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Public Relations for the Not-For-Profit Professional Resident Theatre: An Examination of Four Models

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PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR THE

NOT-FOR-PROFIT PROFESSIONAL RESIDENT THEATRE:

AN EXAMINATION OF FOUR MODELS

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Lauren Green-Caldwell

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to determine how public relations is practiced in the not-for-profit professional resident theatre and determine if the style of practice in use is the most advantageous for the current environment. The study examines literature in three areas: General public relations, public relations in the not-for-profit world, and public relations in theatre management.

During analysis of this material, the practice of public relations in the not-for-profit professional resident theatre is placed within the framework of Grunig's four models of public relations. According to Grunig, if selling tickets is the goal, then theatre should fit within the first model, the press agentry/publicity model. This model is characterized by the use of propaganda, practice of one-way communication with the message coming from the organization to the public; use of little or no research except ticket counting, and few formal evaluation methods. Analysis of the literature supports this conclusion.

The idea is then advanced, supported by the literature review, that practice of a more sophisticated model of public relations--the two-way symmetrical model--would be beneficial to theatre. This model uses two-way communication balanced in its origination points between the organization and the public, and places high priority on research and evaluation.

To test this conclusion, a case study of a representative theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, was conducted. The study involved a review of current promotional and other written materials and personal interviews with the theatre's public relations director and the managing director. Findings determined that although Playhouse management voiced a concern (and written goals agreed) for the theatre to maintain a presence in the community, promoting the artistic, cultural literacy, and educational life of the area, few systems were in place to ensure that result. There were no formal evaluation methods in use for productions or overall organizational performance, nor were there any research methods in place. The only formal method for measuring success was found to be ticket counting. This finding suggested that Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park currently practices public relations fitting the press agentry/publicity model although their published goals call for practice of the two-way symmetric model.

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This thesis is coming in under the wire for the seven years of thesis writing allowed to graduate students. I have, in jest, called this my degree in procrastination. And yet, I am certain that the thesis I have written in 1989-90 is a better product than it would have been if completed in 1983.

I have found that knowledge and skills gained through public relations experience in several not-for-profit organizations is directly applicable to the theatre. The vague ideas that I had several years ago about how public relations should work for the theatre have become solid concepts, supported through research. I feel that society needs the fine arts. I also believe that the environment in which theatre and the fine arts exist will continue to grow more difficult. If the arts are to survive, those people who manage and nurture the organizations must do so in the most sophisticated ways possible, hence, the premise for this research project.

If I have been at all successful in presenting the ideas in this study in an appropriate, scholarly fashion, I have Jay Edelnant, my academic advisor and thesis committee chairman, to thank. Without his advise, insights, and critical eye (and willingness to keep me on the books this long), I would not have been able to complete the study.

I also wish to thank my committee, Dean Kruckeberg and George Glenn, for their willingness to take the risk with a student unknown to them in the beginning, and then, for their insights and suggestions throughout the process.

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Not to be missed in the thank yous are Tom Schick, to whom I am indebted for some timely assistance in obtaining a much needed book, and the unknown librarian at the University of Cincinnati, who threw caution to the wind and made an exception to a rule, allowing me to check out another needed book.

And, although I now risk sounding like an academy award winner giving an acceptance speech, I need to thank some very special people: My parents who taught me to believe that anything is possible; my son Shane, who helped me keep my sense of humor during the long process of research and writing (just try being a serious writer with a three-year-old on your lap); and finally, my husband Herb, whose gentle gibing got me started writing in the eleventh hour, and whose love, support, and patience kept me at the task.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

When the managers of Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, a LORT B theatre located in Cincinnati, Ohio, decided to place the drama Equus in their 1988-89 season, a public relations problem quickly developed. Equus tells the story of a relationship between a boy and his psychiatrist, a relationship which culminates in an intense and violent scene. In the original script and New York production of the play, that final scene included full male nudity.

As the Cincinnati Playhouse story unfolded, the theatre's board of trustees were informed of the content of the play and of the nudity. In October 1988, they decided to write a letter to the city solicitor's office advising that the play would be produced in January 1989. They forwarded a copy of the script which described the nudity. This move was taken due to an Ohio statute which forbids the presentation of full nudity in places where liquor is served. Playhouse board members were not sure whether production of the play would violate that statute ("Playhouse Says" 7B). A local newspaper reported: "The Vice Squad, in turn, called the Equus director to see how he planned to do the scene. The director called Kathy Panoff, Playhouse managing director" (Engber 26).

Panoff called together the artistic director and the theatre's advertising agency, deciding quickly to revise the planned promotion campaign. Before the entrance of the vice squad, the campaign had been planned as "a sort of gimmicky, come-see-what-happens-in-the-stable set of ads" (Engber 26). The judgement call was made, the ads were scrapped, and the play was promoted instead as "highly charged, interesting theatre" (Engber 26), a theme consistent with the director's intent and focus (Stein, "Director"). With the new promotion campaign, nudity was not an issue, and the play sold enough seats to become one of the ten most popular shows in the history of the Playhouse, including musicals and extended runs (Engber 26). Critics proclaimed: "This is one of the Playhouse's finest moments" (Stein, "Psychology").

We will never know what might have happened with the play Equus at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park had the original promotional plan been followed. However, we can surmise that Playhouse management faced a public relations dilemma when confronted by the letter from the vice squad. Would the original course of action have damaged the theatre in the public's eyes? Would the original promotional plan even have been considered if those charged with carrying out the promotion (public relations and marketing management) had been involved in the season planning process?

Many theatres face similar questions surrounding some aspect of the business of the theatre, be it in planning a season of plays, making decisions about costuming or staging, or deciding how a show will be publicized. At some point, someone must decide what will play--what fits with the goals of the theatre and how it impacts the community? Nudity may not play in Cincinnati in quite the same manner as in New York or London, but, as in the Playhouse example, it can play.

Stephen Langley devotes a chapter of his book, Theatre Management in America, to a discussion of the importance of community acceptance to the survival of a theatre company. He says:

> Even if the artistic aim is to 'alienate' or 'agitate' the audience, that audience must at least be willing to remain in the theatre. In the wider sense, a theatre can only exist when a sufficient portion of the local community is willing to allow its existence. (315)

To a large extent, the success of a theatre company is dependent upon public opinion. Without positive public opinion, tickets are not sold, seats remain empty, and the show does not go on. Langley says: "Despite high purpose and artistic merit, a theatre group may find it impossible to survive if it is encumbered by bad community relations" (329).

Public relations can help ensure that there are "people out front." The obvious way that it does this is through publicity to promote a particular show. However important, publicity is only one tool of public relations.

> Publicity is usually a significant part, even the centerpiece, of a public relations program, but public relations is a broader concept. Public relations is everything a government agency, a corporation, a downtown store, or an individual candidate or entrepreneur does to present what is hoped will be an accurate and acceptable public image. (Goff 5)

Much of the value of public relations can be found in the ability of trained practitioners to provide counsel to an institution, theatre or otherwise, concerning the public, the institution's relationship to the public, and the image of the institution to the public (Awad 19). Further, when used to fullest advantage, public relations is an ongoing concern of an institution and all its staff. Awad explains:

> It is not a vague "nice thing to do," that generates an equally vague sort of "good will," and can therefore be dispensed with in times of retrenchment. It has to be an ongoing way of doing business that, long-range and short-range, makes positive and substantial contributions to a business organization's bottom line and at the same time is consonant with the public interest. (21)

The Problem Statement and Methodology

This study will examine the role of public relations in carrying out the mission of the not-for-profit professional resident theatre. The study will discuss the theory that public relations in the not-for-profit theatre is practiced in a manner based upon the press agentry/publicity model of public relations (Grunig and Hunt 22). Further, it will suggest that the use of a more sophisticated model of public relations--the two-way symmetrical model--in concert with a planned public relations program for the theatre entity would be beneficial.

In pursuing this study, pertinent constructs will be defined. Then, a review of appropriate literature will be presented. Next, the study will consider, in detail, the four models for public relations practice: the press agentry/publicity model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetric model, and the two-way symmetric model. The discussion will focus on reasons in favor of applying the two-way symmetric model to theatre as well as evidence showing the press agentry/publicity model to be prevalent. Finally, this argument will be supplemented through the case study examination of a public relations program within a representative theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park.

The study will identify the type of public relations model that best describes public relations activity at Playhouse in the Park. The case study section also will compare the way public relations is practiced at the Playhouse with ideas advanced in the discussion about the models of public relations. It also will analyze whether or not benefits could result from using a different model for public relations practice.

Definitions

What is public relations? Providing a definition of public relations is not an easy task. The term evokes different images to different people, and not all of those images are positive (Simon 5; Grunig and Hunt 4). Even practitioners in the field fail to agree on a definition. Haberman and Dolphin point out that "the task force appointed by the Public Relations Society of America to consider the stature and role of public relations wrestled with the problem. In its report at the end of 1980, however, it simply recommended that the society establish an official definition and noted several suggestions" (4).

Simon explains that years ago the commonly accepted definition of public relations simply described it as "doing good and telling people about it" (6). Haberman and

Dolphin also mention this simplistic definition and, although a more complex definition offers advantages, they caution not to overlook the value of simplicity:

> Nonetheless, with a simple definition we can emphasize the fact that acceptable performance is the cornerstone of public relations. Practitioners must be deeply involved in determining what deeds or actions are good. Next, they must see to it as managers that those actions are undertaken. Then, and only then, can they take up the problems involved in communicating the fact that good deeds have been performed. (7)

Webster's Third New International Dictionary provides additional illumination on the definition of public relations; public relations is "the art or science of developing reciprocal understanding and goodwill" (qtd. in Cutlip, Center, and Broom 2). The authors point out that the importance of this definition and others that reflect modern thinking lies in the ideas of two-way communication, reciprocity and organizational performance (2). One definition they offer says: "Public relations is the planned effort to influence opinion through good character and responsible performance based upon mutually satisfactory two-way communication" (4).

Public Relations News, a newsletter for public relations practitioners, offers another definition variation which introduces the idea of public relations as a management function as well as opens the discussion on the function of public relations. This definition reads:

> Public relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance. (Haberman and Dolphin 5)

A similar definition of the subject was developed and adopted by members of many public relations societies world-wide at a 1978 conference in Mexico. Called "The Statement of Mexico," this definition also attempts to discuss public relations in both conceptual and functional terms:

> Public relations practice is the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders, and implementing programmes of action which will serve both the organization's and the public's needs. (Jefkins, Management Success 7)

Cutlip, Center, and Broom pull the discussion of definition together and find several common ideas. These ideas present a fairly comprehensive picture of the public relations function. They summarize the ideas into nine points, explaining that the public relations function:

1. Is a planned and sustained program conducted by an organization's management.
2. Deals with the relationships between an organization and its various constituent publics.
3. Monitors awareness, opinions, attitudes, and behavior inside and outside the organization.

4. Analyzes the impact of organizational policies, procedures, and actions on various publics.
5. Adjusts those policies, procedures, and actions found to be in conflict with the public interest and organizational survival.
6. Counsels management on the establishment of new policies, procedures, and actions that are mutually beneficial to the organization and its publics.
7. Establishes and maintains two-way communication between the organization and its various publics.
8. Produces specific changes in awareness, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors inside and outside the organization.
9. Results in new and, or, maintained relationships between an organization and its publics. (4)

Raymond Simon presents a similar list, again, in an effort to consolidate the many ideas which help define public relations.

1. A management function which utilizes research and a planned effort and follows ethical standards.
2. A process involving the relationship between an organization and its publics.
3. Analysis and evaluation through research of public attitudes and opinions and societal trends and communicating to management.
4. Management counseling so as to insure that an organization's policies, procedures, and actions are socially responsible and in the mutual interests of the organization and its publics.
5. Implementation and execution of a planned program of action, communication, and evaluation through research.
6. The achievement of goodwill, understanding, and acceptance as the chief end result of public relations activities. (7)

While each of these definitions adds to the description of public relations, still it is difficult to arrive at an absolute definition of public relations that will be universally accepted. As Kruckeberg and Starck point out: "While all these definitions undoubtedly have some validity in describing how public relations is practiced today, and thus perhaps contribute to an understanding of its practice, they also demonstrate the overall lack of precision in contemporary practice, to the extent that practitioners and scholars cannot even agree on the function of public relations" (16).

Looking at the function of public relations--or asking the question "What does public relations do?"--is another avenue offering insight into a definition for public relations. Kruckeberg and Starck say:

> If anything, such definitions best illustrate that, to understand public relations as it is commonly practiced today, it is necessary to look at what public relations practitioners do, not at what they attempt to define their job to be. (16)

<u>What exactly does public relations do?</u> The Public Relations Society of America, in a statement adopted in 1982, sets forth these activities: anticipating, analyzing, and interpreting public opinion, attitudes, and issues; counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of actions, and

communication; researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programs of action; planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or change public policy; managing the resources to accomplish the above (paraphrased from the "Official Statement on Public Relations," rpt. in Cutlip, Center, and Broom 5).

The statement then lists the tasks that might be performed by a public relations practitioner. Cutlip, Center, and Broom also discuss these tasks or "tools" of the trade. They consider the printed word through newsletters, pamphlets, manuals, books, printed speeches, inserts, informational racks, and advertising. They also look at oral communication through meetings, speakers bureaus, telephone newslines, and word-of-mouth or the grapevine. They add to that list motion pictures, news film clips, cable television, displays and exhibits, staged events and art. All of these funcions represent the tools available for use by the public relations practitioner.

Jefkins groups these tools into some broader categories. He discusses the use of the existing media and the created media for carrying out public relations plans. The existing media include the press--newspaper, radio, and television. Created media include public and trade exhibitions; house journals and newsletters both internal and external; films or video productions; slide presentations; annual reports; seminars; conferences, and special events. Finally, there is advertising which may take the form of corporate advertising, issues management advertising, product specific advertising, and sponsorships.

The quintessential definition of public relations is offered by Cutlip, Center, and Broom:

> Public Relations is the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends. (4)

The importance of this definition is found in its consideration of public relations as involving "mutually beneficial" relationships between the company and the public. For a theatre company, this element applies directly because the theatre is dependent upon its public (the audience): "Theatre is not produced for its own benefit; it is produced for the people out front" (Langley 330).

Having determined an operational definition of public relations for the purposes of this study, it is still important to acknowledge several areas often considered to be a part of public relations: marketing, advertising, and publicity. This study will hold to the view that, although these three areas are important to the public relations task and are frequently used by public relations practitioners, they should not be construed as being public relations.

Marketing is "the management function that identifies human needs and wants, provides products to satisfy those needs and wants, and causes a transaction to occur that delivers products in exchange for something of value to the provider's success or failure" (Cutlip, Center, and Broom 6). While the controversy over the proper relationship between marketing and public relations is a battle poised to rage for years, for the purposes of this study, marketing will be defined as a separate function from public relations. However, there are many concepts and functions two disciplines share.

The "marketing concept" is one such construct which is technically in the realm of marketers, but also is important to public relations. "The marketing concept states that all strategies must be based on known consumer needs" (Assael 11). This idea implies that knowledge of the consumer is important. For a theatre company, the audience is the primary consumer; thus, a knowledge of the audience should be sought (Langley 315-30).

Advertising also is not public relations but is a tool used by both public relations and marketing. When practiced in conjunction with public relations, Haberman and Dolphin and others refer to advertising as corporate advertising or image advertising. This type of advertising, often used by public relations, is frequently designed to improve the image of the corporation or to reinforce a particular message (Haberman and Dolphin 10). Public relations also is frequently involved in issue or advocacy advertising, which uses advertising to explain an organization's position on major public issues or to present a company's point of view on an issue in the news (Awad 85).

Control of the message is the primary reason for using advertising. "When it is necessary to publish exact information where and when one wants it, the only choice is to buy advertising space or airtime" (Jefkins, Management Success 63). Cutlip, Center, and Broom also make this point and add, "Advertising serves public relations' purposes when it is designed to affect how particular audiences perceive or act toward the sponsor in other than a marketing exchange relationship" (9). These authors explain the nature of "public relations advertising--sometimes called 'institutional,' 'public service,' or 'controversy' advertising--which typically attempts to increase understanding and goodwill, or to motivate members of the audience to take some action" (11).

In 1985, Awad noted that advertising as a public relations function was on the increase. He said:

> In an increasing number of companies corporate advertising is a responsibility of the public relations officer, and in many companies public relations is being made at least a participant in the planning and approval process for all advertising. (85)

Awad explained this phenomenon by pointing out that organizations have become more sensitive to the public interest and the company's own social responsibility. They have been turning to public relations as the area charged with helping preserve the public interest. He cited a number of other reasons for the increased role of public relations with regard to advertising, including changes in the economy which often force budget cuts and a shift from a product-based economy (where advertising sells things) to one that is service-based (where public relations sells ideas) (85-88). Brody added his voice to the concensus that, "Advertising today [1988] is a common component of public relations practice" (258).

Publicity is not public relations. Publicity is another tool used by the public relations practitioner. Publicity involves "providing information, news and feature material about an organization or person. Publicity can be and often is linked to newsworthy events . . . " (Simon 11).

Publicity is the tool of public relations which is perhaps most often misinterpreted as being public relations. Awad wrote:

> One hears of public relations 'programs' or public relations 'campaigns.' And organizations will often seek the services of public relations professionals with something like an advertising campaign in mind. What they are thinking of is usually publicity, just one of the tools of public relations. (17)

Indeed, the promotion campaign for the play Equus, described above, started out as a publicity campaign, when it was, in fact, a public relations problem.

Awad crystalizes the difference between public relations and publicity when he refers to publicity as "programming to meet a very specific communications or marketing objective," whereas public relations "cannot be segmented. And it cannot be accomplished with sporadic one-shot campaigns." Public relations must operate "on a continuum" (17).

The Public Relations Plan. Another important element to be considered within this study is the idea of public relations planning. In developing a public relations plan, one must analyze the situation, establish a reasonable goal, develop a program that can be expected to move toward that goal and then determine a method to measure the success of the effort (Brody 27-36).

In planning a public relations program, there is a standard, logical procedure or planning model which is widely accepted. Jefkins advances two major benefits resulting from use of a planning model. "First, it sets out the framework for a PR programme. Second, it invites us to look at all possibilities and needs and then imposes various constraints which are not only those of the budget" (32).

The planning model outlined by Jefkins is similar to that used by other public relations experts (Simon uses a seven-step model, 192; Haberman and Dolphin offer a similar model, 31-32). Jefkin's six-step model is stated very succinctly. It includes budgeting as a separate step, which the other models do not. Other than that difference, most of the planning models are easily interchanged. Jefkin's model has these steps:

1. Appreciation of the situation or a communications audit.
2. Defining the objectives of the PR program.
3. Defining the publics with whom communication is needed.
4. Defining the media through which we can reach the selected publics, and also techniques for doing so.
5. Budgeting.
6. Evaluation of results. (32)

The RACE model introduced by John E. Marston in 1963 provides a simple series of steps which help delineate the public relations process and lead practitioners into planning. This model, still in use today, has stood the test of time (Files, RACE 22). The acronym stands for Research, Action, Communication, and Evaluation (Simon 7):

> Research, formal or informal, establishes a substantive rationale for whatever follows; action, as a consequence of planning predicated upon research, provides substance for communication; and, given the measurable qualities of time and specific goals, evaluation completes the configuration. (Files, RACE 23).

Importance of the Study

In speaking to the question of importance of this study, one must first acknowledge the importance of the not-for-profit theatre world itself. Nancy Hanks, former chairperson for the National Endowment for the Arts, addressed this idea when she said:

> Communication between people is a deep concern of our time. So is the environment, education, constructive change, and basic human values. The arts are central to all of these issues, and increasingly the nation and its citizens are becoming aware of the arts as growing participation in them indicates. (Nancy Hanks, preface to Reiss vii)

Because theatre serves such a role in our society, one cannot fail to examine any methods that can help ensure the survival of theatre. Professional use of public relations, stemming from a sound public relations plan, can be an important tool in helping not-for-profit theatres survive.

In his book, Theatre Management in America, Stephen Langley argues for the recognition of theatre as a business. As such, he feels that theatre managers should draw upon all of the tools available to business. And so Langley discusses budgeting and research and public relations as well as the artistic concerns of the theatre. He argues for theatrical administrators and artists to work together.

Raymond and Greyser also address the business side of theatre. They argue for a more effective approach to the management of the arts. "The leveraged role that effective administration of arts organizations can play has received little attention, even from persons in business who serve on their boards" (123). They add that this situation is changing as arts organizations recognize the importance of sound management. They draw several parallels between the operation of the not-for-profit theatre and business. "Both kinds of organizations, for example, have a set of 'publics,' including their 'workers,' their 'consumers,' their financial communities, and their local communities" (124). The authors continue to discuss ways that a "business approach" to theatre can benefit a theatre company.

Public relations--true public relations; not publicity or advertising or one-shot programs--is a tool used by business which has not been fully utilized by theatre. When theatres use public relations, they tend to focus only on the publicity; one-way, one-shot communication. Planning and a more sophisticated approach can incur benefits.

Public relations is accessible. Those tools which fall under the realm of public relations, such as publicity, special events, public service announcements, and media coverage, are readily available to be tapped even by the smallest and least financially solvent organization. Indeed, most theatre groups probably tap into these resources, although usually in a sporadic manner. The unfortunate side effect of public relations tools being readily available is that they are also easily abused or misused (McElfresh 11-22).

Most theatre management materials discuss publicity, such as the use of press relations, publicity, and promotion campaigns (Langley 331-385; Cavanaugh 39-41). They discuss the use of the tools without the planning, organization, and structure that makes public relations most effective. This study will seek to show how a not-for-profit theatre company can more effectively employ the tools of public relations through the use of more sophisticated public relations planning.

Finances and the state of funding for the arts offers another argument in favor of the professional use of public relations in the not-for-profit theatre world. According to Theatre Communications Group's 1988 survey, not-for-profit theatre continues to exist in a chaotic economic atmosphere (2). The study shows that, while attendance at theatrical performances has enjoyed a steady rise, leading to an increase in box office revenue, other sources of income such as corporate sponsorship, individual contributions, and federal and state funding have experienced "significant declines in the growth rate" (2).

An aggressive public relations plan is one way to address corporate and individual donors. David Finn points out that public relations is often considered a function of the fund-raising branch of the theatre. "Through a variety of techniques, public relations has helped arts institutions gain visibility for their programs and stimulate community and corporate interest in specific projects" (Finn, Annals 57). Finn suggests that public relations is particularly well-suited to serve as the intermediary between the arts and business. "Public relations can play the important role of helping to find common ground on which both business and the arts can seek to achieve their objectives" (57).

Through examination of public relations activities in the not-for-profit professional theatre and through relating those activities to current public relations theory, this study will show how theatre can benefit from the sophisticated practice of public relations. Public relations is a tool open to business and to theatre. This study will delineate that relationship.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature germane to this study is of three types: literature about the practice of public relations in general, literature relating to not-for-profit organizations which discusses public relations as either a primary or secondary topic and literature relating to theatre management.

Public Relations Practice

A wealth of literature about public relations is available, including material which discusses how managers view and value public relations, how public relations practitioners make decisions, how public relations fits into the organizational structure and what functions are performed by public relations practioners. The historical roots of public relations are seen in much of the literature through discussions about early practitioners and the development of the field. Also, within this literature exist descriptions of and arguments for the use of many models. Some of these models describe the operational or structural framework of public relations. Other models describe the manner in which programs are planned by public relations, sometimes called the public relations process (Cutlip, Center, and Broom 199). All of these areas are important in creating an understanding of public relations. For the purposes of this study, however, a discussion of models to describe the structure of public relations is of prime importance.

Some early research in the area of public relations models was discussed by Grunig in his 1976 monograph. In this work, he proposed that public relations practice could be categorized into two models based on Lee Thayer's communication models (1968). These models included the synchronic, where an organization uses public relations to bring its publics into line with its own views; and the diachronic, where organizations and publics attempt to evolve to a point that is satisfactory to all (Grunig, "Organizations" 7). The synchronic model detailed a practice of public relations communication that was basically one-way from the organization to the public; the diachronic was exemplary of two-way public relations communication. Grunig's early research included the study of the synchronic and diachronic models of public relations practice as they related to two forms of organizations: A fatalistic organization, which had a static environment and a centralized structure; and a problem-solving organization which operated in a dynamic environment. His attempt to fit the practice of public relations into two models serving two types of organizations was not entirely successful because the practice of public relations as related to real world organizations called for a more complex model (Grunig, "Organizations" 7).

Additional research led to the development of four models of public relations which were first described by James Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984). Those models included: press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric. These four models were used to explain the type of communication used in the practice of public relations, its historical roots, its major proponents, the types of organizations that seemed to most frequently use the model and the purpose of the model (Grunig and Hunt 13-44). The models, according to Grunig, "seem to offer great promise for offering a pleasing--and valid theory of the relationships among environments, organizations, and public relations departments" ("Organizations" 7).

In describing and analyzing the four models, Grunig and Hunt stressed that the term "model" was selected to describe the four types of public relations practice because it emphasized that the four descriptions are abstractions: "But, remember, these are simplifications, and simplifications are always false in part, because they always leave something out" (21). However, the models do offer a means for categorizing and analyzing the manner in which public relations is practiced in different types of organizations. All four models can be found in practice today, indeed, some organizations practice more than one of the models concurrently (Grunig, "Organizations" 8).

Each of the four models can be traced to early practitioners of public relations. An examination of these historical roots and their relationship to the development of public relations is important in understanding the practice of public relations today. For example, the first model of public relations, the press agentry/publicity model, traces its roots to P. T. Barnum in the middle of the nineteenth century (Grunig, "Organizations" 8).

History, and particularly the examination of the history of public relations, can be useful beyond the insights provided through the four models. Through examination of public relations-like activities as practiced by communicators throughout the generations, the shaping of public relations can be seen. Grunig and Hunt cited several examples of early public relations practice, including the American Revolution. They wrote:

> Many public relations historians have claimed the American Revolution to be one of the most important products of public relations-like activities in history. Schoolchildren in the

> United States routinely learn, and the majority of adults still believe, that the American Revolution was a popular uprising against an unpopular and oppressive absentee government. Historians tell us otherwise. The majority of influential citizens supported the British, and the majority of common citizens really didn't care that much. It took a small band of skilled propagandists to create the public support that made the revolution possible--and their job was an extremely difficult one. (17)

Cutlip, Center, and Broom also traced the historical roots of public relations to the American Revolution (23). They described this era as being not only a struggle for power but also a struggle for ideas and public support. This concept was more fully explored by Cutlip in an article for Public Relations Review where he described the role of public relations during the American Revolution (11-24). Another volume of that journal offered a follow-up discussion showing how public relations continued to be important following the revolution as the new nation's leaders developed and sought support for the nation's new constitution (Nevins 4-16).

Grunig and Hunt described several other examples of public relations-like activities throughout American history. The point, they say, is that these types of activities, "managed communication--public relations--is as old as history itself" (21). Noteworthy in the examination of historical examples of public relations activities is the fact that these early examples generally fell into the categories of persuasion and/or propaganda. "Most people still have that concept of public relations today, explaining the common suspicion, mistrust, and even fear of it" (21).

Propaganda and press agentry exemplify only the early activities of public relations. Grunig and Hunt's four models for public relations can be seen as a timeline for public relations. The press agentry/publicity model represents the early days of the modern profession, roughly 1850-1900. The public information model came next, being the major model for public relations from 1900 through the 1920s. The two-way asymmetric model began to take prominence in the 1920s. The final model, the two-way symmetric model, did not make an appearance until the 1960s and even then was not rapidly adopted. According to Grunig and Hunt, "even today practitioners are only beginning to adopt it" (25).

Grunig and Hunt, however, were not the first to use history to categorize the development of public relations. Cutlip, Center, and Broom also explained the function of public relations through its evolution in American history (first published in 1952 by Cutlip and Center). They labeled the earliest forms of public relations "press-agentry." "Much of what we define as public relations was labeled press-agentry when it was being used to promote land settlement in our unsettled West, or to build up political heroes" (Grunig and Hunt 27). Their discussion continued, describing the master of all publicity agents, P. T. Barnum.

Cutlip, Center, and Broom then described six main periods of development for public relations. They began with the Seedbed Era in the early 1900s--"a period of muckraking journalism countered by defensive publicity, and of far-reaching political reforms promoted by Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson through use of public relations skills" (31). They concluded with the current Era of Information Society characterized by "accelerating high technology, multiplying channels of communication, and the transition from a national economy to a world economy, which involved global competition and turbulence" (32).

Grunig returned to the discussion of the history of public relations and added an important note to the discussion (1984). He said that all of the models of public relations, even the propaganda exemplified by Barnum, can be found in practice today. The earlier models of public relations, such as Barnum's press agentry, did not disappear as other forms became predominant. As Grunig said: "generally, organizations practice the model that most logically helps them to cope with and have an impact upon their environments" ("Organizations" 8). Grunig and Hunt made a similar comment when they related the models to the types of organizations that tend to practice each model. They concluded that practitioners should take a contingency view of the models--an idea based on the contingency view of management. This view is based on the assumption that no one course is appropriate for all times and all conditions. "What is the best approach depends upon the nature of the environment in which it must survive" (Grunig and Hunt 43). In other words, there is a time, a place and the right conditions to warrant the use of each of the models.

<u>The public relations process</u>. The public relations process is the foundation for public relations practice. This process flows naturally from the discussion of models because, regardless of the model employed, some form of planning and programming must take place (Goff 17). E. W. Brody discussed the public relations process in his book, which focused on the element of programming. Early in his book, he observed that programming must be based on sound organizational policies and practices rather than on the messages and media if the programs are truly to succeed

(6). According to Brody, professionalism (of the public relations practitioner) demands that the conduct of the company as a corporate citizen be sound and in the public interest before attempting to convince an audience of the rightness of the product or service. The successful and ethical public relations practitioner must work from the base of a company practicing business with sound ethics. Johnson & Johnson's Tylenol difficulties provided the classic example of effective public relations practiced within a company framework of sound organizational policies and practices. Johnson & Johnson was "right" to withdraw its product from the shelves after discovery of tampering. The company's quick response to the situation set the stage for an effective reintroduction of the product after development of tamper-proof packaging (Brody 6).

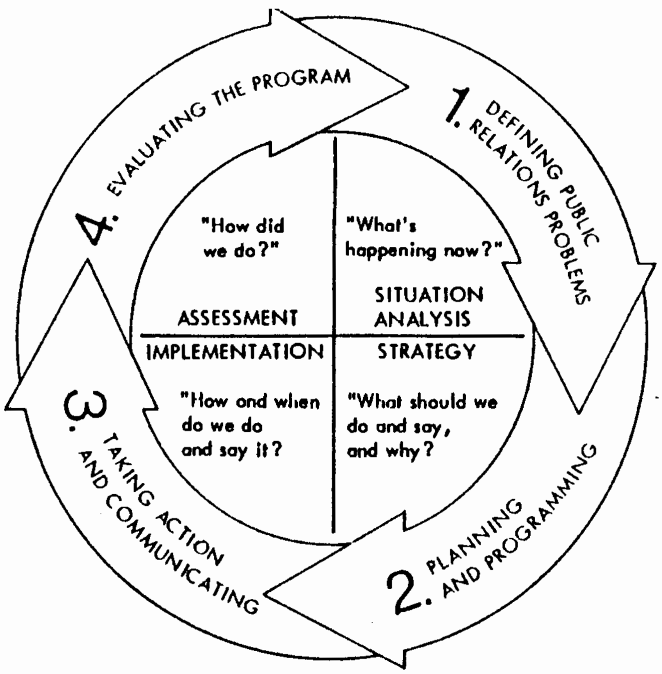
In discussing public relations, Brody said the term "refers to the process through which organizations seek to achieve accommodation with stakeholder groups over issues of mutual concern" (7). He then divided the process into three elements--planning, programming and execution of a set of projects. He defined planning as "the ongoing, cyclical process through which practitioners establish public relations goals and objectives supportive of organizational goals and objectives" (7). Programming, on the other hand, refers to the process of developing projects to address the needs of individual groups.

Other writers did not establish such a clear break between planning and programming. For example, Cutlip, Center, and Broom saw planning and programming as step two in their four-step process (200). They described a four-step process which includes defining the problem, planning and programming, taking action and communicating and evaluating the program (200).

Step one, defining the problem, is actually the research stage of the process. It is designed to answer the question: "What's happening now?" Step two, planning and programming, involves making use of the intelligence gathered in step one. It involves setting goals, objectives, procedures, and strategies. This step answers the question: "What should we do and why?" Step three, taking action and communicating, is the point at which the plan is implemented. Individual publics are considered, and the question is asked: "How do we do it and say it?" Step four, evaluating the program, checks for results and assesses the effectiveness of the overall program. It asks the question: "How did we do?"

The authors emphasized that the process is ongoing and overlapping. It is continuous with one step flowing into the next until step four becomes step one (200).

Fig. 1 Four-Step Public Relations Process



Source: Cutlip, Center, and Broom 200.

Simon also stressed the circular nature of true public relations practice. He cited a formula developed by Professor John Marston in 1963, which uses an acronymic description of the public relations process. The RACE formula looks at R esearch, A ction, C ommunication and

E vaulation, covering the same areas as the other models. Simon continued, pointing out that public relations is both continuous and dynamic "and therefore, it is seldom as neat and orderly as described in definitions" (8).

James A. Files also discussed Marston's RACE model in a journal article in 1982. Files combined Marston's process model (research, action, communication and evaluation) with the functional tasks of marketing, communication, information and legislation to create a matrix ("RACE" 23). The matrix is flexible enough to be tailored to fit many different types of organizations. It is a model for planning which "focuses upon tasks and operational requirements in an orderly manner, enhancing management of both time and staff" ("RACE" 23).

Part of the justification for use of a matrix of this type is the need to address management in terms that make sense to managers. Part of the challenge is to make the work of public relations quantifiable. Files said that one reason contributing to public relations' slow pace in achieving legitimate quantification "is the failure of some public relations professionals to recognize management as a primary <u>internal public</u> and to relate public relations efforts to management's specific self-interests"

("RACE" 22). Files' matrix is one way to stimulate thinking toward quantifying results (25).

Fig. 2 Matrix of Public Relations Planning and Operations

Public Relations Process

	Research	Action	Communication	Evaluation
Legislative				
Information				
Communication				
Marketing				

Source: Files "RACE" 23.

Public relations as a management function. Grunig and Hunt wrote about public relations from a management perspective. They discussed systems management--a concept which encourages a planned organization-wide approach to programs. In this discussion, the authors wrote about the importance of understanding the system in which the public relations practitioner is operating. This approach incorporates "organizational and environmental subsystems into the manager's thinking" (93).

Four main assumptions underlie the systems theories of management and it is these assumptions that correlate to the public relations process. First, systems management is holistic: managers subscribing to this theory must keep the inter-relationship of the organizational parts foremost in mind. This assumption also acknowledges that public relations problems come from the environment and, therefore, can only be solved by adapting or responding to the environment. The second assumption is that systems managers challenge established practice. In short, they look for innovative solutions. Assumption three says that systems managers are mission-oriented. They have a clear concept of the goals and objectives of the organization, and they constantly monitor progress toward those goals. It is this assumption, the authors said, that most directly ties to planning. The authors cited several management techniques that directly address planning such as management by objective (MOB). Finally, it is assumed that systems managers use quantitative methods and computers. Essentially, systems managers research and base decisions on factual data (93-94).

Grunig and Hunt added that a systems management approach works well with public relations when public relations is being practiced in either the two-way asymmetric or two-way symmetric model because these public relations models actively use research and information to adapt (94). They also emphasized that this approach to management has no "right" way for doing things. Flexibility is a built in component which again, supports a public relations system that is adaptive.

Joseph Awad, a public relations practitioner, underscored the need for the public relations professional to understand management. He emphasized that a firm understanding of concepts of business management can help not only in administering the public relations department but also in the important task of counseling management (61-63). While Awad writes from a practitioner's perspective, he offers some valid reasons for approaching public relations as a management process. "Lack of any in-depth knowledge of business management has been the tragic flaw for some otherwise brilliant public relations people," he says (61). Failing to approach public relations from a management perspective contributes to characterization of public relations people as the communicators "hired to write news releases and house organs and handle the media" (61). This characterization prevents public relations from operating at its most mature level, as a contributor to understanding between a corporation and its publics and as counsel to senior management.

Much literature exists which details the role of public relations as a management function and its value when used to fullest potential by management. One 1983 article discussed the role of public relations as counsel to senior management (Ryan and Martinson 20). At this time Ryan and Martinson noted the increasing "integration of public relations persons into top management" (20). In addition to describing this trend, the writers asserted that the public relations manager should act as the conscience of the corporation, "accountable to a higher authority than management; they should be more concerned than other officers about corporate social responsibility . . . " (20).

Widespread public concern for the preservation of the environment is one current example of this growing demand for accountability by business and the need for public relations to fill that role as corporate conscience. In his 1990 essay, Silas outlined the task ahead for business in regaining the trust of the public in regard to environmental issues. In addition to calling for business to perform better, Silas feels that business must also communicate better (34), and that is the realm of the public relations professional.

James Dowling added his voice to recognizing the role of public relations in gaining and maintaining the public's trust. He wrote: "Helping management to align corporate goals and objectives with the public agenda must be the primary role of the public relations practioner" (36). He also argued for public relations to be recognized as a management function when he wrote:

> In many ways, management is communications. No idea, no strategy, no tactic, no policy, no procedure can be effectively implemented unless it is properly positioned through communications with those affected, whether inside or outside the company. (36)

Lawrence G. Foster also presented a strong case for public relations as a management function (Foster 24-25). In his 1990 article, he interviewed a number of chief executive officers (CEO) from large corporations such as General Motors and Johnson & Johnson. He found a shared view: "It is essential to include public relations decisions in the CEO's management responsibility" (24). One CEO, Robert Allen, Chairman and CEO at AT&T, commented on the need for public relations:

> Public relations has many facets. It is a tool of corporate governance. It can be a unique and personal way for a CEO to communicate vision and leadership. At times it must be a reactive agent, since it's virtually impossible to anticipate every scenario

> or event. However, in its best form it should be viewed much like quality--as a strategic asset . . . I need PR at my side, not in my wake. (Foster 24)

The concensus was that public relations must serve a management function, operating to achieve two-way communication between corporations and their various publics.

Public Relations for Not-for-Profit Organizations

Literature in this area, while not entirely specific to theatre, does provide some good comparison points. And, as this study considers not-for-profit theatre only, the information about the not-for-profit sector is particularly valuable.

A series of short books about public relations for the not-for-profit world is published by the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education and covers such topics as using publicity, evaluating results, and handling special events. One work by Frances Koestler covered Planning and Setting Objectives. In this book, Koestler pleaded the case for professional and effective use of public relations by all not-for-profit groups. She said:

> When used to optimum advantage, public relations contributes an essential viewpoint to virtually every kind of policy and management decision: a viewpoint that reflects existing public attitudes, predicts the decision's impact on those attitudes, and proposes appropriate communication methods and channels to make it understandable and acceptable. (4)

She is calling for public relations to be used as a management function by the not-for-profit world.

Koestler continued with a discussion of the specific steps for setting objectives and strategies for attaining these objectives. Her 10 point list resembles the ideas mapped out by other authors (Jefkins; Cutlip, Center, and Broom) in the specific public relations discussion. Koestler's list calls for the organization to:

1. Define objectives.
2. Research your publics.
3. Modify your objectives to reach goals that research shows are attainable.
4. Decide on your strategy.
5. Set up your themes.
6. Blueprint an effective organization to carry on the activity.
7. Chart your plan for timing and tactics.
8. Carry out your tactics.
9. Make provision for evaluation by the publics you reach and be prepared to modify your tactics accordingly, if modification is needed.
10. Assess results. (11)

Koestler added that by following this process, the public relations effort should become a loop process, meaning that step 10 becomes step one for the next phase of the program. This idea of the ongoing process for public relations in the not-for-profit world mirrors the same idea found in literature concerning the public relations process discussed above.

Robert Ruffner wrote specifically about the role of public relations in the not-for-profit world. In his opening chapter, he acknowledged that in many not-for-profit organizations, public relations has received a lowly position. "Many nonprofit managers abhor 'publicity stunts' and hold in contempt 'p.r. types' who spend the days grinding out press releases and running errands" (23). These common misunderstandings about the nature of public relations can prevent it from working for the not-for-profits. And yet, according to Ruffner:

> Professional public relations in today's nonprofit is integral to the growth and success of the organization. It should play a leading role in identifying publics, strengthening community support, encouraging long-range planning, establishing goals, attracting political and financial resources, determining cost-effective and accountable programs. Effective public relations is an active participant in sound management. (24)

Ruffner clearly views effective public relations in the not-for-profit world as a management function. He outlined four challenges facing not-for-profit organizations which can benefit from the effective use of public relations. Change is one challenge. Ruffner named many areas where change is occurring and affecting not-for-profits. The nature of volunteers is changing. Women have been the traditional strength of volunteer groups, yet women are entering the paid employment pool in record numbers, depleting time available for volunteer services.

Competition is another area of change. There were 846,433 not-for-profit organizations on record as of 1980. Each organization competes for public support. Then, there are thousands of new not-for-profits formed each year, and all of these add to the clamor for support. In addition, the differences between some for-profit institutions (nursing homes, schools, hospitals) are no longer totally clear as some for-profits vie for government funding and public support along with the not-for-profits. Consumers also are changing, becoming more sophisticated and demanding more accountability from organizations, not-for-profits included. This change indicates that an organization must be increasingly aware of its publics and responsive to their needs to the point of involving them in the decision-making processes of the organization (25). The implication of all the preceding factors is that the difficulty of garnering support (financial and otherwise) is becoming increasingly difficult (Ruffner 25).

Ruffner added to all of these factors the idea that cost management is an ultimate challenge:

> Cost effectiveness is more important than ever--and is indeed essential. National fundraising organizations are spending millions more each year in postage and production costs to reach the

> same number of people. Energy costs are up. Rents, telephones, employee benefit costs, all are up with no relief in sight. (26)

For cultural not-for-profit institutions such as theatre, the implications are even more drastic. "Corporations are withdrawing their funding of cultural institutions and providing first-time funding to human service agencies because of the well-publicized need" (26).

Ruffner feels that the not-for-profits can meet these challenges. He also said that the use of professional public relations must be a part of the future of the not-for-profit organization:

> These demands can be successfully met by the nonprofit. Effective public relations can help meet them by strengthening the nonprofit's identity, building community support, and planning a strong future. Some nonprofits will merge with others to insure their futures. Others will find new sources of funding and community support. Public relations can help in making these vital decisions. (26)

Ruffner's book is dedicated to providing guidance on how to incorporate public relations into the not-for-profit organization. His thesis is that "Management techniques, including professional public relations, can help the nonprofit to be an effective competitor, an efficient operator, an accountable, cost-effective contributor to its community" (26).

Sunshine Janda Overkamp writing in Public Relations Journal (1990), touched on many of the same points as Ruffner. She too feels that survival of the not-for-profit organization is contingent upon a renewed sense of good management techniques. She wrote:

> It is obvious that not-for-profit organizations need to be more businesslike in approaching fundraising and volunteer recruitment. Like for-profit businesses, we must analyze the emerging markets, determine our prime prospects and approach them in ways that truly reflect and appeal to their ethnic characteristics, economic status and personal preferences. (23)

Another report contributing to the description of challenges for public relations and the not-for-profit world appeared in Public Relations Review in 1988 (Rouner and Camden 31). This article investigated the use of public relations among 105 not-for-profit organizations in the Cleveland Metropolitan area. The authors concluded from their study that while not-for-profit organizations are clearly increasing their reliance on for-profit business tools, they have yet to fully utilize one important tool--public relations. Further, they equated the acquisition of these sophisticated business skills with survival. The reasons they cited were similar to those professed by Ruffner, including increased competition for government and private funding.

Of interest to this study is the finding that although most of the not-for-profit organizations surveyed had some type of public relations function, most used it only in a haphazard manner (Rouner and Camden 34-5). The Rouner and Camden study presented these findings:

> Organizations tended to cite isolated public relations projects as their principal promotional effort of the year. Twenty-one percent reported publicity efforts, e.g., press release writing and public service announcement production, followed closely by fundraising (20%), brochures (18%), general publicity (12%) and membership drives (5%). (34)

The study found that most of the public relations activities by these organizations were one-shot campaigns, and most of the campaigns were not related to the overall organization campaign. Rather, they tended to be publicity production efforts, directed at media coverage, unplanned and untargeted. In addition, they tended to be unevaluated as well (40-1). Occasionally, the people in charge were not sure of the purpose of the campaign (35). The study offered a variety of other insights but all pointed toward failure to fully utilize public relations.

Theatre Management Literature

Theatre management literature that specifically addresses public relations is not abundant. However, useful material can be found through investigation of sources that indirectly apply to the subject. For example, the arts as business is a subject discussed in marketing literature. Thomas J. C. Raymond and Stephen A. Greyser wrote about the business of the theatre. The authors maintained that an arts organization, including a theatre, is a business and should avail itself of any and all tools open to business including marketing. They state: "In view of the competition for the public's attention and entertainment dollars these days, any arts institution needs to market itself" (123-132).

Raymond and Greyser drew several parallels between arts organizations and business. They discussed the necessity for building stronger marketing techniques. Two specific areas were given special consideration: "Identifying and taking advantage of product marketing opportunities, and refining elements of the marketing mix" (130). The authors argued for a natural transference of marketing techniques to theatre management.

More evidence for the transfusion of marketing practices to theatre management is provided by the Foundation for the Extension and Development of the American Professional Theatre (FEDAPT) in a collection of essays (1983) which addressed marketing and the arts (Melillo). The essays in this collection followed the basic tenants set forth by Raymond and Greyser in concurring that the arts must take advantage of the tools of business. However, Joseph Melillo, editor for the collection, stated clearly that these techniques, in this case specifically marketing techniques, need to be adapted to the special demands of the arts organization:

> It is the basic premise of this book that the superimposition of standard corporate marketing processes and techniques on to a performing arts organization is an error made out of naivete. The performing arts, by their essential artistic nature, require the marketing principles (and the resulting processes and techniques) to go through a transformation before being inseminated into the creative process. (11)

That philosophy is fundamental to each of the essays compiled in the book.

While many of the articles in this compilation are very interesting, one bears mentioning because of its direct appropriateness to this study. Bill Rudman, communications officer for the Cleveland Foundation, wrote about essential elements of public relations as they relate to theatre and the arts (163). He made the point that everything an institution does or says affects its image. Image, Rudman said, is "the total impression someone has of your organization--and image is to be reckoned with" because, "image leads to survival and growth, or to failure" (163). Rudman wrote that public relations must be an essential and important part of any arts organization because of its ability to help build and maintain positive image. He cautioned, "Public relations is not the same thing as publicity; it is an organization's entire approach to communications, <u>one part of which</u> is publicity" (163).

Rudman then continued to list essential elements in running an effective public relations program for an arts institution. Foremost on his list is dialogue with and research of the institution's publics. He said: "We are not marketing toothpaste--it is not our job to custom-design a product, but rather to find an audience for an artist and to find ways to interpret the artist's work to the public" (164). He continued by adding that the job does not stop there because to truly build image as well as provide a show-by-show audience, the public relations practitioner must listen to the present and the potential audience. At this point, he said, many public relations practitioners fail to listen:

> By dint of working twenty-four hours a day at our institutions, we lull ourselves into thinking we know exactly how we're perceived by our various publics--and what those publics are looking for in us--and we speak to them accordingly. But much of the time it's a monologue: we're not really listening. (164)

Rudman recommended the use of research--informal opinion groups, focus groups, surveys--to find a way to really gauge feedback. Rudman then discussed techniques for effectively handling publicity, media relations, and other functional tasks of public relations which fall into the realm of "how to" techniques.

By far, the "how to" technique or instructional genre of theatre management literature predominates in the field. There are a number of books available which fall into this category. These materials offer insights on "how to promote your theatre" or "how to sell more tickets." Yes, You Can Get More Publicity, by Tom McElfresh, is one such book in the "how-to" genre. McElfresh restricted the focus of his discussion to the various avenues available through publicity. He did, however, open his book with a discussion about attitude, advocating the development of a professional public relations attitude to accomplish the marketing goals of the theatre company. McElfresh acknowledged that many times in the not-for-profit world, the person in charge of publicity may be a volunteer or other person with no background in the area. He pleaded for a professional approach to the job in order to best serve the theatre:

> Looking and acting like a pro probably won't benefit you personally, but it will materially benefit the theatre or arts organization you represent. It will affect the image your troupe has with the media. It will affect the kind and amount of publicity you get. (11)

Another group of books addresses the financial end of theatre management. In 1987, Bradley Morison and Julie Gordon Dalgleish wrote about some new ideas in the area of audience development. They characterized the '60s and '70s as a time of growth for audiences of the arts (4). They saw that growth subsiding in the '80s until today, "in cities and towns where an initial base of artistic programming has been established, a reliable but small group of people continue to patronize cultural activity" (5). Yet, the two did not preach doom and gloom. They stated that they feel there is room for further development of audiences. However, they also feel that if this is to happen, a new system for selling tickets must be instituted. Instead of the attention to season ticket sales, attractive to seasoned theatre-goers and prevalent in the past, they recommended a system addressed to a group called "Maybes" (6). The authors contention was that the Maybes need encouragement to make a first step toward theatre attendance and then, they need nurturing to grow into theatre advocates. The authors then dedicated their book to a discussion of the history of audience development, the reasons behind the need for a change and ways to bring about this change.

Also addressing the financial side of theatre management but from a slightly different angle is a book by Alvin H. Reiss, Cash In!. While to a certain degree this book is strictly oriented toward ways to raise money, it does offer some interesting insights into other areas. For example, the author is adament about the need for the arts. Reiss said:

> Nonprofit arts groups are different from their commercial counterparts, and the difference isn't only in their attitudes toward money. Because nonprofits develop art for its own value and not for its commercial potential--although obviously it's nice to break even--the product is more important than its marketability . . . While remaining true to its audience and maintaining its artistic integrity, the nonprofit arts group must also have the right to fail. (10)

Even though Reiss supported the need for artistic freedom, he also recognized the need for a clear image to the public, especially when fundraising is an issue. "Audience trust in an organization's viewpoint is a vital factor in the organization's fund-raising program" (11). Reiss said that this trust is most easily earned if an organization has a clear picture of itself, its products, strengths, and weaknesses. In addition, clearly defined artistic and organization goals and objectives are vital (11).

Tem Horowitz also specifically addressed marketing and public relations for the arts in his book, Arts Administration. Horowitz advocated the use of marketing research as an important decision-making tool for all arts organizations. He outlined a plan for conducting a complete marketing audit as well as an audience survey (81). Horowitz also discussed the importance of publicity to the success of an arts organization. Although he was less formal in his presentation of material on this subject than writers like Cutlip or Jefkins, his approach was similar. He maintained that planning was as important as execution of any publicity efforts. He also advocated development of a specific evaluation procedure (90).

Fundamental to any discussion about theatre management is Stephen Langley's Theatre Management in America. Langley discussed the role of public relations through the idea of the theatre and its audience. He covered such topics as community relations, press relations, publicity, advertising, promotional campaigns and audience development. Langley's discussion of community relations was particularly important for it was here that he reached to the heart of marketing theory: know thy consumer (315-330). Langley advised that you should know the attitudes of the community in which the theatre is located because people in that community often form your core audience. Then, you should also consider outsiders such as tourists, who will make up another portion of the audience. He advocated ongoing analysis through such means as audience surveys to continually assess changing attitudes (316). Langley did not specifically talk about public relations. Rather, he talked about the tools of publicity and advertising (361). Langley did advocate the planning of advertising and promotional campaigns (379), however, he saw the person doing this job as a publicist and said: ". . . the publicist is the marriage broker between his theatre and the general public" (383).

Alvin H. Reiss's The Arts Management Handbook also bears mention. Reiss has gathered a collection of writings by numerous authors on topics ranging from the economics of the theatre to management techniques to promotional ideas. While some of the material is somewhat dated (the book was last revised in 1974), many of the specific ideas still warrant consideration. Also, some of the trends identified for the theatre world have remained important factors. For example, one article discussed tightening government purse strings, increased costs, and the move toward specialization which continue to be factors today (17).

Through this examination of the literature in the three areas--general public relations, not-for-profit public relations, and theatre management--similarities in the disciplines can be seen. These similarities enable the study of public relations for the theatre to be conducted using the theories and models established for general public relations. The next chapter of this study will discuss how the four models of public relations, drawn from the material of general public relations, apply to the institution of the not-for-profit theatre. Further, it will examine how the not-for-profit professional theatre can benefit from using a sophisticated model of public relations.

CHAPTER III

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Public relations is not magic. It performs no miracles. It requires research, attention to detail, knowledge of the science and art of communication, an understanding of human psychology, and many other things. Although intuition plays a part in the process, practitioners allow themselves to be wooed by the excitement of playing a hunch, forgetting the value of planning, measuring, and evaluating. Granted, as Haberman and Dolphin point out, sometimes even a well-planned, well-substantiated program of action will not succeed. After all, public relations deals with people, communication, persuasion, and belief systems, and these are not discrete elements; many variables exist. However, the chances for long-term, consistent success with public relations is greater when planning, investigation, research, and evaluation are an integral part in the total program (31). The nature and amount of research and evaluation conducted by an organization are areas that Grunig and Hunt look to when determining where an organization fits within their four models of public relations (22).

Chapter III of this study will describe these four models of public relations practice, looking at their historical roots, the nature of the communication, the nature and type of research, the purpose of the model, and the type of organizations within which each model is commonly found. The press agentry/publicity model will be examined for its applicability to theatre. The study will then describe the current climate for the not-for-profit theatre, examining the situation within which public relations and the arts are functioning. Finally, the study will look at the factors in the current situation which point toward the use of a more sophisticated model of public relations--namely the two-way symmetrical model. Chapter IV will then supplement this discussion through a case study of one not-for-profit professional resident theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. The case study will focus on the way in which that theatre uses public relations.

The Models

Press Agentry/Publicity

P.T. Barnum is the accepted grandaddy of press agents, noted for using outrageous publicity stunts to sell his shows (Grunig and Hunt 28). Indeed, in the press agentry/publicity model of public relations, propaganda and swaying public opinion are the main purposes. "The purpose of this model is propaganda; its goal is control or domination of its environment" (Schneider 108). Public relations helps to achieve this goal through product promotion, selling ideas and promoting an image (Schneider 108). Unfortunately, truth is not always a given in the use of this model (Grunig and Hunt 21), although truth is more essential to today's practitioner of this model than to those in the past (Grunig and Hunt 25).

Within this model, communication is one-way, coming from the organization and going to the public. Goff uses a simple diagram to graphically show the communication process in this model:

Fig. 3 Communication Process

Source——> Message——> Medium——> Receiver

Source: Goff 12.

This model depicts the one-way, simple route of the message, from the source to the receiver.

Obviously, research plays only a minor or superficial rôle in this type of public relations. If used at all, research takes the form of attempts to delineate the publics with whom the organization wishes to communicate.

Evaluation also is perfunctory. Practitioners of this type of public relations may check to see if the media used supplied information, and they may "count" ticket stubs to decide if the promotion was successful (Goff 13).

Grunig and Hunt see this model being used in "sports promotion, theatre or movie press agentry, or product promotion in advertising departments" (25). In 1984, they estimated that it was the model being practiced by about 15 percent of public relations practitioners.

Public Information

Ivy Lee, an early public relations practitioner who established a public relations practice in the first decade of this century, is credited with being among the first to adhere to the public information model (Grunig and Hunt 30). Indeed, Simon refers to him as the "father of public relations" (43). Lee's agency, one of the first public relations agencies, handled such clients as the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Rockefellers. Lee worked under the principle that companies should be open and honest with the public. He was dedicated to providing clear, accurate details to the press (Simon 41).

The purpose of communication in the public information model is to disseminate truthful information. This model uses one-way communication from the source, the company, to the receiver, the public. The communication model used for describing the press agentry/publicity model would fit the public information model as well.

Practitioners using this model feel a responsibility to be advocates for the public as well as the company. Professionals following this model of public relations may sometimes recommend that the company change to encourage a company to adapt to the public's desires. Research is still of little importance in this model (Grunig and Hunt 24). While some research may be conducted, it still is generally on a small scale and may include readability tests and readership surveys (Goff 13). Grunig and Hunt describe this type of practitioner as taking a journalistic attitude toward communication, "preparing informational materials for largely unknown publics" (24). Activities carried out by practitioners of this model would include very active media relations programs and the preparation and distribution of all kinds of informative literature designed to tell the organization's story.

Among practitioners using this model are government, educational, and not-for-profit organizations and associations. Grunig and Hunt suggest that about half of all public relations practitioners use this model (26).

Two-Way Asymmetric

Edward L. Bernays, an early practitioner and public relations scholar, is associated with the two-way asymmetric model. This model is closely related to the press agentry/publicity model, although its purpose is more accurately described as "scientific persuasion" (Grunig and Hunt 22). Practitioners using this model are concerned with persuasion, but rather than operating intuitively (as in the press agentry/publicity model), they rely upon research about attitudes and behavior and social science theory (Grunig and Hunt 22).

Communication in this model is two-way between the company and the public. Goff offers another graphic model of the form this two-way communication takes:

Fig. 4 Two-Way Communication

Source ---> Message ---> Channel ---> Receiver
Feedback

Source: Goff 14.

The value of the communication, however, is unbalanced in favor of the organization. The organization is concerned with persuading the public to its point of view with little concern for the reasons behind public opinion (Goff 14). As Grunig and Hunt discuss, the feedback in this case serves a monitoring function, helping the organization gauge the public's reaction and then allowing the organization to refine its message to more closely control public response (23).

This model can be found today in competitive businesses and in many public relations agencies. Firms that sell consumer products are very likely to use this model because it directly addresses the needs of sales. Grunig and Hunt estimate that about 20% of practitioners use this model of public relations (26).

Two-Way Symmetric

According to Grunig and Hunt, the origins of this model of public relations are more difficult to trace, mainly because the model is only now beginning to be fully understood and practiced (41). Many public relations practitioners have written or talked of this model, including Ivy Lee and Bernays (Grunig and Hunt 42). Grunig and Hunt cite the first edition of Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations (1952) as being the first scholarly book to explain in detail the two-way symmetric model. This model stresses understanding between an organization and its publics (Grunig and Hunt 22). The goal of the model is cooperation and adaptation similar to the public information model. However, practitioners of the two-way symmetric model are not content to merely disseminate information in the hope of gaining that understanding. Practitioners of this model seek to mediate change, helping publics and organizations adapt. Concensus is not always necessary with this model. If the organization and the public meet, communicate, and understand one another's point of view, that is success (Grunig and Hunt 23). Communication in this model is decidely two-way. Again, Goff presents a communication model depicting this type of communication:

Fig. 5 Two-Way Symmetric Communication

$$\text{Group} \rightleftarrows \text{Group}$$

Source: Goff 15.

The most notable difference in this model is that the organization is not always the originator of the message; the public takes its turn, and the organization listens.

plans, but also to evaluate processes and programs during and after their initiation (Schneider 112). Regulated businesses and some public relations agencies are the most common practitioners of this model of public relations, representing about 15 percent of total practitioners (Grunig and Hunt 22).

With these models, Grunig and Hunt stress that organizations may not be limited to practicing only one model of public relations (43). Organizations choose the models most appropriate to time and place and circumstances. "What is the best approach depends upon the nature of the organization and the nature of the environment in which it must survive" (Grunig and Hunt 43). Grunig and Hunt conclude their initial presentation of the four models, cautioning that the models are simplistic. They say that no one approach (as represented through the models) is necessarily right for all times and for all conditions. Rather, a company would be wise to pick and choose the appropriate model for the appropriate conditions, using more than one model when necessary.

Fig. 6 Characteristics of Four Models of Public Relations

	Model			
Characteristics	Press Agentry/ Publicity	Public Information	Two-Way Asymmetric	Two-Way Symmetric
Purpose	Propaganda	Dissemination of information	Scientific persuasion	Mutual understanding
Nature of Communication	One-way; complete truth not	One-way; truth important	Two-way; imbalanced	Two-way; balanced effects
Communication Model	Source-------->Rec.	Source-------->Rec.	Source --------> Rec. <-------- Feedback	Group --------> Group <--------
Nature of Research	Little; "counting house"	Little; readability, readership	Formative; evaluative of attitudes	Formative; evaluative of understanding
Leading Historical Figures	P.T. Barnum	Ivy Lee	Edward L. Bernays	Bernays, educators, professional leaders
Where Practiced Today	Sports, theatre, production promotion	Goverment, nonprofit associations, business	Competitive business; agencies	Regulated business; agencies
Estimated Percentage of Organizations Practicing Today	15%	50%	20%	15%

Source: Grunig and Hunt 22.

Press Agentry/Publicity Model and Selling Tickets

"There's a sucker born every minute," according to Phineas T. Barnum, the great showman and originator of the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Barnum also is noted as being the original modern press agent for whom there was no such thing as "bad publicity." Indeed, Barnum thrived on controversy and was known to keep a story astir in the press by writing letters with conflicting opinions under assumed names. Truth meant less than a good story, plenty of inches in the press, and money in the pocket (Grunig and Hunt 28).

The antics of Barnum and others were responsible for an early negative impression of practitioners of press agentry by the media and the general public. According to Grunig and Hunt: "The one thing that most press agents/publicists had--and have--in common is their constant effort to get free space in the media for their clients, using every possible trick to take advantage of the newspapers and other media" (30). The media and the public have not totally forgotten nor forgiven these early beginnings, often creating negative feelings between public relations professionals and members of the journalist medias and the general public which are often difficult to overcome.

Although today's practitioner of the press agentry/publicity model is usually more concerned with the truth than Barnum and other early day practitioners, they still tend to play the angles, hoping that they hit it right and find their name (more accurately, their client's name) in the news. The main purpose of this model--propaganda--continues to be prevalent (Grunig and Hunt 21).

The tools of the press agent include press releases, special events, brochures and other literature for distribution. Press relations are at the core of a theatre publicist's job, and most how-to books devote a large percentage of their space to talking about how to handle the media effectively (McElfresh and McArthur, for example).

When theatre management is the primary topic of a book, the public relations role is usually discussed under the headings "Press relations and publicity" (Langley 331) or "Using the press" (Menear 108). The idea of public relations for the not-for-profit theatre simply does not come up very often. Even articles such as Rudman's, where a very clear distinction is made between public relations and publicity, considerable space is spent writing about the mechanics of publicity.

Grunig and Hunt also are very clear on the role of the press agentry/publicity model as the primary model for theatre. They say, "if you want to sell tickets . . . you should use the press agentry/publicity model" (43). But, is selling tickets all that the not-for-profit theatre can hope and afford to gain from public relations? Or, is there more that could be done by practitioners in this area? These are a few of the questions to be examined in the next area of this study.

What Should Public Relations Be Doing For The Not-For-Profit Theatre?

The climate--economics. "In the end of the Reagan era, TCG's national survey indicates that economic stability still eluded many of America's theatres. Major growth has been achieved in some areas, but in 1988 theatres experienced a perilous slowdown in growth of the two leading contributed income sources," according to Barbara Janowitz Ehrlich (Facts 1). This survey, reported by Ehrlich, was the fifteenth annual survey undertaken by Theatre Communications Group. The annual survey gathers and analyzes information from 189 not-for-profit professional theatres throughout the United States. The current report (1988), describes a situation that held true throughout the 1980s. That climate was one of mixed gains and losses which the author feels has "inhibited long-term artistic growth of America's theatres throughout the '80s" (Ehrlich, "Theatre Facts" 2).

Specifically, Ehrlich's report shows that live theatre attendance reached the highest level in the five years studied. At the same time, box-office income rose, and productivity levels reached a new high. Overall, contributed income grew with foundation grants showing the largest increase. However, individual contributions, the largest source of contributed income, grew only 1.5% over 1987 giving. This figure is much smaller than the 9-15% increases seen annually since 1984 (Ehrlich, "Theatre Facts" 7). Corporate gifts also showed a lower percentage increase than in the past. Also on the negative side of the equation, expenses grew faster than income with expenses increasing 7.8% and income increasing 7.4% (6). Nearly half of the theatres in the sample reported deficits in 1988.

Individual donations were a source of concern for theatres. Ehrlich points out that there are many factors which might be affecting personal giving, including the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (which went into effect in 1987), the stock market plunge of October 1987, and a decrease in the average income. However, it is interesting to note that individual giving to all charities increased by 6.7% over the previous year, compared to a growth rate of 9.2% the year before (7). That decline in the rate of increase of giving is much smaller than the decline found for theatre.

The climate--social factors. Problems similar to those facing the not-for-profit theatre are facing the country as a whole. Robert Ruffner calls this "the worst of times (10)" for the not-for-profit organization. Ruffner said:

> We are facing high unemployment, shrinking resources, the decline of America's industrial might. Mind-boggling expenditures on military, ever higher operating costs, new expenses for Social Security and employee benefits, rising costs of operating . . . (10)

All of these factors contribute to the overall picture. Sunshine Janda Overkamp, in writing about the upcoming decade, cites a variety of social issues, such as education, illiteracy, substance abuse, and AIDS as being major topics drawing the attention of businesses as well as government (22). She discusses several trends which will affect both public relations and the not-for-profit sector in the 1990s, ultimately calling for a stronger public relations function. Overkamp discusses the renewed interest in environmental problems, concern for community safety, home security, drug abuse, health issues, and the list goes on. All of these causes will create increased competition for funding and volunteers. "It is obvious that not-for-profit organizations need to be more agressive and businesslike in approaching fund-raising and volunteer recruitment," Overkamp says (23). She calls for a stronger, more professional, carefully planned approach to public relations. "Now more than ever, there is a clear recognition of the need and impact of a finely crafted and executed public relations plan that supports specific organizational goals and objectives" (23).

Although Overkamp writes mainly from the perspective of not-for-profit health and social service organizations, her ideas encompass theatre as well, and, perhaps, even sound a louder warning for this realm. The theatre arts in general have always fought, not only for public support, but also for recognition. Robert Brustein calls it an "obligation to define why the arts deserve to be funded" (20).

In 1984, Kathleen McCarthy wrote that, "in the face of governmental cutbacks, economic duress, and rising social-welfare needs, arts organizations may be less competitive for limited private support, and the less established, more experimental groups would be particularly in danger of falling by the wayside" (13). Indeed, Theatre Communication Group's 1988 report notes the closing of one company, The Alaska Repertory Theatre, due to economic failure (Ehrlich, "Theatre Facts" 3).

The climate--government. In 1989, Barbara Janowitz Ehrlich discussed the role of the government as a supporter of the arts. She painted a bleak picture for the arts under the Bush administration. Ehrlich described the eight-year Reagan administration as being particularly hard for the arts and offered little hope for the Bush administration to do any better ("Bush Years" 33).

In fact, the first year of the Bush administration brought the controversial Serano/Mapplethorpe/Helms affair reported by Lindy Zesch in December 1989. This congressional bill, while more moderate than the original one presented, placed some limitations and new review procedures on the National Endowment for the Arts (Zesch 40). Without debating the rightness or wrongness of the bill, or even entering into the issue of the role of theatre, this bill has had some very real effects. According to Zesch:

> [This bill] has revealed the vulnerability of the arts, both in a utilitarian/capitalist society, and in a politically conservative era. It has demonstrated the lack of readiness on the part of the arts community to defend itself and to educate the public of its worth. (41)

Peter Zeisler echos this sentiment in an October 1989 editorial. He writes:

> The role of the theatre throughout time has been to prod, provoke and invite debate . . . The theatre profession must help its audience (who, by the way, are taxpayers and voters who elect their congressmen) understand why the theatre must be an unfettered forum to grow and thrive. (7)

Zeisler and Zesch talk about an increased need for the theatre community to speak about and defend and educate others about itself. One avenue for beginning to accomplish this task is to increase the communication between the theatre and its various publics. Indeed, because theatre and the arts have accepted public funds, they have an obligation to explain their role to the public; to let the public know about the service they provide. Much like a public utility company, theatre provides a service to the public and should let the public know how it benefits from that service.

The climate--audiences. Beyond politics is the area closer to home for each theatre organization: the audience. In 1977, Danny Newman wrote a book called Subscribe Now! As described by two authors, Newman was an "evangelical Chicago press agent," (Morison and Dalgleish 5). Newman introduced the concept of DSP or Dynamic Subscription Promotion principles, which quickly became the bible for audience development experts in theatres across America (Morison and Dalgleish 5).

Newman's argument was that the success of a not-for-profit theatre lay with the "saintly season subscriber" rather than with the "slothful, fickle single-ticket buyer" (Newman 15). According to Newman, the subscriber could be counted on to support the theatre. He wrote:

> The subscriber is our ideal. In an act of faith, at the magic moment of writing the check, he commits himself in advance of the season's beginning (often many months in advance, and we then also enjoy the interest on his money which we have put into banks or into short-term securities). Perhaps because he has made this initial judgment in our favor, he believes in us

> from that point on. He arrives at our auditorium with a positive attitude. He wants us to succeed, and he's thrilled when we do. (17)

In contrast, Newman saw the single-ticket buyer as a necessary evil and certainly not one to be courted. Of them, he wrote:

> The single-ticket buyer doesn't buy when it's too hot or too cold outside. He stays home if it snows, if it rains, if there's ice on the road, sleet in the air, or if any of those unfavorable weather conditions so much as threatens. He is so perverse that he doesn't even come if it's a beautiful day, claiming that he must be outdoors, in communion with Nature when it smiles on Man. (16)

Newman's theory of DSP was thus based on cultivating the season subscription buyer pretty much to the exclusion of other types of theatre-goers or would-be theatre-goers.

The problem with Newman's theory was that a saturation point for subscription sales was reached. Morison and Dalgleish wrote:

> But as the 1980s approached, the expansion of the arts slowed substantially. New audiences ceased to enter into the nation's cultural life in the same numbers or with the same enthusiasm as they had during the "boom" of the previous three decades, and the growth in attendance seemed almost to come to a halt. (5)

The trend has been toward a leveling off of subscription subscribers with a core of subscribers continuing to support the arts. Morison and Dalgleish explain:

> Existing data indicate that over the years audiences have grown as the availability of the

> arts has increased, but that in any developed community, the per-capita size and the demographic characteristics of that audience remain about the same as they were when the revolution began in the 1950s. (Morison and Dalgleish 5)

The authors continue to say that the demographics of that base audience are the same as they were before mid-century--"affluent, well-educated people in the professions and managerial occupations" (6).

The solution, according to these authors, is to cultivate new groups of people--seek new audiences. Adapt, they say, "to meet the real needs of a new breed of audience" (6), or the arts will not move forward, The approach they recommend is one based on education and a commitment to theatre as an art, important to a community.

Echoing that cry is Lynn Jacobsen, who writes of ways to innovate and attempt to attract those new audiences. Jacobsen discusses audience needs from the perspective of the production. She sees the new heros <u>on stage</u> as being nontraditional--the homeless, the disadvantaged--while, at the same time, the typical audience member represents the mainstream--white, middle-aged, affluent. Her article focuses on ways that some theatres have been attempting to bring nontraditional audiences to the theatre. The ideas are based on change, adaptability, and risk. One theatre offers "Pay What You Can" ticket-pricing as a way to lure first-time theatre-goers into trying the theatre (Jacobsen 44).

Morison and Dalgleish present an interesting capsule look at how the arts, and arts audiences, grew during the past 20 years.

> HOW THE ARTS GREW
>
> . In the ten years ending with 1975, 100 new professional theatres were established across the country, one-and-one-half times as many as the 40 that had been created in all the previous years.
>
> . From 1970 to 1980 the number of major opera companies with budgets of more than $100,000 grew from 35 to 109.
>
> . Between 1966 and 1985, the total number of museums in all categories increased by 28 percent.
>
> . Dance exploded. The best available figures show that the number of companies increased by at least five times over two decades.
>
> . Membership in the Association of College, University and Community Arts Administrators (ACUCAA), the largest service organization for presenters of performing arts attractions, increased from 29 in 1957, to 275 in 1966, to a total of 980 in 1985.
>
> . During the 1960s and 1970s, seven regional arts agencies came into existence and brought performing and visual arts attractions to communities where there had been few, if any, previously. During its first ten years, the Mid-America Arts Alliance made more than 1,600 performing and visual arts events available in 239 different cities and towns in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma, playing to attendance of nearly five million.

> . An explosion in the number of local arts agencies and councils took place. In 1949, there were two--in Quincy, Illinois and Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Today there are more than 2,000, of which at least one-third sponsor art shows and performances. (4-5)

Clearly, the 1960s through early 1980s was a boom time for the arts. But as the 1980s developed, the boom ceased and expansion was no longer the rule. The challenge to the arts was clearly made. With a new and changed climate and with the good old days unlikely to change, management of the arts required a new approach. That approach would logically include the use of any and all tools available.

Current Practice

The majority of theatre management literature deals with the mechanics and routines of theatre publicity, advertising and, at times, marketing. Even those works that label a section "public relations" proceed to discuss publicity and advertising. For example, in his book about theatre management, Stephen Langley discussed press relations, publicity, and advertising as being the job of the publicity director (331). He said the objective of this person's job is "attracting capacity audiences on a regular basis" (331). Langley then offered advice on the best techniques for successfully promoting a show.

Writing in 1974, Alvin Reiss described the publicity tools and techniques in use by arts organizations (Arts

Management Handbook 397). His choice of the term "publicity" is the first clue to the model of public relations being practiced. Reiss described an approach to publicity that included analysis and research of the types of audiences being served, but admitted that few organizations actually carry out this research (398). The bulk of his article discussed ways to gain publicity, essentially the best way to practice the press agentry/publicity model of public relations.

Danny Newman's book also is based on this idea. Ticket sales are the measure of success, and, for Newman, subscription sales specifically equate success. The author described a variety of ways to promote the sales of season subscriptions and he, too, discussed the use of the media, advertising, and gimmicks (specifically in chapter 13).

But does promotional activity, advertising, and ticket sales mean public relations? No, said William Rudman. "Public relations is not the same thing as publicity; it is an organization's entire approach to communications, one part of which is publicity" (163). Rudman offered a definition of public relations which he feels works for the arts. He paraphrased from a definition provided by the International Public Relations Association: "Public relations is a management function of a continuing and planned character, through which . . . institutions seek to win and retain the understanding, sympathy and support of those with whom they are or may be concerned" (163).

Rudman's counsel is that, in practicing true public relations, one must listen as well as speak (164). This fact is one which he feels is often missing within the arts:

> By dint of working twenty-four hours a day at our institutions, we lull ourselves into thinking we know exactly how we're perceived by our various publics--and what those publics are looking for in us--and we speak to them accordingly. But much of the time it's a monologue: we're not really listening. (164)

Research and evaluation using methods such as surveys and focus groups help to define attitudes. Only then can one proceed with appropriate communications.

Ten years after the publication of Danny Newman's book, Bradley Morrison and Julie Gordon Dalgleish published Waiting in the Wings, another book about selling tickets, but with a difference. Morison and Dalgleish said that promotions and sales are not enough. They wrote at a time when all of the factors discussed in the previous section about climate had come into play. Subscription sales were leveling off, and other social factors were beginning to take their toll. Their theory presented an approach to ticket sales which is closer to Rudman's idea of public relations--seeking to win and retain the understanding, sympathy, and support of present and potential audiences.

Their theory is that the arts must educate its present and potential audiences, seeking ways to appeal to more target groups of people. They proposed the system of SELL--Strategy to Encourage Lifelong Learning (Morison and Dalgleish 7). They talked about "audience development" and defined it in a broad sense to include not only promotion, but also public relations, communication, and educational programs. Morison and Dalgleish wrote:

> In our definition, audience development is the long-term process of encouraging and assisting an audience member to become increasingly more involved in the life of an arts institution. The goal is to build a loyal and committed audience with an appetite for adventure. The system must provide people with the opportunity to learn about the art form and increase their commitment to the organization at a natural, gradual pace. (77-8)

The SELL theory is based on learning. It advocates a series of stepping stones, allowing people to test the theatre in small doses and gradually increase their interest, understanding, and willingness to explore new areas (78). The key to this approach is to create new points of entry or first-time opportunities for potential audiences (79).

External communication locates these new audiences initially. However, the product--the arts event--must be appropriate for these first-time attenders. And, once they have come for the first-time, the organization must "capture the names and addresses at the Point-of-Entry," enabling the next communication with these people to be personalized. Ongoing communication with these people is seen as critical, as is responsiveness to the needs of both artistic organization and the various segments of the audience being wooed.

> The system or strategy that an organization devises must be tailored to its own mission and its particular needs for artistic development and growth. It may involve grouping different kinds of artistic events into different, increasingly adventurous packages. It may include special learning experiences designed to meet the needs of particular segments of the audience. Commitment to the organization may be arranged in progressive stages. But, in any case, there must be a plan, a formal strategy. (80)

Morison and Dalgleish emphasized that longer term success for the arts must be measured in more intrinsic terms than in the past. They did not propose that arts organizations discard the elements of press agentry/promotion, season subscription sales, and marketing. The bottom line must still be met. However, they did suggest that:

> . . . success in the world of the arts cannot be measured quantitatively. It must be judged by the depth, impact and strength of the relationships that are developed between people and art, audiences and artists. These relationships can only be developed through a process by which people and artists learn how to communicate and share. (80)

These authors maintained that the current methods of audience development based on subscription sales, promotion and advertising, will not enable the arts to continue to move forward (81).

Conclusion

The prevalent model of public relations practice in the not-for-profit theatre during the past three decades has been the press agentry/publicity model. With the purpose of the model being propaganda, control, and domination of its environment, it offered the perfect tools for selling tickets. Getting the message out to the public through any and all means possible worked. Tickets were sold. Success was counted with the ticket stubs.

With changes in the economic, political, and social climates, selling tickets became more difficult. Other issues--health concerns, environment--muddied the waters affecting not only the direction for some donated sources, but the way in which messages were heard. Suddenly, it seemed that publicity was not enough. One author wrote:

> All of this is not to say that publicity is a waste of time. Far from it. Publicity is a vital part of any arts group's public relations program. It is a necessary part of long-term image-building, and in short-term, can help sell tickets to one attraction or to an entire season. (Rudman 167)

However, publicity should be only one element of a sophisticated public relations program. With the demands of the current climate for the arts, sophistication is what is needed. Overkamp's warning to the not-for-profit world applies to the not-for-profit theatre as well, because these entities are facing as clear a crisis as any of the other organizations. Theatres need to have all of their tools prepared to meet today's challenges. They need to be as sharp as any other organization. Overkamp said:

> Now, more than ever, there is a clear recognition of the need and impact of a finely crafted and executed public relations plan that supports specific organizational goals and objectives . . . Activities need to be focused, measurable, and results-oriented. (23)

The two-way symmetric model offers a sophisticated public relations model that is consistent with the views of authors such as Morison and Dalgleish. The goal of this model is cooperation and adaptation. It stresses understanding between an organization and its public, much like Morison and Dalgleish's call for an increased emphasis on education and life-long learning for nurturing and building arts supporters. The model stresses research: knowing and listening to the publics (or various audiences) of a given organization. It also stresses responsibility to the public, and that involves listening and responding to public needs.

Because the need for selling tickets is not likely to go away in the business of the theatre, the press agentry/publicity model of public relations is also not likely to be abandoned. However, the current climate indicates a need to practice a form of public relations which encourages listening, adaptation, and research--the two-way symmetrical model.

The question remains: How do not-for-profit theatres use public relations? The literature indicates a current practice of the press agentry/publicity model, however, this answer can be tested through examination of an actual theatre company. Chapter IV will offer additional information for answering this question through presentation of a case study of Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park.

CHAPTER IV

A CASE STUDY

The world is changing rapidly, and the challenges facing theatre are changing just as rapidly. In the face of this dynamic environment, it is imperative that theatre fully utilize all its resources, including public relations. As presented and analyzed in the previous chapter, public relations is being used only marginally in the theatre setting: more of a publicity tool than the full service function of which it is capable. But does this conclusion hold true when examined against an actual example? Is a typical not-for-profit theatre getting full measure from its public relations department?

To answer these questions, a case study of a representative theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, has been conducted. Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, a LORT B theatre in existence for 30 years, can be considered representative of not-for-profit professional resident theatres in a number of areas, including its audience size, budget, staffing size, physical plant size and the material offered on its two stages. Indeed, the Playhouse has a high reputation among LORT theatres and could be expected to be fully utilizing its management tools, including public relations. However, to the surprise of the researcher, the opposite situation was found. An examination of Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park's public relations practice found it to be operating primarily in the Press Agentry/Publicity model with little emphasis on research and evaluation, and with no formal methods for response to public needs. Although progressive programs were in place, such as a question/answer series, services for the handicapped, and others, they were conducted in a haphazard manner with no formal evaluation mechanisms to gauge effectiveness.

The case study that follows will consider the aforementioned ideas as well as provide a picture of the current practice of public relations within a not-for-profit theatre. However, before moving into the case study, the stage will be set through a brief look at the history of the not-for-profit professional resident theatre.

The Rise of the Not-For-Profit Professional Resident Theatre

The rise of the not-for-profit professional resident theatre took place during the second half of the twentieth century, coinciding with the rise of stock theatre, another type of regional professional theatre. Although these two forms of theatre have many similarities, the two serve very different functions. Langley explains the difference in the two systems: stock theatre is a "commercial purveyor of 'popular entertainment,' while resident theatre tends to be noncommercial, nonprofit and more interested in serious or experimental work" (129).

The 1950s marked the real beginning of the modern not-for-profit professional resident theatre. Before that time, there were only a handful of theatres that fell into this category. Theatre Profiles 8 lists 14 pre-1950 companies in its theatre chronology listing (Istel 161). Early resident companies included the Hudson Guild Theatre (founded 1896), The Cleveland Playhouse (founded 1915), and the Goodman Theatre (founded 1925). During the '50s, the number of theatres began to rise. Also on the rise were the number of festivals and annual summer theatrical events such as the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon. Morison and Dalgleish documented this arts explosion when they said:

> Driven by the passion of dreamers and doers like Joffrey and Arpino, the arts in America responded to dramatic and deep-rooted changes in the social, economic and technological fabric of society and plunged into an era of unprecedented expansion.
>
> Triggered by the emergence of a new majority with discretionary time, energy and money . . . propelled by a generation of idealists and visionaries whose creative energies had been

> diverted for the duration of World War II . . . and fueled by the largesse of a new breed of bureaucratic and institutional patron, the cultural life of the country burst free of its traditional bastions on both coasts and flew off in all directions, depositing art, artists and arts institutions in improbable places from Bumblebee, Arizona to Caribou, Maine. (3)

Post World War II Americans were living longer, working fewer hours, and retiring earlier than their parents and grandparents. This increase in leisure time left a gap to be filled, and the arts grew and rushed to fill it (McCarthy 14).

As the arts developed and gained public support, they also began to encounter problems. A 1965 Rockefeller Panel report cited the growing woes of the arts, including revenues that no longer covered expenses, low salaries, inability to employ enough staff full-time to meet the needs of the organizations, limited performance spaces, and generally inadequate financing. At the same time, alternate sources of income were being investigated and developed. Foundations to support the arts and patronage from corporations were beginning to offer important new funding sources. The Ford Foundation led the way. Government also entered the picture when President Lyndon Johnson signed into existence the National Endowment for the Arts. By the end of the 1960s, a framework for individual, foundation, corporate, and government support of the arts was established (McCarthy 15).

Before 1965, 40 professional regional theatres existed. Between 1965 and 1975, 100 more theatres were established across the country (Morison and Dalgleish 4). By the late 1970s, there were more than 175 permanent not-for-profit professional resident theatres, playing to more than 12 million people annually (Langley 135). In numbers reached and audience size, these theatres had far surpassed Broadway, the earlier standard for live theatrical entertainment.

In the 1960s, the managements of many of these resident theatres banded together to form the League of Resident Theatres (LORT). LORT companies operate under a Resident Theatre Agreement with Actors' Equity, the professional union for actors. The Equity contract spells out special rules governing many situations, such as touring. Equity also recognizes four categories of companies under the agreement with LORT. The categories are determined by a formula which takes into account seating capacity and potential weekly gross receipts. Under these terms, a theatre can be designated A, B, C, or D, with A being the largest, potentially highest-grossing theatre and D the smallest (Langley 135).

The theatre's designation affects salary scales for actors, journeymen, stage managers, and assistant stage managers who are all signed to Equity contracts. The agreement governs the use of nonsalaried interns, apprentices, and students. The designation and the Equity contract also cover such terms as housing for actors, meals, transportation, time off and other typical contract items (Langley 139). The LORT designation has come to signal not only a resident theatre's relations with the actors' union but also a theatre's national impact.

Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park

The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park is the only resident, professional theatre serving a tri-state region which includes southern Ohio, northern Kentucky and southwestern Indiana. Founded as a not-for-profit organization in 1960, the Playhouse celebrates its 30th season this year. Originally housed in a 100-year-old fieldstone shelterhouse, the Cincinnati Playhouse now comprises two theatre houses, the 629-seat, modified-thrust stage Robert S. Marx Theatre, and the 220-seat, thrust-stage Thompson Shelterhouse. The Marx Theatre operates under a LORT B contract; the Shelterhouse under a LORT D contract (Istel 38).

The mainstage Marx Theatre was built in 1968. The Shelterhouse was renovated in 1980. That renovation project included the building of the Albert Vontz Theatre Center, an atrium lobby and office complex which joins the two performance spaces (Playhouse 1). In March 1990, the most recent addition to the theatre complex, a garden dining area, was completed and dedicated (Robinson). The theatre complex is located in a large park which also is home to the city's art museum, art academy, historical society, and botanical conservatory.

The Playhouse typically produces 10 to 12 plays and musicals each year, reaching nearly 200,000 people annually (Playhouse 1). The 1989-90 season in the mainstage Marx Theatre included five productions: Les Liaisons Dangereuses, a drama; Treasure Island, a world premiere adaptation with original music; Fences, a Pulitzer Prize winning drama; The Boys Next Door, a humorous yet compassionate look at mental disabilities; and How the Other Half Loves, a wild comedy. The 1989-90 Shelterhouse season included: Pump Boys and Dinettes, a light-hearted modern musical; De Donde?, a serious drama and winner of the Playhouse's third annual Lois and Richard Rosenthal New Play Prize; Frankie and Johnny In The Clair De Lune, a happy ending, adult comedy; Fanshen, a drama, and

Romance/Romance, a musical that was nominated for five Tony Awards in 1988 (Season brochure).

In its 1988-89 season, the Playhouse's operating budget was in excess of $3 million (Playhouse 1). The 1988 Theatre Profiles 8 reported a budget of $2,730,000. About 65 percent of the organization's income is earned through ticket sales, a fact which theatre management feels demonstrates "sound fiscal control and a responsiveness to the theatrical needs of the community" (Playhouse 1). The Playhouse also relies upon contributions, individual and corporate, to balance the budget. "As with all non-profit (sic) organizations, unearned and contributed income remains the pivotal budgetary element" (Playhouse 1). For the Playhouse, part of the unearned income is derived from an endowment fund created in 1985. The Playhouse started the fund to "provide a buffer required for fiscal stability and artistic growth" (Playhouse 1). Current value of the endowment is over $1 million. The Playhouse also works with corporations in co-producing some productions, and receives contributions from individuals and businesses. Grants are received from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ohio Arts Council, the Cincinnati Fine Arts Fund, the City of Cincinnati, and Hamilton County (Playhouse 2).

In addition to its regular repertoire of performances, the Playhouse carries out other special programs and offers services, which according to its management, "broaden the community's awareness and appreciation of theatre" (Playhouse 2). Several programs are educational in nature. One of the programs that falls into this category is the student matinee series, begun in 1975. This program reaches more than 5,000 area students annually. The series offers discount matinees to the students one week before the opening of each show, including question and answer sessions following the performances (Playhouse 2).

Also with an educational purpose, a program known as Interact offers a series of classes to all age groups. The classes are taught by resident and guest professionals. First available in 1988, the current year's schedule offers acting, make-up, dramatic literature, and stage combat courses ("Acting Classes" 10).

Another educational endeavor by the Playhouse takes the form of internships in acting, design, technical production, stage management, and directing. The goal of this program is "crafting qualified professionals for the stage" (Playhouse 2). Each year the interns produce and perform their own repertoire which they tour to area schools. They also understudy roles or appear in regular productions as well as take classes.

In addition to the educational programs, the Playhouse has services available during performances designed to make theatre available to special audiences. Known as "accessibility with dignity," the program is "an equal access program assuring every audience, of every dimension, the best and most effective ways to participate in the world of high quality professional living theatre" (Accessibility). Special services provided include large print programs made available through a gift from a local eye glass company. Also available for the visually impaired are audio-described performances. "Trained describers broadcast, via a closed-circuit FM system, the integral silent actions of the play, as well as lighting concepts, costume, and set design. Playbill and production notes are given ten minutes prior to curtain and during intermission" (Accessibility). This program is available through a fund provided by the Cincinnati Bell Foundation.

The needs of the hearing-impaired are addressed through a sound enhancement system. A Telex FM sound enhancement system, provided as a gift from a local hospital, enables hearing-impaired individuals to hear the performance more clearly and loudly than otherwise possible. Through the cooperation of the Cincinnati Speech and Hearing Center and funded through a foundation grant, the Playhouse offers two signed performances for the severely hearing-impaired and deaf patrons. Dates for signed performances are published at the beginning of the season and periodically throughout the season (Robinson).

Both theatres as well as patron facilities are designed for easy accessibility by handicapped individuals. Wheelchair seating is available and can be reserved at the same time reservations are made. According to the management: "Through these and other services, the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park strives to enlighten the public and heighten the vibrancy of the theatrical art" (Playhouse 4).

Additional insight into the Playhouse can be gained through a review of various published mission and artistic statements. An early mission statement, published in 1973, stated that the purpose of the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park was "to promote the artistic, cultural literacy and educational life of the area by offering to all segments of the area professional theatrical productions of a balanced repertory of classic and modern plays which are not otherwise available" (Spencer and Turner 348).

In 1988, the artistic philosophical statement provided to Theatre Profiles 8 by artistic director Worth Gardner read:

> The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park is dedicated to expanding the theatrical experience for both artists and audiences through provocative, mysterious works that reawaken the imagination through the language of drama and that recognize theatre's potential to liberate our dreams, reflect our pretenses, celebrate our differences and challenge our prejudices. (Istel 38)

In a descriptive paper prepared by the theatre's public relations department for new board members, the Playhouse is described as being:

> . . . committed to the development of new plays; finding playwrights, directors, actors and designers who embrace the resident theatre's mission of shaping the future of the art form in an age when the commerical theatre can no longer afford to risk the investment. (Playhouse 4)

One way in which the Playhouse's commitment to this philosophy can be seen is in the number of new plays that appear regularly on the season schedule. The 1989-90 season included two new plays. The 1988-89 season included two and the 1987-88 season included four new plays. The creation of the Lois and Richard Rosenthal New Play Prize in 1987 is another example of this commitment to new works. The prize in this contest provides for a fully staged professional production of the winning play. Finally, the Playhouse actively pursues its philosophy through the annual hiring of a playwright-in-residence. Worth Gardner, in writing the theatre's description for Theatre Profiles 8, says, "The Playwright's Fund offers an annual fellowship to an emerging playwright, thus ensuring that the process of playmaking can happen in the most encouraging environment" (Istel 39).

The Playhouse as a Representative Theatre

The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, established in 1960, was among the early not-for-profit professional theatres, with only 28 LORT companies in existence before it. More than 175 such theatres now exist (Istel 161). The company is regularly included in the "Theatre Facts" report published annually by Theatre Communications Group. That report typically includes information from more than 170 not-for-profit professional theatres from throughout the United States.

Theatre Communications Group also conducts a trend analysis for a sample group of 45 theatres drawn from its larger group. Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park is included in that sample group. Budgets for the theatres covered in this smaller sample range from $50,000 to nearly $9 million. Obviously, the Playhouse's $3 million budget falls toward the middle of this range. The Playhouse was comparable with other theatres in this group in terms of income distribution with about two-thirds of its income earned through ticket sales and the remainder coming from individual, foundation, corporate, and city and county donations (Istel 5).

In addition, the Playhouse's season is typical of many not-for-profit resident professional theatres of its size, offering a mix of traditional, experimental, and new drama, and musicals, with varying lengths of runs for each show. The average theatre in the Theatre Communications Group trend analysis sample played to an audience at 82% of its capacity (Ehrlich, "Theatre Facts" 4). In close comparison, the Playhouse in the Park Marx Theatre played to an average 73% capacity in 1988-89; the Playhouse in the Park Thompson Shelterhouse played to an average 83% capacity for an average overall capacity of 76% (Norris and Robinson).

When examining types of tickets sold, Theatre Communications Group's sample reported an average of 54% of tickets being sold on subscription series (Ehrlich, "Theatre Facts" 4). The Playhouse reports 70% subscription sales for the Marx Theatre and 50% for the Thompson Shelterhouse.

The Public Relations Function At Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park

The director of public relations at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park reports to the managing director. In the organizational structure of Playhouse, the managing director is the highest ranking position on the administrative side of the chart. On the artistic side of the operation, the artistic director is the highest ranking position. The managing director and the artistic director, theoretically, are equals--at least they receive equal billing on playbills.

In addition to the director of public relations, the director of marketing and the director of ticket services report to the the managing director. In the current organizational structure, the people in these three positions are equals. However, the Playhouse has recently undergone a change in managing directors. The current managing director, Kathleen Norris, assumed her Playhouse position in September 1989 (Neff 21). Her predecessor was with the Playhouse for only one year, which means that the organization has had three managing directors in three years. According to Peter Robinson, public relations director, the frequent changes in management have left some things unsettled, including a current organizational chart delineating the inter-relationship of the three areas (Norris and Robinson). Robinson's description of the way the organizational chart has unofficially lined up for the past three years fits the picture described above and charted on the next page.

Fig. 7 Organization Chart for Playhouse in the Park

Artistic Director

Production Manager

And other artistic personnel

Managing Director

Marketing Director

Public Relations Director

Development Director

Source: Robinson

The managing director, Kathleen Norris, is a 1968 graduate of University of Cincinnati. She began her arts management career as the public relations assistant for Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park in 1968. She then served as public relations director and box office manager for Cincinnati's Showboat Majestic, a professional stock theatre company. Norris left Cincinnati for New York in

1975, where she served a two-year term as executive director of the Byrd Hoffman Foundation, an organization noted for producing Einstein on the Beach, an opera. Following this position, she served as executive director of New Dramatists, a New York professional theatre organization devoted to developing new American playwrights. Norris then assumed the position of chief executive officer of the Australian Elizabethan Trust and served a similar function for the Australian Film Institute. She worked in Australia for eight years before returning to the Playhouse in 1989 (Neff 21).

Norris holds a marketing-oriented view of the place of public relations in the management structure of theatre. She sees it as "a key component in the marketing effort" with its fundamental job being "to sell tickets" (Norris and Robinson). Norris lists several approaches that public relations might take to promoting theatre, including obtaining media space and positioning the show to appeal to segments of potential audiences. However, when asked to define the purpose of public relations at Playhouse in the Park, she returns to the answer, "It's not about getting the theatre's name in the paper unless that results in more ticket sales. The job of public relations is to sell tickets" (Norris and Robinson).

Norris does comment on the role of public relations for the total institution and differentiates this from its role in a single show. When promoting a single show, Norris says, the public relations practitioner need not worry about how the show fits into the overall frame of the institution. When promoting a show, the selling of that show is key and taking any tactic that works is acceptable. However, when selling a show that is part of an institution like the Playhouse, Norris believes that public relations has a responsibility to view the larger picture. She says:

> You are trying to create a series of impressions rather than a single impression. You are trying to convey a much larger idea. You are still selling a show but you also have to keep in mind the entire institution. You can't mislead your audience. (Norris and Robinson)

This view is consistent with the purpose of the first model described by Grunig and Hunt, the press agentry/publicity model (22). The purpose of that model is to "spread the faith of the organization involved" (Grunig and Hunt 21). The way in which this task is accomplished is not as important as accomplishing the task. "Public relations serves a propaganda function in the press agentry/publicity model," say Grunig and Hunt (21). Propaganda as used in this context is not necessarily negative, but is consistent with a dictionary definition of the term which states that propaganda is: "The systematic propagation of a given doctrine or of allegations reflecting its views and interests" (American Heritage Dictionary 992).

The current director of public relations for Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park is Peter Robinson. He has held this position for three years. Before this position, Robinson worked freelance, writing and doing some public relations work for an Equity theatre in Maine (Robinson). A graduate of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, Robinson majored in speech education and theatre. He taught speech and theatre at the high school level for six years. His background also includes serving an acting internship with the Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival. Robinson then turned to a career in arts management. Before making this decision, his intention had been to be an actor. He says, "I loved to write and felt that I could be stimulated by the theatre from a management point of view" (Robinson).

In a synopsis published for release to the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park board of directors, Robinson describes his department's function. He says:

> The public relations function at the Cincinnati Playhouse is reflective of its season - eclectic, dynamic, and dependent on communication and collaboration with every other facet of the playmaking process. Its purpose is to present the Playhouse to the public in a positive, informative, consistent fashion. While the majority of time is spent promoting the season

> and each production within it, attention is also paid to packaging information on Playhouse services and innovations, outreach programs and personnel. This function is primarily executed through contact with the press that does not involve paid advertising. (Playhouse in Perspective)

When asked in an interview how public relations contributes to the Playhouse, Robinson added more information to the picture when he responded:

> We are here to provide enlightenment a little bit, and certainly entertainment. Part of our job is to show that those two need not be mutually exclusive . . . It is the job of public relations to always relate the Playhouse's role to the community that it serves. (Robinson)

At first glance, Robinson's comments can lead one to think that the mode of public relations he prefers to practice might more closely line up with the information model, however, a key component in the information model is that the information tends to not take a persuasive tone. With this model, the public relations practitioner presents the facts in an objective manner (Grunig and Hunt 22). Robinson's approach is anything but objective. He seeks to sell his product--the theatre. He explains that for each show his goal is to position the play to attract the audience. He looks for a promotional theme for each show.

For example, the Playhouse presented the show Fences, about a black, former baseball player who regrets never having broken the racial barriers in the fifties to become a major league baseball player. Robinson set about to find a tie-in with the Cincinnati Reds baseball team, thereby attracting a segment of the potential audience that might not otherwise attend a theatre production. An issues and answers forum was set up in conjunction with the play, and people were invited to come and meet a retired baseball player who also happened to be one of the first black players to join the Reds. While the approach taken offered some educational and cultural advantages, the basic goal was to sell tickets, not present objective facts about baseball or racial equality.

Likewise, an argument could be made for Robinson's approach fitting into the two-way asymmetric model. That model has a function similar to the press agentry/publicity model. Practitioners of this model seek to persuade, but they use a more scientific approach (Grunig and Hunt 22). They use research, and they actively seek feedback to help them refine their persuasive techniques.

Research and formal evaluation, however, are not evident as priorities at the Playhouse. According to Robinson, the Playhouse has not conducted any audience research during his three years with the company. He explains that this fact is partly due to the various top level managerial changes. Norris, however, does not indicate that she plans any sort of research project for the Playhouse or that she places research very high on her priority list. In fact, when asked if there were any formal ways of measuring the success of a show or the attitudes of the audience, she said no and explained that she believes that market research, including audience research, is "never wholly accurate." In fact, she said, the theatre business operates on "sophisticated hunch play." Robinson calls this "flying by the seat of your pants" and said he feels that this approach is a given for public relations in the theatre (Norris and Robinson). Grunig and Hunt also use the phrase "seat-of-the-pants" and "intuitive" to describe the practice of the press agentry/publicity model (22). They point out that this lack of attention to research is one of the primary differences distinguishing the press agentry/publicity model from the two-way asymmetric.

Crucial to the practice of the fourth model of public relations, the two-way symmetric model, is the use of research as well as an active interest in seeking two-way communication and feedback with the various publics. In these areas, both Robinson and Norris indicated that the Playhouse has no formal methods of evaluation, research or on-going audience communication.

When asked how the theatre measures or evaluates the success of a show or a season, Robinson replied that "the success is measured by subscription renewal rate and by single ticket purchases" (Robinson). When asked further about evaluation and measuring success in terms of other stated goals such as education, Robinson replied:

> I don't think we really do because those things are all by definition rather personal responses. Short of conducting surveys and sending out questionnaires or building in response mechanisms through coupons or some other marketing mechanism, I really don't see that happening here. (Robinson)

Robinson reiterated that he felt that much of the research and evaluation had fallen to a low point on the priority list due to the changes in top management.

When asked the same question--how does the theatre measure or evaluate the success of a show or season--Norris said:

> I think there are three measures of the success of a show. I think there is financial success, which is measured by maximum income and contained expenditure. I think there is critical or perceived success, which is really what the community thinks of that attraction. . . The last thing is artistic success, and that is wholly an internal measurement" (Norris and Robinson).

The follow-up question asked Norris to elaborate on the mechanics involved with determining success in each of the above instances. She replied that, with financial success, you "count the ticket sales against expenditures for the production." For the perceived success, she said measurement was more "ephemeral." She said that one way to measure perceived success was through the documentation provided by critics, including reviews and other articles. In addition, she said the Playhouse receives letters about shows and comments from audience members to the house staff.

When asked if there was any formal mechanism in place for tallying or analyzing this type of feedback, Norris's reply was no, not at the present time. She mentioned several formal ways that this type of success could be measured, such as through surveys or focus groups, but qualified these remarks with the comment that formal research is never entirely accurate unless done very carefully. She then referred to the play De Donde? to offer an example of how success is measured. She says:

> We knew after De Donde?, that we'd had a real impact on the community. We knew it from lots of small things. We knew it from people coming up to us in the lobby--they don't ordinarily. Usually house management is only spoken to by the audience when there is something wrong. So if people go out of their way to let us know that there is something right, that's success. We knew it from the number of letters we got in--all those added up. (Norris and Robinson)

Finally, when looking at artistic, internal measurements of success, Norris said there were both formal and informal methods of evaluation. The informal methods take place in casual conversations as people interact during the normal course of the day. The decision on whether or not to do a formal evaluation hinged upon whether or not there were many problems with the show. "We are more likely to make it formal if there were a lot of difficulties, because we want to analyze why there were difficulties and suggest ways to prevent them in the future," she said.

The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park production of Equus, described in chapter one, is an example of a problem that can develop during production of a show. While earlier Norris was referring to "artistic" and "technical" problems, the Equus problem was really a public relations problem. Peter Robinson was the official spokesperson during the Equus media crisis. When asked how they handled the media attention surrounding the nudity issue in that play, Robinson replied that they had decided early on to produce the play in keeping with the original script and that meant there would be nudity. Robinson explained that certain incidents that happened at the Playhouse before Equus really contributed to the problems with this play.

According to Robinson, the Playhouse staged a world premiere of Frankenstein two seasons before Equus was scheduled. Because this was the first time this particular show had been produced, there was no past record for how it had been done. Early in the rehearsal process, the director was interviewed for a newspaper feature story. In that story, the director mentioned that there would be a brief moment of male nudity when the Frankenstein creature is animated out of the vat of liquid and given life. The director and the actor playing the creature felt that to have the creature clothed would be totally unrealistic, hence a moment of nudity before the creature climbs the walls to escape the doctor's lab. The city vice squad picked up on that issue and confronted the Playhouse about the need for nudity in this play. As it turned out, in dress rehearsal, the decision was made to create a sort of bandage wrapping, providing a type of clothing for the creature. This decision was made at the request of the actor for purely practical reasons--the climb out of the lab took place in near darkness over some rather precipitous terrain, and the actor feared for his own safety.

This attention from the vice squad during this play caused the Playhouse board of directors to worry when Equus came on the schedule, according to Robinson. When Equus was announced for the 1988-89 season, the board decided that "it would be the best approach where the city authorities were concerned to tell them--not request permission--but to simply say that we were not trying to hide anything and to forward a copy of the script," said Robinson. The board's letter stated that the nudity was an integral part of the drama. The vice squad contacted the show's director, who was at that time not employed by the Playhouse (his contract had not yet begun), and the director handled the first round of vice squad and media questions. From that point on, the Playhouse, through Peter Robinson, stood firm in its commitment to produce Equus in a manner consistent with the intent and needs of the play. The issue received attention from the local newspaper at various times in October, November, December, and January. In January, Robinson was quoted as saying that he believed "that police intend to leave it to 'Playhouse judgement' how to present the nude scene" ("Playhouse Says").

When asked about the original promotion plan for the show and its emphasis on the nudity, Robinson stated that this plan "was not out of keeping with the play," but that, because of the unexpected emphasis on nudity, the intent was redirected. He added:

> This [play] is a psychological thriller. There is an emphasis on come and see what happens in the stables--not because of the nudity, but because this is the meat of this play. It all builds up

> to what happens when this kid stabs and blinds these five horses and why he does that [act]. (Robinson)

Robinson admits that the show probably benefited from the controversy. "The exposure did the play some good. But it's not the way I like to pursue things." He also does not feel that, in the long run, the Playhouse's reputation was damaged by the incident. He points out that the Playhouse production was not the first time Equus was performed in Cincinnati. An earlier touring production was done in 1977 as part of the city's Broadway series. That production included nudity and garnered no controversy.

When asked about a policy or plan for handling crisis situations such as the one that occurred around Equus, Norris said, "In that situation, you aren't talking about control because, in that kind of a situation, you are in a completely reactive position. At that point, you have to get your working party down to a very small team and to a limited amount of input." She said that an appropriate crisis management team at the Playhouse would include herself, the director of public relations, the director of marketing, and possibly the artistic director, depending upon what else was happening at the time. "You have to use your most focused decision-makers," she said.

Conclusion

Stephen Langley advanced the idea that community acceptance is important to the survival of a theatre organization (315). This idea suggests that public opinion can have a significant impact on a theatre's viability. Public relations practitioners are the people charged with managing an organization's appearance to and role with the public. If we accept Cutlip, Center, and Broom's 1985 definition as the modern day definition of public relations, then we define it as: "the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships betwen an organization and various publics on whom its success or failure depends" (4).

As discussed in Chapter I, accepting that definition of public relations means that public relations is not limited merely to publicity or advertising. Rather, these tools are used by public relations. When operating at a sophisticated level, public relations practitioners use research, planning, and evaluation to address multiple concerns and issues facing the organization.

Through examination of the literature related to public relations in general, a framework for analyzing how an organization uses the public relations function was introduced. This framework, referred to as the four models of public relations and introduced by Grunig and Hunt in 1984, suggested that theatre organizations practiced the first model, the press agentry/publicity model. This model is characterized as typically using propaganda to achieve the organization's purpose; practicing a one-way style of communication, with the message coming from the organization to the public; using little or no research save for counting tickets or income, and having few, if any, methods of evaluation.

At the other end of the public relations model spectrum, was the two-way symmetric model. This model is characterized by a desire for mutual understanding between the organization and its publics; the use of two-way communication balanced between the organization and the public; a high priority on research and evaluation practices to aid understanding and provide guidance. Although Grunig and Hunt estimated that this fourth model is practiced by only about 15 percent of organizations, they also felt it represented the most sophisticated style of public relations. However, no one model can be seen as the "right" model. In fact, "at times, one organization will find that a different model works best for different problems or for different public relations activities" (Grunig and Hunt 43).

Literature about public relations in not-for-profit organizations provided other insights into the practice of public relations and began to illustrate some of the common problems facing all not-for-profit organizations. Throughout the literature, the importance of a professional approach to public relations was evident: "Professional public relations in today's nonprofit is integral to the growth and success of the organization" (Ruffner 24). Also sounding loudly was the warning about increased competition for public support and attention. Ruffner saw this as a challenge for all not-for-profit organizations, pointing out that there were more than 846,000 such entities in 1980. In 1990, Overkamp gave a similar message, writing that "not-for-profit organizations need to be more businesslike . . . " and citing the professional practice of public relations as one way to respond to the increasing challenges of the social and economic environment (34).

On a similar note, the theatre as business was a theme found in much of the theatre management literature. Most frequently, theatre management literature discussed marketing and mentioned public relations only in passing. When discussed, however, the tone of the articles paralleled what was found in general public relations literature and in not-for-profit public relations literature, supporting the idea that positive public relations is necessary for an organization to succeed. Rudman wrote that, "image leads to survival and growth, or to failure" (163). He then described the need for public relations in the theatre to help insure survival and growth. He also suggested that a special understanding for the purpose of the arts was needed by public relations practitioners. He emphasized the need for listening--for the public relations practitioner to really listen to the audience--the theatre's public (164). And, he said, listening ultimately meant research and evaluation. His discussion bears similarities to Grunig and Hunt's fourth model of public relations, the two-way symmetric model, which is based upon a need for understanding between the organization and the public, and a commitment to research and evaluation.

Ultimately, public relations is not a magic solution for the not-for-profit theatre. A more sophisticated use of it can, however, provide specific benefits to theatre. The growth of theatre and the arts during the 1960s and 1970s was extraordinary. New arts organizations opened all around the country, and these organizations were supported by the government through such entities as the National Endowment for the Arts and by the general public through contributions, volunteerism, and attendance. The 1980s brought a change in that scene. The economy continued to be a concern to the nation as a whole and to theatre, specifically. Although theatre attendance and box office revenues remained high, contributions from individuals and corporations slowed. Expenses grew and some theatres began to fail. Contributing to this situation were many social factors, including illiteracy, substance abuse, and AIDS. Suddenly, the arts faced greater competition for financial support. Overkamp wrote that all not-for-profit organizations were at risk; McCarthy gave the same warning for arts organizations, and Brustein suggested the need for the arts to clarify why they "deserve to be funded" (20). The point was further driven home when the Bush administration put the clamps on the National Endowment for the Arts, which, according to Zesch, "revealed the vulnerability of the arts . . . " (41).

Within this climate, the conclusion can be reached that selling tickets is no longer a sufficient guarantee of success and viability for the theatre. The need exists for the theatre to be aggressive in making its value and contributions known. Yet, when examined, theatre does not seem to have any formal mechanisms in place for measuring success other than the "ticket count." A better case for success is built upon listening, adaptation, and research, components of the two-way symmetric model of public relations. Theatre should take advantage of all that public relations can offer. As Overkamp said: "Now, more than ever, there is a clear recognition of the need and impact of a finely crafted and executed public relations plan that supports specific organizational goals and objectives . . . " (23).

Chapter IV brought the discussion of public relations and the theatre home to a specific theatre: Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. Through an examination of existing literature about this theatre and through personal interviews with the managing director and the public relations director of Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, a picture of this theatre's current practice of public relations was developed.

In discussing his overall approach to public relations in the theatre, Playhouse Public Relations Director Peter Robinson said that, "people who work best in theatre administration, including public relations, are people who are artists themselves to a certain degree even if it is only some small corner--it's in their background" (Norris and Robinson). He explained further: "They must have a deep understanding, love, and appreciation of the product. It's not just this year's PR objective and moving on to another challenge for next year. It's something they're committed to for a long time." Norris agreed and said:

> I say to young people coming into this business that you've got to read all the same plays as someone wanting to be a director. You've got to read the critical essays. You've got to know all that, plus know about banking and contract law. (Norris and Robinson)

She maintained that to do the job well a person must know and understand the product--the theatre.

Research, evaluation, and two-way communication with the various publics of the theatre become crucial to truly knowing the climate of the theatre. However, as seen through the case study, the current practice of public relations at the Playhouse places low priority on research and evaluation. The mechanisms are not in place to truly listen, monitor and respond to the public. The artistic statement published by the artistic director, the written mission from the public relations director, and the stated objectives from the managing director all include a sense of a greater mission than just selling tickets: " . . . to promote the artistic, cultural literacy and educational life of the area . . . " (Spencer and Turner 348); to "recognize theatre's potential to liberate our dreams, reflect our pretenses, celebrate our differences and challenge our prejudices" (Istel 38). Yet, the only formal type of evaluation conducted counts ticket sales, reflecting a measure of success based on finances and fitting the press agentry/publicity model, the most simplistic form of public relations.

What then is to be gained from practicing public relations following a two-way symmetric model of public relations? First, truly following this model of public relations would insist that research and evaluation be undertaken. Grunig and Hunt emphasize that in this type of practice communication between the organization and its publics flows two ways. However, they also point out that the organization should not just monitor feedback. Rather, the information gathered from the various publics should be analyzed and appropriate responses made. The organization doesn't attempt to just persuade the public to its point of view; it strives to gain an understanding of the public and help the public understand it (Grunig and Hunt 23). For the theatre, this approach should better enable the public to sample a variety of works. The objective would be to encourage the audiences--new and old--to approach the theatre with open minds. Norris talked about a series of impressions that a theatre should strive to give to its audience. She said: "You may not like this show, but you come anyway. Because you trust the Playhouse, because you know that there is a reason for us doing that (show) and you will take the risk" (Norris and Robinson).

Grunig and Hunt say that with the two-way symmetric model of public relations, the practitioner brings two groups together--the institution and its public. And, they add, "as long as both communicate well enough to understand the position of the other, the public relations effort will have been a success" (23).

Use of this model would not preclude continuation of those activities that lead to ticket sales. Indeed, as discussed before, Grunig and Hunt maintained that the press agentry/publicity model is the most likely model to use when the goal is to sell tickets. Selling tickets is not likely to cease to be a goal for any theatre company; however, to begin to accomplish those larger goals, which include continued viability of the institution of theatre in today's fast-paced competitive climate, a more sophisticated use of public relations is necessary.

Beyond this study, several areas for continued research seem evident. One area is the examination of the bond between the general not-for-profit world and the not-for-profit theatre. This study drew parallels between the challenges facing both types of organizations, suggesting that similar answers would help both the not-for-profits and the not-for-profit theatre meet these challenges. Research to determine similarities and differences in business practice, marketing approach, and fund-raising as well as public relations practice would be useful in establishing the bond between these types of organizations.

This study considered only the not-for-profit professional theatre. The question remains as to whether these arguments hold true for other types of not-for-profit theatre such as community theatre and university theatre. Additional research in this area could help discover the similarities and differences in the public relations needs and practices of these different types of not-for-profit theatre. Some of the questions that might be asked include: Do these theatres use public relations in the same manner as the not-for-profit professional theatre? Do these types of theatres face similar challenges? What are the unique aspects of public relations practice for each of these types of theatres?

This study also argued for the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park being a representative not-for-profit professional theatre. Expanded research in this area is indicated to verify that Playhouse is indeed a representative theatre of its type. Another possiblity is that it is representative only of LORT B theatres. More empirical research, perhaps using case studies of several theatres, combined with quantitative samplings of many theatres, would add to the knowledge in this area.

Finally, the fact that Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park management has been in flux for three years may impact the results of this study. Additional examination of the history of this specific theatre and other similar theatres could help establish possible trends. Specifically, research could help establish if the practice of public relations in not-for-profit professional resident theatres has remained the same over time, or if there are any trends in the way that practice is changing.

All of these areas would bear consideration, if the grounds for this current research paper are accepted: namely, that the arts and theatre serve a purpose in our society and need to flourish and continue. Accepting the need for theatre and further, the increasingly difficult environment in which theatre must survive, leads to this paper's conclusion: Theatre should avail itself fully of all possible tools for survival. Public relations can be an important component in the management of a theatre and, more important, can provide counsel, guidance, and assistance in reaching out to and responding to the various publics of the theatre.

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