organization, but less so had any real impact on CTG production.”<sup>20</sup>

Resources are available locally to theatres wishing to pursue environmental efforts, and recognition for those efforts also is possible through a certification process. Arts: Earth Partnership (AEP), encompassing an environmental sustainable certification program and a material resources exchange for the creative sector, is endorsed by the city of Los Angeles. It works with arts and culture organizations throughout the area by providing them with a toolkit that is a road map to becoming a more sustainable green organization. It can work for any size organization and focuses on achievable measures such as considering recycling, reducing electricity, chemical and water use, shopping habits, and transportation to and from the venue. AEP suggests making changes where they can be made from a financial standpoint.<sup>21</sup>

“We are kind of like a gateway into sustainability,” said Adam Meltzer, director of operations for AEP. “Most groups that get certified through AEP are already doing a little bit of stuff and they want to do more, or they are not doing anything and they want to start to be more green.”

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<sup>20</sup> Ian Garrett, director, Center for Sustainable Practice in the Art, e-mail to author, August 10, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Adam Meltzer, director of operations, Arts: Earth Partnership, interview with author via telephone, August 16, 2012.

Based on the criteria for certification, there's no reason that the Ahmanson could not be certified, but as of August 2012, the theater had shown no interest and AEP didn't seem aware of what environmental actions the theater had taken.

Representatives of the Broadway Green Alliance were unaware of the actions the Ahmanson or the Segerstrom had taken. Many of the suggestions for improving lighting efficiency and reducing water use as well as mentions of improving recycling and HVAC systems that I learned about from the Center for Non Profit Management, AEP and the Broadway Green Alliance, already have been enacted by the Ahmanson and the Segerstrom, yet the peer organizations interested in supporting and recognizing these environmental efforts remain unaware of what is taking place at these venues.

Why is there such a disconnect? My research was designed to discover what actions the Broadway touring venues in Southern California are taking to decrease environmental impact and I learned that many steps are being taken. I was unable to investigate the communication issue that has kept the venues from working with advocacy organizations or promoting environmental efforts, but it is an area that deserves further study.

The Segerstrom and the Ahmanson are in admirable positions when it comes to their environmental efforts. Both could easily be certified by AEP with what the venues have already accomplished. These venues have great stories to tell and I believe they should be promoting them. AEP certification could give the facilities' efforts validity, and the Broadway Green Alliance would be a great

ally to give venues an opportunity to share their work and influence others in the theater community. Sharing the positive environmental actions can lead to positive publicity for the venues, which translates into positive community sentiment among the patrons who value environmental stewardship and purchase tickets and donate funding to the venues. Showing patrons that steps have been taken to decrease energy, facilities, and printing costs so more funding can be put toward productions shows responsible stewardship of patrons' donations, which can contribute to increase funding in the future.

## CHAPTER TWO – THE TOUR

For Broadway national tours, there are many elements of production that impact the environment. From transportation for everyone and everything in the production, to merchandise, to water use, to trash and more, there is the potential to leave a very large carbon footprint in a national tour's wake.

Tours are able to make changes to decrease their impact, but the effort needs to be a collaboration among the many moving parts that take a show on the road.

In the article “How Green is the Center?” that appeared in the Segerstrom Center for the Arts publication, *Revue*, 9 to 5: *The Musical*, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, *Mamma Mia!*, and *Mary Poppins* are mentioned as shows in its 2010-2011 season that were participating in Touring Green, an industry initiative to offset carbon emissions.<sup>22</sup>

“Touring Green” is the program name given to “The Clark Transfer Green Initiative.” Clark Transfer is a leading provider of transportation services for moving theatrical equipment for national tours. In 2008, Clark Transfer teamed with Native Energy, an international provider of carbon offsets. For a penny-and-

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<sup>22</sup> *Revue*. How Green is the Center? June/July 2010.

a-half per mile per tractor-trailer, productions can offset the carbon emissions of transporting their equipment, sets, props and costumes.<sup>23</sup>

In the document Clark Transfer provided regarding the program, it explains that the key features of the program are easy because Clark Transfer takes care of the offsets, inexpensive at only a penny-and-a-half per mile, and effective because projects have been chosen to offset that will reduce both current and future emissions.

The document also notes the benefits the shows receive for participating in the program. It states that in addition to the “satisfaction of knowing that your show is making a difference on one of the most important issues of our time,” it grants the production the ability for the shows to advertise on the transportation trucks, show programs, and elsewhere that “Theatrical Equipment is transported on a carbon neutral basis by Clark Transfer in partnership with Native Energy.”

One of the shows that participates in the “Touring Green” program is *Wicked*. The company manager of the Broadway production of *Wicked*, Susan Sampliner, has been instrumental in getting Broadway theaters and national tours to think about going green. She is one of the founders and co-chairs of the Broadway Green Alliance, “an industry-wide initiative that educates, motivates,

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<sup>23</sup> Clark Transfer Inc., “The Clark Transfer Green Initiative: Broadway On-the-Road Goes Green,” February 28, 2008



and inspires the entire theatre community and its patrons to adopt environmentally friendlier practices.”<sup>24</sup>

The Broadway Green Alliance is an ad hoc committee of The Broadway League, a national trade organization with more than 700 members in nearly 200 markets in North America. Members include theater owners and operators, producers, presenters and general managers who bring Broadway theater to nearly 30 million people in New York and on tour across the United States and Canada.<sup>25</sup>

The combination of *Wicked* and the environment has turned into a perfect match. The marketing of the show has been centered on the color green due to the character of the Wicked Witch. The Witch’s green has led to thinking green, originally with the Broadway production with Sampliner leading the charge. The greening has continued onto the road with two national tours of the hit Broadway musical.

According to Molly Braverman, stage manager for one of the two *Wicked* tours, the production has taken many steps on tour to reduce the company’s impact. Recycled paper is used in all departments including printing all program inserts on recycled paper. When it comes to recycling, the production ensures all paper, cans, drink bottles, printer cartridges, theatrical light bulbs, hairspray and other daily-use bottles from the hair and wardrobe department are disposed of for

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<sup>24</sup> Broadway Green Alliance, “About,” <http://www.broadwaygreen.com/about/> (accessed May 10, 2013)

<sup>25</sup> The Broadway League, About Touring Broadway, <http://www.touringbroadway.com/about> (accessed May 13, 2013)

proper recycling. If the theater doesn't provide recycling, the company adds recycling bins to backstage areas to conduct their own recycling efforts. Rechargeable batteries are used for headsets, flashlight and other daily-use items. The company utilizes biodegradable utensils and travels with its own coffee mugs so the cast and crew do not have to use paper/disposable coffee mugs. Also, on the consumer-facing side, most of the merchandise sold on tour is made from organic cotton and the merchandise bags are made from recycled paper. Some of these ideas have come from the *Wicked* cast and crew, who are "recycling fanatics," thanks to their involvement with the show.<sup>26</sup>

*Wicked* has taken other steps to encourage and educate the public to look for and make better environmental choices. In 2008, the national tour worked with a Wichita, Kansas area high school to enhance the students' understanding of the Broadway Green Initiative, how it is influencing theater productions, and how to incorporate environmental efforts into everyday life. The curriculum involved five parts that were taught to 70 high school students by five theater teachers and included partnerships with the local city staff and community members.

In 2009, the Paramount Theatre in Seattle, Washington used the national tour of *Wicked* to launch its Preservation and Green Energy project. The Paramount used *Wicked* as an example of a show making a commitment to green

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<sup>26</sup> Molly Braverman, company manager, *Wicked*, e-mail to author, August 22, 2012.

energy standards and tied it into the first step in replacing the theater's landmark sign with a more energy efficient concept.<sup>27</sup>

In 2008, the company partnered with the local community in Boston to plant trees on "Wicked Day," an annual celebration of the day that *Wicked* began performances on Broadway, which is often marked with an environmental message and activity in New York.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to these efforts, *Wicked* companies, and theatrical productions produced by the Walt Disney Company, have "green captains" on all of their productions. The green captains are ambassadors for the Broadway Green Alliance. The *Wicked* productions also have taken up the torch of filling out Broadway Green Alliance Touring Scorecards at each venue where they perform.<sup>29</sup> The cards are submitted to the Broadway Green Alliance as part of the data gathering to analyze what theaters are doing around the country.<sup>30</sup> The intention is to be able to notify all national tours of environmental practices venues have in place before the productions arrive. The Broadway Green Alliance also is building toward having a space on the Alliance's website where members can learn about environmental best practices in theaters around the country.<sup>31</sup>

With all this activity, *Wicked* has created a cast and crew of "recycling fanatics." They encourage recycling wherever they go and have seen reactions to

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<sup>27</sup> Susan Sampliner, e-mail to author, August 18, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Molly Braverman, company manager, *Wicked*, e-mail to author, August 22, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Susan Sampliner, e-mail to author, August 16, 2012

<sup>30</sup> Molly Braverman, e-mail to author, August 26, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Susan Sampliner, e-mail to author, August 29, 2012

their efforts such as venues, including the Pantages Theatre in Los Angeles, begin to reuse the leftover program inserts as scrap paper around the theaters and administrative offices.<sup>32</sup>

Even with all of their efforts, upon reviewing a Playbill from the *Wicked* tour stop on Pantages Theatre in Los Angeles, I found no mention of any green initiatives, including any acknowledgement of Clark Transfer or its “Touring Green” program.<sup>33</sup>

Clark Transfer states in its document that, “The vast majority of Americans believe that global warming is a serious problem and this program lets audiences know that the show cares about the issue. By participating, Broadway on-the-road can influence its audience to offset their own emissions, leveraging the impact of the program.”<sup>34</sup> It would seem like it would be a great opportunity for *Wicked* and any production utilizing “Touring Green” to let audiences know that the company cares about the audiences’ concern and have taken the initiative to Tour Green by sharing this information in productions’ Playbill programs.

*Wicked* is making great strides. The production works with local venues and communities when on the road and the opportunities arise. It has a section<sup>35</sup> on its website where it lists the production’s green accomplishments,

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<sup>32</sup> Molly Braverman, e-mail to author, August 22, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Playbill, *Wicked*, Pantages Theatre, December 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Clark Transfer Inc., “The Clark Transfer Green Initiative: Broadway On-the-Road Goes Green,” February 28, 2008

<sup>35</sup> NBC Universal, Green. For Good., <http://www.wickedforgood.com/greenforgood/> (accessed May 10, 2013)

which are many and significant.<sup>36</sup> *Wicked* has made changes to decrease its environmental impact as a production and has engaged its cast and crew to evangelize its environmental message and take action.

*Wicked* is going green and promoting its actions, while I heard several times from the Broadway Green Alliance that Disney Theatrical Productions, which currently is producing *Mary Poppins* and *The Lion King* on tour, have no information available online about their productions' environmental efforts.

Many of the actions *Wicked* has taken are steps that all productions can take, yet if other productions are, they are not talking about it.

Jill Kratish, co-chair for the Broadway Green Alliance's touring committee, weighed in with her thoughts about what needs to happen to get other productions besides *Wicked* on board, "I think we need a cultural shift – end of sentence." The public relations, marketing and website teams are charged with selling tickets, and, "they just don't find it (environmental efforts) that sexy of a story." In her meetings with the Broadway Green Alliance she has said that they need to figure out a way to market it "to make this sexy – to make people care."<sup>37</sup>

It may be true that a cultural shift does need to happen, but at a penny-and-a-half a mile, Green Touring should be part of what Clark Transfer does with every show. If *Wicked's* production can institutionalize environmental-friendly

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<sup>36</sup> NBC Universal. Green Accomplishments as of April 2012, <http://www.wickedforgood.com/greenforgood/greenforgood-accomplishments.html> (accessed May 10, 2013)

<sup>37</sup> Jill Kratish, director of programming, Broward Center for the Performing Arts, interview with author via telephone, August 28, 2012.

solutions in its backstage areas, I don't see an argument as to why others cannot as well. *Wicked* may have a theme around green, but the show is still structured like other Broadway shows, with a cast, crew, sets, costumes, make up, lighting, merchandising, etc.

The Broadway League should institutionalize "green captains" as a requirement for all shows going out on the road, and work with shows from the first day of production to work toward best practices, using *Wicked's* work as an example of the actions they can take to minimize the production's impact on the environment.

The Broadway League also should work with marketers and public relations professionals representing touring productions to educate them on the value of environmental stewardship as a publicity tool. Green in the headlines can translate to green at the box office through positive publicity and public awareness. The League also can help further its stance by sharing data and reports on positive public perception of organizations that take the environment into consideration as part of its business model with the promoters to help them understand why it can impact the bottom line – ticket sales.

## CHAPTER THREE - THE SUCCESSES AND THE CHALLENGES

Terri Trotter and Jillian Kratish are the co-chairs of the touring committee of the Broadway Green Alliance. Trotter is the chief operating officer of the Walton Arts Center in Fayetteville, Arkansas and Kratish is director of programming at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Neither are states I would think of when it comes to setting standards for environmental policies or being particularly green – they just don’t register at all when it comes to environmental efforts – but my first impression was proven wrong after speaking with Trotter and Kratish.

The Walton Arts Center is the only venue that presents national tours of Broadway shows that I could find<sup>38</sup> that has an “About: Going Green” section on

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<sup>38</sup> Ahmanson Theatre, Center Theatre Group, <http://www.centertheatregroup.org/theatres/ahmanson> (accessed May 11, 2013)

Ahmanson Theatre, Center Theatre Group, <http://www.centertheatregroup.org/theatres/ahmanson> (accessed May 11, 2013)

<sup>38</sup> Segerstrom Center for the Arts, <http://www.scfta.org/> (accessed May 11, 2013)

<sup>38</sup> Pantages Theatre, <http://hollywoodpantages.com/> (accessed May 11, 2013)

<sup>38</sup> Broadway in Chicago, <http://www.broadwayinchicago.com/> (accessed May 11, 2013)

<sup>38</sup> Kimmel Center, <http://www.kimmelcenter.org/broadway/> (accessed May 11, 2013)

<sup>38</sup> Broward Center for the Performing Arts, <https://www.browardcenter.org/online/> (accessed May 11, 2013)

<sup>38</sup> Paramount Theatre, <http://www.stgpresents.org/paramount> (accessed May 11, 2013)

<sup>38</sup> Broadway in Wichita, <http://theaterleague.com/wichita/> (accessed May 11, 2013)

<sup>38</sup> Broadway in Boston, [www.BroadwayInBoston.com](http://www.BroadwayInBoston.com), (accessed May 11, 2013)

its website.<sup>39</sup> According to Trotter, the reasons the Walton has taken these steps are multi-faceted. Arkansas is nicknamed “the natural state” and people enjoy the outdoors, so taking environmental actions is something of great interest to the community. The Walton’s actions also have been driven by the influence of Walmart, whose operations are based in the area and is seen as a leading corporate voice in the idea of sustainability. The University of Arkansas is a partner with the Walton, which has taken on the idea of green businesses and technologies as well.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, the Walton was inspired by the community’s interest in sustainability to create the Artosphere Festival in 2009. According to Trotter, “as we saw the conversations going on in our community about sustainability we wanted to look at a way to bring the artist’s voice into the conversations so we started the Artosphere Festival, which looks at sustainability and issues of sustainability and nature through the eyes of the artist.” She went on to say:

...as part of thinking about the festival, one of the things that occurred to us is that if we are going to do a festival where we look at the issues of sustainability, it sure is important that we do that as an organization. So that was a real emphasis for us to use the launching of that festival as a way for us organizationally to say, ‘it’s well and good, but what is it that we want to accomplish as an organization and to what end?’ So that really launched our sustainability efforts as an organization.<sup>41</sup>

As a result, the Walton has taken many actions that are similar to what the Ahmanson and the Segerstrom have enacted. The Walton has completed a

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<sup>39</sup> Walton Center for the Arts, “About/Going Green,” Walton Center for the Arts, <http://www.waltonartscenter.org/aboutus/goinggreen.aspx> (accessed May 11, 2013)

<sup>40</sup> Terri Trotter, chief operating officer, Walton Arts Center, interview by author via telephone, September 9, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Terri Trotter, chief operating officer, Walton Arts Center, interview by author via telephone, September 9, 2012.



lighting retrofit, installed low-flow faucets in restrooms, initiated policies for turning off lights and adjusting thermostats in offices and backstage, placed recycling bins and signage throughout the campus, and switched to chemical-free cleaning products.<sup>42</sup>

Some additional actions the Walton has taken include initiating policy for double-sided printing in the office, redesigning their concessions program to source locally and reduce waste, offering touring companies reusable bottles and filtered water stations backstage,<sup>43</sup> and switching to Forest Stewardship Council certified fibers for tissue products. The Walton notes that it has multiple staff members working with the Broadway Green Alliance to create a green certification program that would be available for theaters nationally. The Walton also has a Sustainability Team that is cross-departmental and meets every 2-3 months to set goals, measure outcomes, and champion the initiatives at all levels of the organization.

The Sustainability Team's actions are seen in the information the Walton makes available on its website. The list of actions the Walton has taken often includes the reason why the step is important and potential savings from taking that action. For example, when it comes to lighting the Walton states:

Lighting and controls upgrades for our facilities will reduce our CO2 emissions by over 500 metric tons per year and save an estimated

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<sup>42</sup> Walton Arts Center, *Walton Arts Center Green Initiatives*, May 10, 2012

<sup>43</sup> Terri Trotter, chief operating officer, Walton Arts Center, interview by author via telephone, September 9, 2012.

\$53,000 per year on our electricity bills. These savings result in a return on investment in less than four years.<sup>44</sup>

The Walton addresses the environmental reason as to why they are upgrading – it will reduce CO2 emissions by over 500 metric tons per year – and states the cost savings – an estimated \$53,000 per year on electricity bills.

When initially looking at sustainability efforts during the launch of Artosphere, the staff started looking at what things they could do that were sustainable and could save them money.<sup>45</sup> The staff conducted a large energy audit, which led to the Walton taking the steps to install new lighting fixtures that based on the audit, would equal to CO2 emissions reduction and the cost savings.

As a nonprofit organization, Trotter and her staff saw the cost savings as an important part of the equation when it came to making changes that would lessen the Walton's impact on the environment. They had to think about how they talk about it so they don't upset donors who are contributing to the Walton because they supported the arts and then think their money is going toward an environmental cause. Trotter addressed this concern by saying, "We try to be careful about that and the way we look at that is to say we believe *this*, but our responsibility as a business is to best utilize our resources. So if I can save money by changing lighting so therefore I have more money to bring more artists, in that is a good stewardship of those dollars."

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<sup>44</sup> Walton Center for the Arts, "About/Going Green," Walton Center for the Arts, <http://www.waltonartscenter.org/aboutus/goinggreen.aspx> (accessed May 11, 2013)

<sup>45</sup> Terri Trotter, chief operating officer, Walton Arts Center, interview by author via telephone, September 9, 2012.

Kratish also weighed in on environmental efforts versus costs. An example she gave is recycling. While it seems logical to recycle, local waste management dictates the availability of recycling and whether or not implementing a recycling program is feasible at a venue. Kratish has been with Broadway Green Alliance longer than Trotter and has found some venues do not want to recycle since there is no recycling offered in their county. “It’s not reasonable to expect that a large performing arts center is going to haul away their own cans and bottles to another county.”<sup>46</sup>

Kratish pointed out that what the Broadway Green Alliance has found for many theaters, as well as her own, is that the cost savings trump the environmental benefits. She very candidly said:

If it is cheaper to haul away recycling than it is to haul away waste that is when the theater is interested. That’s what it took here (the Broward). When a company opened up that said, ‘we’re going to charge you less to haul away your recycling than your waste and you are going to save overall dollars at the end of the year,’ that’s when the higher ups in my organization said, “Okay, we’re going to do this now.” They really don’t care about greening. They don’t believe it helps. They’re not at all interested. They’re interested in saving \$100,000 a year in waste removal. That’s what they were interested in.

While Trotter’s organization has been able to combine the environmental message with the costs savings message to the benefit of her community, the environment, and her electric bills, Kratish doesn’t believe that the environmental message is as compelling and that you have to use the cost-savings approach to give organizations a strong case for change.

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<sup>46</sup> Jill Kratish, director of programming, Broward Center for the Performing Arts, interview with author via telephone, August 28, 2012.

Kratish referred to how she worked with the sound department at *Wicked* to put together a spreadsheet showing what the Broward could save per year on batteries if they switched to rechargeable batteries. The cost savings won over the administration at the Broward so they made the switch. She later presented her research and results to representatives from various theaters around the country at the annual Spring Road Conference put on by The Broadway League. After her presentation, a number of people came up to her wanting to know more and what they could do, and asked if it really worked. For many it was the first time their interest was piqued and it was because of the cost analysis.

Both Kratish and Trotter indicated that it's easier for the venue to make changes than the tours. Trotter said there's still a huge carbon footprint of the movement of a production and while the Walton can change out its house lights and make sure they are turned off when no one is using the space, the technology for theatrical lighting is not made in a way that is very sustainable.<sup>47</sup> Kratish said that producing green is more difficult because designers working on productions don't want to think about trying to reuse materials.

When it comes to making environmental changes at venues, Trotter eloquently stated, "Just do what you can do within your context. We're not going to stop being who we are, but how do we be who we are in the best way that we can?"

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<sup>47</sup> Terri Trotter, chief operating officer, Walton Arts Center, interview by author via telephone, September 9, 2012.

That is an important message. The mission of any nonprofit entity presenting national tours of Broadway shows is to present the arts. They need to stay true to that mission. In the grand scheme there is opportunity at many venues to further their good citizenship of making changes and choices that lessen the venue's, and at times the production's, impact on the environment while making decisions that save the venue money in the long run. The cost-savings benefits will win management and donors' hearts and minds, but the environmental impact is not only the right thing to do, but also can impact the community's perception of an organization doing good beyond just their cultural offerings. It can be a win-win scenario as Trotter has seen at the Walton Arts Center.

## CONCLUSION – RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ahmanson Theatre and the Segerstrom Center for the Performing Arts, national touring venues in Los Angeles and Orange County, are taking initiative to decrease the environmental impact of their facilities and the productions that play at their venues, but are not publicizing the efforts being taken. This is to the detriment of audience perception and their ability to be industry thought leaders.

It is evident that with collaboration and learning from other venues that the Ahmanson and Segerstrom have the ability to impact perception and to be thought of as leaders because many steps have already been thought about and taken to reduce their environmental impacts. The venues have both made great strides, but should make their stories public. Every action they take is beneficial to decreasing their environmental impact and possibly reducing costs. It shows good citizenship and stewardship of funding and a concern for the environment in which they work and operate. The venues should not get caught up in the idea that the arts audience and patrons only value the arts.

It was suggested by Meltzer of AEP, that the reason an arts venue may not want to talk about their efforts is because previously a local Los Angeles arts organization that tried to promote its environmental efforts was criticized for what they didn't accomplish. Trotter pointed out though that for the Walton, her staff thought about how they wanted to talk about their efforts and that may have been the missing key for the criticized Los Angeles organization. If the public relations message includes the benefits and the cost savings by making changes, the argument as to what an organization isn't doing is easier to dismiss. In the case of Segerstrom, they pointed out that they had completed studies on solar panels, but they couldn't make it work from a cost standpoint. Transparency is key when it comes to environmental efforts and how a non-profit is funding their environmental efforts.

The Broadway Green Alliance could be key to tying together venue and production to improve overall environmental impacts, but also to engage and educate audiences. Every venue and every production is different, but there are commonalities, such as the shows that play at these venues. I see no reason why they can't learn from each other and initiate best practices. As the Broadway Green Alliance collects scorecards throughout the country for each venue, they could compare venues and look for opportunities to recommend changes.

**Require Green Captains on touring productions.** As recommended earlier, the Broadway League also could work with producers to establish a green captain on every touring production. Regular conference calls for all green captains could be conducted where they can discuss their actions on the road so

that if one company is able to institute something new at a venue, the next company coming into the same venue will know to look out for the change.

**Support industry discussions.** The Broadway League should include an environmental update and discussion every year during the annual spring road conference and offer it as a presenting opportunity for staff at venues that have taken action to present to their peers. Walton Arts Center constantly was used as the example for a venue doing it right because the Walton not only took action, but they also talk about it and make information available on their website. The Walton has built goodwill and a great reputation throughout the industry because they talk about it. Let others lead by example because the Ahmanson and the Segerstrom and I'm sure others are taking actions too. Encourage their voices to be heard.

**Look for opportunities to tell the story.** *Wicked* has created goodwill for the show by engaging with communities and taking part in activities such as planting trees and teaching high school students about the production's environmental efforts. Those are public relations opportunities and those stories in the local media equal additional exposure, which drives ticket sales and donations.

**Find low-cost opportunities to engage the audience.** Make announcements that programs are available online and give with it stats about paper usage and trees saved if the audience didn't use programs. Place signs in appropriate areas about the impact of a change like a sign in the bathroom about



how many gallons will be saved over a year by the switch to low flow sinks. In the program, productions should note the changes the production has made and give tips on how audience members can translate those efforts into their home life. Venues also could incentivize patrons with discount offers or programs that have an environmental component such as show your public transportation ticket to the concessions stand and get a free soft drink. There are lots of ways to get the audience to think about what the venue is doing and how they can make changes too.

Being a Los Angeles area resident, I am proud to see what the Ahmanson and Segerstrom have accomplished. I believe by telling their story they can set the example for other theaters across the country. A theater in Arkansas shouldn't be the only venue talking about their actions when theaters in Los Angeles are taking action and seeing the financial and employee engagement benefits, too. The key is sharing their story to influence action in the theater industry and audiences.

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