



Lila Wallace-  
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# Building Audiences

STORIES FROM  
AMERICA'S THEATERS

What Theaters Are Learning About the Role  
of Marketing in Attracting Audiences

- Matching Strategies to Targets:  
Theaters Travel Different Paths in Search of Audiences
- Rethinking Subscriptions:  
Giving People More Than First Choice of Seats
- Community Marketing:  
Taking a Grassroots Approach to Building Audiences
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Resources



# Building Audiences

STORIES FROM AMERICA'S THEATERS

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**I**n 1991, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund launched a \$25 million initiative to help 42 nonprofit theaters around the country expand and diversify their audiences. **Building Audiences: Stories from America's Theaters** is designed to share lessons from the theaters taking part.

In this issue, theaters talk about different marketing strategies being used—from creating new subscription packages to face-to-face selling—to accomplish their audience development goals. As these stories reveal, no "magic bullet" works for everyone. Instead, theaters are applying a variety of innovations to help them reach the people they've targeted.

## What Theaters Are Learning About the Role of Marketing in Attracting Audiences

- page 3*     **Matching Strategies to Targets:  
Theaters Travel Different Paths In Search of Audiences**  
Resident theaters have to present themselves as welcoming places to newcomers from a variety of backgrounds, while the challenge of community-based theaters is to demonstrate to people why theater should play a more important part in their lives.
- page 9*     **Rethinking Subscriptions:  
Giving People More Than First Choice of Seats**  
A number of theaters are discovering that creative subscription packages, better suited to the wallets, tastes and interests of potential ticket buyers, can help support their audience development goals.
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Recognizing that patrons don't come through the door en masse, but one by one, theaters have been adopting more personalized approaches to selling themselves to the people they're trying to attract.
- page 16*    **Change in Motion:  
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All across the country, theaters are coming up with new ways to sell tickets and draw crowds—from making the box office the linchpin of the marketing effort to making the theater the gathering place for young adults after work.

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**Evaluation Update**

To mine the many lessons from its theater initiative, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund is underwriting an eight-year evaluation of the program. As part of this effort, the evaluation team is trying to determine if changes to audience size and composition can be linked to specific activities theaters have undertaken to achieve their diversification and expansion goals.

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**Resources**

Names and contact information for all theaters participating in the program.

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## Matching Strategies to Targets

### Theaters Travel Different Paths in Search of Audiences

The way resident theaters go about diversifying their audiences is quite different from the marketing strategies used by community-based theaters to expand their current base of patrons. Many resident theaters need to present themselves as welcoming places that are sincerely interested in serving newcomers from a mix of backgrounds. While doing so, they also need to sustain strong relationships with their traditional clientele. Many community theaters face a more basic challenge: how to introduce people to the value of theater and why it should be a more important part of their lives. Despite these differences and in spite of these difficulties, theaters—large and small—are trying new strategies and meeting with success.

**T**he Goodman Theatre in Chicago is in an enviable position. Its 1995-96 season was 82 percent subscribed. With a 75 percent renewal rate at the start of this season, the theater expects to deepen that cushion even more.

African Americans make up a growing portion of the Goodman's audience—6 percent of its subscribers and 13 percent of its single-ticket buyers. Since 1991, the Goodman has steadily increased its African American audience, and is

moving toward its goal of creating a theater that better reflects the cultures and interests of diverse Chicagoans.

But with seasons more than three-quarters reserved, what's the urgency to subscribe new audiences? "The Goodman is like a squirrel preparing for the future," said Alfred Wilson, the theater's marketing manager. He noted that there are more than 100 theaters in the city and audiences for them are dwindling. The Goodman intends to

continue introducing more and more people to the theater through single-ticket sales and special interest subscriptions (see page 11) and then convert them to full-season subscribers.

The theater's efforts to market itself to African Americans were scattershot at first, Wilson admits. But surveys conducted during the period of the Goodman's grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund Theater Initiative, which extended from the 1991-92 to 1993-94 seasons, revealed that new African American patrons mirrored the theater's traditional white audience in age, income, education and marital status. That information allowed the Goodman to hone its marketing strategy and focus its efforts on upscale African American households with incomes of \$50,000 or more.

**S**imilarities in demographics, however, belied an important difference between the Goodman's white and black audience members that also emerged from surveys and focus groups. Even though the work of African American playwrights has been an integral part of the theater's artistic programming since 1978, most black ticket-buyers, according to Wilson, still consider the Goodman a white theater occasionally doing black plays.

"Over each of the past several seasons, the theater has shown a commitment to non-traditional casting and producing at least one mainstage African American play," he said, "but perceptions haven't changed all that much. Black ticket buyers know they'll see quality work at the Goodman, but they're not sure they'll be represented on stage or

*The Goodman Theater is moving toward its goal of creating a theater that better reflects the cultures and interests of diverse Chicagoans by attracting newcomers through single-ticket sales and special interest subscriptions and then converting them to full-season subscribers.*

shield itself against rising competition by building as large a loyal subscription base as it possibly can. Its strategy with the African American market is to

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feel particularly welcome."

In addition to producing the work of African American playwrights, Wilson explained, the Goodman rounds out its season with plays dealing with broad themes that might transcend the cultural differences of an audience. And to make new audience members feel more welcome, before each play's run the theater hosts an event for new subscribers to meet the director and cast. Wilson said 100 or more people attend these events, which offer subscribers an opportunity to discuss the work and learn about the production, but are also designed to make them feel more a part of the Goodman.

### **Making New Audiences Feel Special, Not Different**

Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF) has also been at work building an African American audience base over the past several seasons. In 1992, the year-round theater located in Montgomery, where half the population is African American, received a four-year grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund to support its audience diversification efforts. On receiving the grant, the theater chose not to publicize the details of it locally. ASF was concerned the African American community might think the theater was turning its attention to them because it had received the grant money, not because it was seriously committed to serving their interests over time. Based on the experience of other theaters, ASF also feared its traditionally white audience base might turn away if it didn't fully understand the theater's proposed plan.

**E**arly in its efforts, ASF made a distinction between treating African American audiences differently and treating them specially, according to Tamara Cofield, director of marketing. "In our outreach to the community, we took great pains to convey the same message we do to all audiences—that their attendance is desired and in return the theater will give them something well worth seeing."

Montgomery's print and broadcast media are not segmented—everyone reads the same newspaper and listens to the same radio stations. That forced ASF to carefully choose the images and copy it used in its advertising, said Cofield, so the traditional audience base wouldn't misunderstand the theater's

actions and African Americans could feel included rather than targeted.

"Rather than emphasizing race when we were promoting the African American shows," Cofield explained, "we played up the themes that would have wide appeal—family, love, loss, community, etc." The theater has used this same approach in marketing the rest of the shows in its seasons and has found it successful in drawing African Americans to such productions as *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Night of the Iguana*, where they constituted more than 5 percent of the audience, a significantly higher percentage than in past seasons.

"There was nothing on the surface of these shows that called out to African Americans, and yet we pulled them in," said Cofield. "That's how I measure our success—not in drawing an audience that's 60 percent African American to *A Raisin in the Sun*, but counting one that's 4 percent or 5 percent for a general interest show."

These tactics didn't safeguard ASF completely from some loss of white subscribers as they began to see more African American plays slotted during the season and a growing number of black patrons in the seats of the theater. "We lost a few hundred subscribers in the 1994–1995 season," Cofield said, "but most of them have come back as single-ticket buyers."

### **Subscriptions Not Viable for Some Theaters**

Like the Goodman Theatre, ASF also discovered early in its grant period that the demographics of the new African American ticket buyers it was attracting matched those of its traditional white audience. ASF's overall marketing strategy has been the same as the Goodman's: lead them to subscriptions.

To draw new African American patrons, ASF has an extensive community outreach program, uses well-placed radio ads and, in partnership with First Tuskegee Bank, offers single-ticket discounts to the bank's customers. To help convert single-ticket buyers to subscribers, the theater has developed an appealing selection of subscription packages (see related article, page 9). ASF's 1995-96 season was half-subscribed, with African Americans accounting for 10 percent of subscription and single-ticket sales—up from less than 1 percent in 1992.

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ASF and the Goodman, like many other resident theaters, have sophisticated marketing systems in place to deploy in pursuit of the African American market—top-notch copywriters and art directors to develop attention-getting ads and subscription brochures, relationships with savvy list brokers to steer them to fresh leads, budgets to print glossy promotional pieces and mail them broadly, seasoned in-house telemarketing staffs to make the sales, and the computer capabilities to maintain in-house lists of ticket buyers with detailed histories of their purchases.

**M**any mid-sized and community-based theaters have ambitious growth plans, too. Even though their efforts are focused on expanding the size of their current audiences, it's often a harder task because their marketing capacity doesn't match the level of resident theaters. Some theaters also question whether such traditional marketing techniques would work with their audiences.

Jomandi Productions, a theater located in Atlanta, has used telemarketing to sell subscriptions as part of ongoing efforts to grow audiences. Until the current season, response was low—accounting for only 25 percent of all subscription sales. In the 1996-97 season, the theater's telemarketing efforts

yielded a more than 50 percent increase in subscriptions. According to Marsha Jackson-Randolph, co-artistic director and interim managing director, the theater might have had more success with telemarketing in earlier years had it sustained a campaign throughout the season. In the past, Jomandi sold most of its subscriptions directly through the theater.

Randolph noted that

even though some patrons have opted not to buy subscriptions for a particular season “we know from surveys and other forms of tracking that they will continue to support the theater as single-ticket buyers.” The challenge, she added, is to build on

that support by “discovering alternatives to traditional subscription packages.”

Randolph says she has seen audiences change since she helped found the theater in 1978. “We offer flexibility and savings in our subscription pass,” she explained, “to accommodate the lifestyles of many young professionals who comprise the majority of our audiences.” Because theater also competes with other forms of entertainment, including home video, Randolph added that some of Jomandi's discount ticket offers are structured “to make us more competitive with those forms of entertainment, as well as other theater companies.”

In Jomandi's 1994-95 season, subscribers accounted for about 10 percent of its total audience, with an annual renewal rate of 25 percent. While subscriptions have grown, albeit slowly, over the past several seasons, the theater has had far more success in its efforts to increase group sales. Since the outset of Jomandi's audience development grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund in 1992, group sales grew from 15-25 percent of all ticket sales (see related article, page 16).

### The Push to Sell Single Tickets

But groups and subscribers together still account for only 35 percent of Jomandi's total audience, leaving a large number of tickets to be sold to single-ticket buyers. Astonishingly, the theater, which mostly produces new work, discovered through audience surveys that 45-55 percent of its audiences are attending Jomandi for the first time, and some are having their first taste of theater.

Jomandi's diverse programming no doubt contributes to its high volume of first-time attendees. In its 1995-96 season, the theater produced a play about the blues, *Trick the Devil* by Bill Harris, that attracted audiences that were 60-65 percent white (8 percent is the normal seasonal average). In addition to regular samplings of new works, other recent seasons have featured distinctive revivals of such Broadway blockbusters as *Sophisticated Ladies* and *Dreamgirls*, as well as Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, adapted and directed by Harry J. Lennix as a reinterpretation based in the civil rights and black nationalist movements of the 1960s.

**Many mid-sized and community-based theaters are as eager as their larger counterparts to expand their audiences, but it's often a harder task because they don't have the same marketing capacity.**



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Jomandi has found through audience surveys that television and radio ads are its most effective vehicles for generating single-ticket sales. The theater's grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund allowed it to place more paid advertising. But, wisely, the theater recognized it couldn't afford paid advertising for every show and it used the opportunity to develop long-term relationships with media outlets. It has formed partnerships with a wide range of local media—from the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* and network-affiliated TV stations to alternative radio stations catering to the tastes of jazz and ethnic music fans. Randolph said Jomandi calls on these sponsors selectively, after carefully evaluating the season show by show and deciding which media outlet can

***For some theaters, word-of-mouth is a powerful marketing tool...and a recommendation from a friend or family member may be the strongest motivator to purchase a ticket.***

give the theater access to the type of audience it seeks for each production.

Some media sponsors make cash contributions, but most donate ad space or air time in exchange for cross-promotions and blocks of free tickets for viewers or listeners, clients and employees. Promotions of single-ticket discounts for listeners of FM 103, an

urban contemporary station, have worked particularly well for the theater. For three preview performances during the season, Jomandi makes tickets available at \$1.03 to the station's listeners. Randolph said surveys have shown these audiences would be willing to pay a full ticket price, and she hopes they will return once they've had the chance to sample what Jomandi has to offer.

The theater has also had success using TicketMaster, which has helped Jomandi sell as many as 25 percent of tickets for selected shows. As a result, it plans to work more frequently with TicketMaster. In addition to making tickets more easily available to the public, other benefits are exposure for the theater at TicketMaster sales outlets and in its high-visibility promotional materials, and the ability to capture vital marketing data on single-ticket buyers.

With marketing efforts redoubled—and producing results—Marsha Jackson-Randolph still asks herself continually what is most important in sustaining audiences. She has identified the factors she believes attract people to Jomandi: cultural relevance of the work, a desire to support the theater's mission, consistent quality of the theater's on-stage offerings, a sense of ownership and belonging, repeated gratification from being entertained and stimulated or from simply being able to share the experience with family and friends. Randolph believes there is an interplay of these factors, which may vary from one audience member to another. "However," she added, "all these factors combine to make the theater viable for an audience that is richly diverse in its generational and cultural makeup."

**R**epertorio Español in New York City also devotes much of its energy to making single-ticket sales. The theater, which has produced Spanish-language plays since 1968, counts 5 percent of its audience as subscribers. One-third of its total ticket sales are made to school groups and 15 percent to adult groups, leaving 45 percent of the audience single-ticket buyers.

"At least we make more money on single-ticket sales," producer Robert Weber Federico said with wry resignation. "But each sale represents a lot of work." The theater has a flexible pass subscription program called the Combo that offers six entries for \$72. Single tickets are regularly priced at \$20.

Federico insists traditional marketing techniques don't work with Repertorio Español's audiences, and that word-of-mouth is all important. "We're creating theatergoers here, and we have to concentrate on first-time ticket buyers," he said. Most patrons, he explained, are motivated by friends or family to see a play there. They are not habitual theatergoers, on average purchasing one theater ticket each year.

Repertorio Español's primary strategy for attracting audiences lies with its on-stage selections. Because New York's Latino communities are so diverse, the theater uses nationality-specific productions to draw audiences from the Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, Colombian and



Argentine communities. For most of these groups, Federico commented, theater is a celebration. "Coming to Repertorio Español is more than just being entertained, it's an affirmation of cultural identity," he said. "The more talk there is in the news about English-only laws and curtailing immigration, the more certain plays seem to become a rallying point for our audiences."

To get word-of-mouth going for its productions, Repertorio Español works with cultural and community organizations of specific nationalities. It arranges list exchanges, and 10 times a year sends out 50,000-piece mailings, primarily to former ticket-buyers, that prominently feature impressive reviews of works in repertory from New York's Spanish and English press. The theater has maintained a database of ticket-buyer histories since 1988 that it uses to target patrons for special productions. In addition, Repertorio Español advertises selectively in Spanish-language newspapers and radio. Like Jomandi Productions,

the theater has developed sponsorships with many of these outlets. Federico laments that there isn't a newspaper in New York that specifically serves English-dominant Latinos. This is the market that Repertorio Español is now trying to tap—the second- and third-generation Puerto Ricans, Cubans and Dominicans. Among this group is an emerging middle class, with many college-educated people working in upper- and

middle-management positions. In recent seasons, the theater has produced new works by local playwrights who address some of the cultural issues of this milieu. The box office response to these plays has surpassed the theater's initial expectations. And although Repertorio Español offers simultaneous translations of these and other

productions, it's discovered that most young Latinos comprehend enough Spanish to follow along on their own.

In this new audience of more sophisticated theatergoers, Repertorio Español is encountering some patrons who first attended the theater as high school or college students. Now that it's beginning to reap the rewards of serving young audiences for the past 28 years, the theater may find these theatergoers are responsive to more traditional marketing techniques, such as sales of subscriptions through direct-mail and telephone solicitations.

### A Flood of New Programming Draws Latinos to Mark Taper Forum

The Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles has been making a concerted effort to increase its Latino audience since the 1993-94 season. Although its Latino Theatre Initiative (LTI) does not have the long history of Repertorio Español, it's taking a novel approach to serving Latino audiences and has some early and valuable lessons to share.

LTI's efforts to develop Latino audiences at the Taper have taken two directions—one centered around drawing them to mainstage productions and the other designed to introduce potential theatergoers to the Taper through a series of annual community events.

For its mainstage strategy, since the 1993-94 season, the Taper has produced several works to attract Latino ticket-buyers: Luis Valdez's *Bandido*, Eduardo Machado's *Floating Islands* and *Blade to the Heat* by Oliver Mayer.

LTI's mainstage productions have met with rapid success. In the 1995-96 season, the theater's audiences were 5.3 percent Latino, compared with 2 percent when LTI began. While Latino subscribers have steadily increased, they currently account for only about 4 percent of all subscribers. The theater, however, has no problem with selling single tickets to target plays, noted LTI marketing associate Xavier Sibaja.

The theater tailors its community outreach strategy according to the mainstage production and the population it wishes to reach. All the same, even though Los Angeles is home to a large and

***For people who might not be able to afford the price of a mainstage ticket or be interested in a traditional production, one theater has created a series of annual programs—called community events—that complement its full-season of offerings.***

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diverse population of Central and South Americans, the Latino audiences for LTI productions have been primarily Mexican American.

Pinpointing specific Latino communities in Los Angeles is difficult, Sibaja reported. "The demographics of the city are ever-changing, neighborhoods move, and some communities blend in with the surrounding Anglo culture," he said. "It's a challenge to find the pulse of the city since everyone seems to have their own map of Los Angeles' Latino populations."

Surveys of Latino audiences at mainstage performances have revealed that these new patrons skew younger than the theater's traditional audience base. Focus groups have informed the theater that these individuals expect to see plays of award-winning calibre when they come to the Taper. Although they want the graphics and visual images of a play to convey a Latino sensibility, they also want their culture to be portrayed positively, perceived as part of the mainstream culture.

LTI's community events are designed to target a broader audience—middle-income families, students and young adults who might not be able to afford the price of a mainstage performance or be interested in the offerings there. Several of LTI's programs have become popular annual events, such as *Diva L.A.*, *Spirits Rising: A Day of the Dead Celebration* and *El Grito!, A Latin American Independence Day Celebration*, which all take place at the Taper and regularly sell out. These English-dominant events feature music, dance, poetry and comedy in the style of the Mexican vaudeville tradition called *tanda*. In addition, LTI has produced works for the Taper's performance art series called *Virtual Theatre*, and it often stages play readings and other spoken word events.

Like many community-based theaters, LTI relies on single-ticket and group sales (see related article, page 16) for these events, and it takes a grassroots approach to promoting them. For each LTI event, 50,000 flyers, all in English, are distributed—30,000 by mail and 20,000 by hand to restaurants, boutiques, record stores and community organizations. LTI also cooperates with other theaters serving Latino audiences on projects such as joint marketing efforts and the exchange of mailing lists.

Latino audiences are thriving at the Taper. LTI has successfully cultivated two streams of Latino audiences for the theater. But the theater has yet to develop an introductory subscription package tailored to Latinos.

"We're proceeding cautiously with that," Sibaja said, "because the theater doesn't want to appear to be treating this audience differently."

In the search for audience, ultimately every theater finds its own way.

## Rethinking Subscriptions

### Giving People More Than First Choice of Seats

Are subscription series the privileged domain of the well-heeled? Does their upfront cost effectively put attending the theater out of the reach of certain audience groups? Or, used creatively, can they support the audience development goals of forward-thinking theaters? Here's what several theaters are learning about what happens when they come up with packages that better accommodate the pocketbooks and wallets, and the tastes and lifestyles, of people they want to attract.

Subscriptions have long been considered a theater's lifeblood, providing a reliable source of much-needed revenue. They also help alleviate some of the pressures of selling tickets for an upcoming season. Yet, in recent years many theaters have found that subscriptions have lost much of their appeal to individuals other than their more affluent patrons.

And even for those who can afford to make what's often a large, upfront commitment, not everyone wants to feel locked into a series that may not be their first choice.

Instead of abandoning their efforts to sell subscriptions and resorting to single sales, a number of theaters are experimenting with alternatives to the traditional series. As several participants in

the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Theater Initiative are learning, by coming up with inventive packages that offer better pricing and greater flexibility, the rewards are greater than just cash. Some of the newer kinds of subscriptions they're trying are proving to be effective tools in broadening audiences and expanding the number and kinds of people involved in theater.

Among those that have had positive results with their new subscription programs are Baltimore's Center Stage, Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF) in Montgomery and The Alliance

Theatre Company in Atlanta. One strategy that has worked well for all three theaters is to offer subscriptions that make ticket prices competitive with other forms of popular entertainment, such as the movies.

At Center Stage, for example, college students who subscribe can gain admission to any play in the season for \$7.50. At ASF, subscribers can lay out as little as \$42 for four plays. And The Alliance in Atlanta has a monthly billing option that allows patrons to pay for their subscriptions over time for only \$10 a month.

Center Stage, which is working to build young adult audiences for the theater, counted 1,243 college students among its subscribers last season, thanks to its student passes. That's more than double the year before. This subscription voucher system is designed especially with the needs of students in mind. Student passes cost \$22.50-\$45 for three to six shows and, with a phone call at any point in the season, subscribers can order tickets for current or upcoming productions. In marketing these passes, Center Stage emphasizes their ease of use and low prices to dispel preconceptions students may have about attending theater. The theater also is offering half-price season subscriptions to the children of reserved seat subscribers.

ASF's select-your-own subscription campaign gives subscribers their choice of four plays for \$42 to \$92 or eight plays from \$92 to \$152 from the theater's 10 productions. The full season is also available for \$122 to \$212.

The Alliance offers a package it calls "Pick 4 for \$94." Another option is a Wednesday matinee series of six plays for \$60. In addition, because the theater believes that teachers are important

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generators of word-of-mouth, it offers an educator's discount that makes the full season as inexpensive as \$39, or \$6.50 a ticket.

"We're trying to blow the walls off the theater to make it possible for everyone to attend," said Curtis King, The Alliance's director of community relations and patron services. "That's the mission our artistic director, Kenny Leon, has called us to."

### Choice Just As Important As Price Break

But with the pick-your-own campaigns, pricing isn't the only issue. The newer offerings at ASF, The Alliance and Center Stage not only fit a wider range of budgets, they also offer patrons the flexibility to choose which plays appeal to them most in a season.

"There's definitely a trend toward smaller, more flexible packages," said Tamara Cofield, director of marketing at Alabama Shakespeare Festival, which since the 1993-94 season has been actively reaching out to the large African American community of Montgomery and its environs. "People just don't

want to commit a great deal of money over an extended amount of time. It's easier to convert a single-ticket buyer to a subscriber with a smaller package.

"It's crazy to think that subscribers of tomorrow will be like today's—especially for theaters actively trying to diversify their audiences," she added. Because some African

Americans may initially shy away from Shakespeare, ASF's four-play series requires subscribers to choose only one of the Bard's plays.

The Alliance's King agrees that theaters have to pay attention to changing audiences. "The Alliance's board and management recognize that there are a lot of people who love theater but don't necessarily care for everything we're showing in a particular season," he said. "We don't want people to opt out of the subscription process because they're forced to take everything."

*"A lot of people love theater but don't necessarily care for everything we're showing in a season. We don't want them to opt out because they feel they're forced to take everything."*

During the first several years of Kenny Leon's leadership, subscriptions were seen as an important vehicle for encouraging patrons to sample the full range of The Alliance's on-stage offerings. In fact, for the past several seasons the theater has enjoyed such an impressive crossover of African American audiences to every production that, at first, management was concerned that its "Pick 4" series might have the reverse effect. The fear was that by allowing subscribers to choose only four shows a season some buyers might narrow their selections to only those productions they felt most comfortable attending and not be willing to try something new. "We had to trust that as subscribers went through the season, it would be almost impossible for them not to select something that would take them outside themselves," King said. In effect that's what happened, King added, noting that the majority of subscribers are opting for the full package of six offerings.

### Small Fixed-Series Packages Help Establish Base

For The Alliance Theatre Company and Alabama Shakespeare Festival, the venture into multiple-option subscription plans stems from their successful experimentation with marketing discounted series to African Americans with their grants from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

During The Alliance's grant period, which spanned three seasons, the theater's subscriber base of African Americans rose from an estimated 3 percent to 12 percent. The first year of the grant, 1992-93, The Alliance offered its full six-play subscription at half-price. The second season, while patrons could renew at a 25 percent discount, the theater again offered new subscribers subscriptions at half-off and The Alliance acquired 800 new African American subscribers. In the final year, as part of a process of getting people to pay full price for subscriptions, it began phasing out the discount for renewals, and still added nearly 1,300 new African American subscribers.

The Alliance's mandate has been to continue growing that subscriber base. Whether cold-calling fresh leads or urging subscribers to renew, the theater's telemarketers always pitch the full-season

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subscription first, holding the "Pick 4 for \$94" option in the wings as a fall-back offer. A full third of all subscribers, old and new, opt for the smaller package. African American subscribers at The Alliance now number around 2,000 and make up 15 percent of the theater's subscription base.

In 1993-94, the first season of Alabama Shakespeare Festival's Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund grant, the theater created the Heritage Series as a focused way to market subscriptions to African Americans. While the Heritage Series offered a handsome discount to make it competitively priced, its emphasis was on a selection of four plays that were likely to appeal to African Americans. For

three seasons, the theater used the Heritage Series, which had its own promotional materials, to underscore its lasting commitment to doing work by and about African Americans. In the first season of the Heritage Series (which

included *Flyin' West* by African American playwright Pearl Cleage; *Grover*, a play by Randy Hall about a white Southern newspaper publisher's crusade against the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s; Shakespeare's *Othello* and an additional play of the subscribers' choice), African American subscribers grew from two to 200. In the following season, as the Heritage Series expanded to include five plays, African American subscribers increased to 400. They now make up 10 percent of ASF's subscriber base of nearly 5,000.

Other theaters have also met with success in carving out discreet series aimed at African American subscribers.

In its 1993-94 season, The Goodman Theatre in Chicago unveiled a three-show package for \$47-\$70 that included two works by African American playwrights, *I Am a Man* by OyamO and Regina Taylor's *The Ties that Bind*, as well as *A Little Night Music* by Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler. The theater attracted more than 600 African American subscribers, about 40 of whom came back the next year as full-season subscribers. The Goodman, which was 82 percent subscribed in the

1995-96 season, plans to continue offering the three-show package exclusively to new subscribers—targeting African American single-ticket buyers from previous seasons—while it works to upgrade former subscribers to at least a four-play package, if not the full season. There are currently 1,200 African American subscribers, who make up 6 percent of the theater's total subscriber base.

Indiana Repertory Theatre in Indianapolis is using the same strategy to attract African American subscribers. In its 1994-95 season, it introduced the Culture Collection, a three-play package priced at \$56 and \$66, depending on night and seat location. That helped the theater attract 144 African American subscribers. These additional patrons brought it very close to its goal of building a total African American audience base of 12 percent. In the 1995-96 season, the theater dropped the bottom price of the Culture Collection in an effort to move patrons to accepting a full-season subscription of six plays at full price (\$96-\$195).

### Too Important to Abandon

Admittedly, the number of African American subscribers at most theaters is still relatively modest. Yet, those theaters that have successfully established an African American subscriber base, however small, consider it important and are not about to abandon the effort to sell to this or any other audience group.

"Subscribers are a blessing when you have a limited marketing budget because they give you a cushion," explained ASF's Cofield. "And if you're doing new work, as we do each season, subscriptions are essential because they stretch the audience beyond what they're familiar with."

Cofield adds, "It's our challenge as marketing directors to relay clearly to African Americans why it's important to subscribe. We have to make them understand that, in the long run, the subscription offers the cheapest ticket with benefits to them and to the theater."

***"Subscribers are a blessing when you have a limited marketing budget because they give you a cushion."***



## Community Marketing

### Taking a Grassroots Approach to Building Audiences

In little more than a year, Indiana Repertory Theatre (IRT) achieved a major increase in its African American audience. The theater attributes this accomplishment to what it calls "community marketing," a strategy that emphasizes face-to-face selling and other direct outreach efforts to build relationships with individual patrons, organizations and businesses in the community. IRT isn't the only theater benefiting from this new marketing strategy. Other theaters are adopting more personalized approaches to audience-building—part of a growing recognition that patrons don't come through the door en masse, but one by one.

**W**hen Denise Herd joined the marketing department of Indiana Repertory Theatre in early 1994, the theater was in the second season of a three-year grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund to help diversify its audiences. IRT had been quietly at work planning and commissioning plays for upcoming seasons that would appeal to Indianapolis' African American community. It had also begun diversifying its artistic and administrative staffs, and it had embarked on market research to profile its current audience and gauge whether its initial efforts to market to the African American community were making inroads. In creating Herd's position as manager of diversity

*Indiana Repertory Theatre's new marketing focus recognized that face-to-face communication with potential patrons was essential to achieving its audience development goals.*

and media relations, IRT gave its marketing strategy a new focus, one that recognized face-to-face communication as essential to achieving its goals of getting African Americans into the theater's seats.

Herd prepared for the first production in her new capacity, Pearl Cleage's *Flyin' West*, by going into the black community to meet with the leaders of its institutions, including the press, and to talk to church, business and civic groups. The challenge

was great. Like many resident theaters newly reaching out to African Americans, IRT—and Herd as its ambassador—had to familiarize the community with the theater's work and cultivate some interest in Cleage's play, an acclaimed but still largely unknown new work. She had to convince the community of the sincerity of the theater's invitation and of its long-term commitment to doing work by and about African Americans. Herd's challenge was made even greater by the persistence of a misconception in the community that IRT was under the same management as an old theater and movie palace that occupied the building from the 1920s until the 1970s and was notorious for barring blacks from its premises.

Herd spent much of that first year out of the office attending meetings and events, making presentations and whenever possible, bringing actors along to do scenes. "It was a matter of the theater getting to know the community, and the community getting to know the theater," she explained.

#### Labor-intensive, But Rewarding

Three seasons later, Herd's focus is on maintaining, rather than initiating relationships in the community. Yet, she still makes presentations each season, and for each production, the theater blankets the community with posters and flyers, dropping them off at human resources departments of local corporations, as well as neighborhood restaurants, book stores, hair salons and churches. Susan Stevens, IRT's senior marketing manager, said, "It's an

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approach that's extremely labor-intensive, but rewarding."

For IRT and other resident theaters trying to attract new audiences, grassroots efforts to establish trust and familiarity are an important underpinning to more traditional marketing techniques such as direct mail, telemarketing and advertising. IRT, for example, in addition to offering special subscription packages and single-ticket discounts, runs a highly visible print ad campaign in African American newspapers.

***Grassroots efforts to establish trust and familiarity are an important underpinning to more traditional marketing techniques such as direct mail, telemarketing and advertising.***

The theater advertises every show in the season, not just plays that have special relevance for African American audiences. For its production of *Much Ado About Nothing* at the end of the 1993-94 season, IRT created an ad with the headline "Get with the rap of Shakespeare" that featured a visual of the Bard with crossed arms in a "gangsta"-style pose. That kind of bold approach and consistent presence, says Denise Herd, has helped boost the attendance of blacks at non-African American shows to 5 percent to 7 percent.

As labor-intensive as grassroots marketing may be, it has been embraced by many other resident theaters, including Atlanta's The Alliance Theatre Company. "It's important to go out to where the people are," said Curtis King, the theater's director of community relations and patron services. "Traditional marketing channels have some impact, but people respond to people."

King, who oversees The Alliance's subscription sales, annual giving campaign and house management, devotes much of his time to community relations, attending numerous meetings, luncheons and banquets in Atlanta. But he and his staff have blazed a direct path to their market through the city's many large expos. These have been a fruitful venue for meeting people The

Alliance wants to recruit to its productions. In addition to telling prospective patrons about the theater, The Alliance captures contact information, typically through raffles, for direct mail and telemarketing follow-up. Over the past year, The Alliance has set up booths at For Sisters Only, Black Expo, Atlanta Jewish Festival and Weddings for Us, a bridal expo where the theater offered couples certificates redeemable for a pair of free tickets to the show of their choice. King says he gathers 300 to 1,200 leads at any given event.

**T**he Alliance's artistic director, Kenny Leon, is also a highly visible figure in Atlanta. "Lunchtime with Kenny" is one of the theater's many efforts to capitalize on his popularity and make him even more accessible to the public. The Tuesday before every opening, Leon hosts a free noontime program at which he talks with the director, cast and designers about the play. Excerpts from the play are performed, and the audience, which often nears the studio theater's capacity of 200, has ample opportunity to pose questions and offer comments. "Afterwards, some people head directly to the box office," said King.

### **Making Audience Feel Like Family**

Speaking to church groups, getting to know patrons on a first-name basis and selling tickets that old-fashioned, feet-to-the-pavement way have been integrated into the audience-building efforts of Jomandi Productions, which was founded in Atlanta in 1978. Marsha Jackson-Randolph, a founder, co-artistic director and interim managing director, acknowledges the audience in every curtain speech or personal appearance she makes, saying "You are part of the Jomandi family."

"We think of our audience as partners, not consumers," she explained. "We also think of them as individuals, rather than a homogeneous group." Randolph, other staff and Jomandi volunteers can be found in the lobby after every show greeting and speaking with patrons as a way to build one-on-one relationships.



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Steve Warnick, managing director of Crossroads Theatre Company in New Brunswick, New Jersey, says that when he introduces people to the theater, they are always impressed by what a warm, friendly and personal experience it is to see a play there. He describes the sense of community in the African American theater as almost churchlike. The tone, he says, is set from the moment patrons walk into the theater and are warmly greeted by front-of-house staff.

The audience is also made to feel that their voice is important. "We actively solicit the audience's response to the work we're doing," said Warnick. "We encourage people to be vocal about

*"We actively solicit the audience's responses to the work we're doing. We encourage people to be vocal about their feelings, and they often express them to the house manager on their way out."*

their feelings, and they often express them on their way out to the house manager and audience services person." The audience also has a direct line to artistic director Ricardo Khan. Several years ago he opened a separate phone line in his office, with a voice mail box, so patrons can call with their thoughts, ideas and opinions.

Crossroads' ties to the community run deep. Founded in 1978, it is located in a cultural district established in the early 1990s by New Brunswick to redevelop the downtown area of the old mill city, which had been hard hit by urban decay. Seeing itself as a partner in the development effort, the theater has tried to make itself accessible to as many people as possible. It has made theater more affordable to families and the poor through ticket subsidy programs and pay-what-you-can performances. It also offers many programs for youth. In addition, Crossroads has become a friend to the black business community by providing a meeting space at the theater for a group of small- to medium-sized business owners.

Each season, the theater also hosts several community forums on a wide range of issues, often co-sponsored with other local organizations. In the 1995-96 season, forums included a statewide meeting for Muslim youth on cultural identity, held in conjunction with the Million Man March in Washington; an event sponsored with B'nai B'rith and the Anti-Defamation League on the meaning of "brotherhood"; and a gathering of central New Jersey's West Indian community to discuss ways of maintaining cultural traditions.

**I**n its efforts to serve the community, Crossroads has been embraced by many churches in the area. Warnick says ministers often include mention of Crossroads and its on-stage offerings in their sermons, although the theater makes a point of letting ministers know when a play might be considered controversial. Some churches devote an annual passing of the basket for Crossroads, and others distribute the theater's brochures with their newsletters.

Crossroads has nurtured its relationships with the community's churches by regularly hosting "ministers nights" at the theater. In the 1995-96 season, Crossroads added a reception for local church secretaries to introduce them to the theater and enlist their support in attracting audiences from their congregations. Indiana Repertory Theatre holds similar events each season and Alabama Shakespeare Festival invites ministers and church secretaries to community receptions as part of their respective strategies for reaching ticket buyers through African American churches.

### **Volunteers Extend Reach Into the Community**

Whether conducting a joint promotion with a local radio station, selling subscriptions to church members or closing a deal on a group sale, Jomandi's Marsha Jackson-Randolph insists it's the one-on-one approach to selling that works best for her theater. But Jomandi does not use a marketing director or a dedicated marketing staff to carry out this time-intensive strategy. Instead, each member of the theater staff has assumed responsibility for some aspect of Jomandi's marketing and public relations. Their work is augmented by temporary marketing

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personnel and volunteers. For example, Jomandi has 300 general volunteers it can call on to help with marketing, fundraising and production of special events. A steering group of 30 volunteers, called the Friends of Jomandi, coordinates their work. In addition, functioning like an auxiliary sales force, the Friends of Jomandi talks to groups and organizations in the community to help sell tickets.

In the last several years, resident theaters have also been enlisting more help from volunteer committees to make inroads in target communities.

*"We get more mileage out of every dollar we spend on developing one-to-one relationships than we do pouring thousands of dollars into advertising."*

When Denise Herd joined IRT's marketing department, she inherited the Audience Development Advisory Committee, a newly formed group of volunteers whose members were involved in various segments of Indianapolis' black community. Herd credits them with her success in quickly

setting up meetings and presentations with community leaders and organizations. "They opened doors and made appointments for me that I couldn't have on my own," she said.

Alabama Shakespeare Festival's then Audience Development Coordinator, now Director of Marketing, Tamara Cofield, created African American Friends of the Arts, a volunteer group of 30 people from across the state representing a variety of professions. The group identifies group sales and public relations opportunities for the theater. One member was able to secure a television interview as far away as Nashville, Tennessee.

**F**or its 1996-97 season, Crossroads Theatre Company has developed a marketing strategy that marries the grassroots efforts of volunteers with new marketing technology. The theater has targeted 10 towns surrounding New Brunswick in which it is doing saturation marketing over two-week intervals. Long-time patrons and donors from each of the

towns are planning outreach activities, while the theater's telemarketers will use CD-ROM phone directories to contact people living on the same streets as the volunteers and other subscribers to invite them to attend the theater with their neighbors. The theater is offering subscribers discounted tickets for friends and neighbors and will arrange to seat groups together.

"We get more mileage out of every dollar we spend on developing one-on-one relationships than we do pouring thousands into advertising," said Crossroads' Steve Warnick. "Our strategy is to layer direct mail, telemarketing and selective radio and print advertising with as much personal communication as possible," he added. "That's what works for us."

## Marketers Add to Their Toolboxes

All across the country, theaters are coming up with new ways to sell tickets and draw crowds. A survey of participants in the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Theater Initiative provides a glimpse of what can happen when the box office becomes the linchpin of the marketing effort and when the playhouse becomes the place for young adults to gather after work for food, drink and a show.

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### Alabama Shakespeare Festival Shifts Box Office to Marketing Department And Creates More Effective Sales Team

**T**amara Cofield began working with the Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF) in the box office 10 years ago while attending college. The three years she spent in the box office, said Cofield, now the theater's director of marketing, made her understand its importance as the first point of contact with patrons. The experience also helped her make a persuasive case for moving the box office out from under house management to her supervision.

The change paid off. In making the box office staff an integral part of the marketing operation, ASF has created a more effective sales team.

The shift occurred just before the last show of ASF's 1993-94 season, *All Night Strut*. At the last minute, management raised the box office goal for

the show because ticket sales for the season were falling short of projections. Cofield helped the box office staff break up the ambitious goal for the show into smaller, weekly sales goals.

As she made regular trips to the box office to give staff praise and

encouragement, she watched the box office make more money on a show than it had in a long time.

Her motivational talks helped, but even more important, said Cofield, was the flexibility she gave the box office staff to meet the goal.

"I gave them the power to close the sale," she explained. "Instead of order takers or money-changers, they were now salespeople."

The theater's guiding principle is that no one calls the box office just for information. "They may not know it, but they want to buy a ticket," said Cofield. "Every caller gets a pitch."

If a caller expresses interest in one show, a staff member tries to entice the buyer to take two or three shows or upgrade to a subscription. A pitch is also made for the theater's gift shop and magazine, and the customer is offered information on local restaurants and hotels. If a potential buyer hesitates about ticket prices, the box office can cut the processing fee as an incentive to buy right then. Staff even have the latitude to offer a ticket for as little as half price to a performance with a loose inventory.

**A** boost in staff morale has been an important factor in the improved performance of the box office. Staff members feel more a part of the marketing and sales team and receive recognition from upper management. This bolsters interest in ticket promotions and gets everyone to push harder. The box office manager, who previously sat in on marketing meetings, now participates more actively in decision making. Cofield says she always bounces ideas for promotions off the box office staff. "The best ideas always come from the phone agents," she added.

*In making the box office staff an integral part of the marketing department, Alabama Shakespeare Festival has created a more effective sales team.*

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Because the box office is still the first contact with the theater for many patrons, ASF goes to great lengths to ensure its staff members are

*Selling to groups is a labor-intensive—but worthwhile—effort, since groups tend to provide repeat business and many become regular customers for years.*

properly trained to serve the public. For example, as the theater's African American audience has grown, ASF has found it necessary to teach staff members how to handle cash transactions more efficiently, which is the way most black patrons prefer to purchase tickets.

Under Cofield's watchful eye, rudeness to a customer is grounds for dismissal. Box office staff know it's their job to convey to all customers that they are welcome and special. "After all, these people don't have to spend their money here," said Cofield. "We have to make it worth their while."

As a final touch, box office cashiers and phone staff are now called customer service agents. After all, says Cofield, they are "the hands and voices of ASF," talking to more than 300 customers every day.

### **Group Sales Make Up Growing Portion of Ticket Revenues**

Many theaters report that group sales account for an increasingly hefty portion of their ticket sales. Repertorio Español says groups make up 15 percent of its audience, not counting the school groups that compose an additional one-third of its audience. Twenty-five percent of ticket sales are made to groups at Jomandi Productions and Crossroads Theatre Company. Alabama Shakespeare Festival generates one-third of its ticket sales from groups. And the Mark Taper Forum's Latino Theater Initiative sells half of all tickets for its community events to groups.

Theaters have developed a variety of strategies to keep the group sales machinery going and growing. Identifying, selling to and serving groups is

a labor-intensive but worthwhile effort since groups tend to provide repeat business and many become regular customers for years.

For the Taper's Latino Theater Initiative (LTI), advance sales to groups are vital to the success of several community events each year, including *Diva L.A.* and *Spirits Rising, A Day of the Dead Celebration*. LTI mails 10,000 promotional offers each season to corporate groups, social organizations and arts and education groups. In recent seasons, LTI has followed up its mailing with a telemarketing campaign to bring in new group customers.

**D**uring the first three years of its five-year grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, Jomandi Productions in Atlanta increased its group sales from 15 to 24 percent, selling more than 5,000 tickets to groups in 1994-95. That percentage has remained consistent as the theater's total audience increased over the years, according to Marsha Jackson-Randolph, co-artistic director and interim managing director. In its work with groups, Jomandi regards these ticket buyers as partners, not simply customers. Since a significant percentage of the theater's group sales are for local fundraising events, Jomandi offers its clients some important extras—such as holding workshops, distributing a special workbook, providing additional tools and sharing its expertise—to help nonprofits meet their targets.

Jomandi's community relations manager also lends a hand by making appearances before local groups and pitching members on an upcoming event at the theater or by identifying nearby restaurants and venues where they can hold a reception before or after a performance. In addition, the company often schedules post-show discussions at times convenient for groups to attend. All that makes for what Randolph calls the ultimate "win-win" for both Jomandi and its patrons.

In its 1995-96 season, Crossroads Theatre Company in New Brunswick, New Jersey, sold 8,000 tickets to groups, which it goes to great lengths to serve. "African Americans like sharing the theatergoing experience," said Steve Warnick, managing director, "so we try to facilitate that as best as we can."

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Crossroads' full-time sales director handles marketing to 2,000 groups, negotiates rates and coordinates events for them. For example, the theater, which has a professional kitchen, can arrange catering before or after a show in its reception area. Other times, the group sales director puts groups in contact with local restaurants that can meet their needs. Crossroads also publishes a newsletter to keep potential group ticket-buyers informed of the theater's programs and services and to provide news and ideas about upcoming events.

### Theaters Design Special Evenings to Attract Young Adult Audiences

Many theaters, trying to fill the age gap in their audiences, have developed special evenings to lure the under-35 crowd. These events are designed to

*Many theaters have created special evenings to lure the under-35 crowd, which make coming to a show a fun-filled night of entertainment and socializing.*

make coming to the theater a fun-filled night of entertainment and socializing.

Indiana Repertory Theatre in Indianapolis hosts Pub Night one Tuesday evening during the run of each show. To capture the after-work crowd, the theater has a 6:30 p.m. curtain preceded by food and

drinks in a pub-like setting in the lobby beginning at 5 p.m. Pub Nights sometimes feature live music and live radio broadcasts from the theater.

To build interest, the theater gave away tickets to the first few Pub Nights. Now, the evenings sell out and, as the theater hoped, the audience skews younger. Some professional organizations have started using the event as a group outing.

Baltimore's Center Stage also offers a Pub Night on one Friday night during the run of each show in its six-play season. The theater markets the evenings as a series, but also invites single-ticket buyers to join the small parties set up in several intriguing areas of the landmark theater. Free food and \$1 beers help make a friendly and relaxed

atmosphere for networking and socializing.

Center Stage has also created Espresso Cafe, a series of post-performance programs of jazz, alternative music and comedy that it holds in its mezzanine cafe one Thursday night during the run of each show. Beverages and light desserts are sold. Admission is free to that evening's ticket holders. The series has developed a following of its own, and some people come just to see the entertainment at Espresso Cafe. For their \$3 entry, they receive a coupon for \$3 off a mainstage performance ticket.

**T**he Mark Taper Forum's Latino Theatre Initiative (LTI) sees Los Angeles' glitzy entertainment industry as one of its primary competitors for the attention of the public, particularly young adults. In response, LTI surrounds the openings of its mainstage productions with lavish events. In the 1995-96 season, for its acclaimed production of Chicano playwright Oliver Mayer's *Blade to the Heat*, LTI held a series of gala opening-night events that attracted a large invited audience and spawned much publicity to get word-of-mouth going.

The play, set in the 1950s, is about the rivalry of two renowned Latino boxers and their conflict over sexual identity. LTI's opening night event was called *Legends of Boxing*. Veteran Latino boxers were honored at the event and audience members could have their photos taken with them. LTI also installed a ring in the Taper's lobby, where up-and-coming Latino talents in boxing gave the crowd a different kind of show. An exhibit of boxing photos organized by the theater remained on view for the run of the play. Following the performance, LTI hosted a revival of the legendary Coconut Grove night club at Los Angeles' landmark Union Station, where patrons danced to vintage Latin music of the '50s.

The opening sparked early word-of-mouth buzz, which, coupled with strong reviews, created a great box office success. The theater was also pleased with the profile of the audience it attracted—young and diverse, including Latinos, blacks, Asians, whites and gays.



## Evaluation Update

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To learn as much information as possible about its Theater Initiative, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund commissioned AMS Planning & Research to lead an eight-year evaluation. AMS and a team of experts drawn from the fields of evaluation, marketing and research are tracking the efforts of grantees to expand and diversify audiences, assessing the strategies they are using and charting changes that result. Since it began in Spring 1992, the evaluation has collected data from all theaters participating in the initiative. Here is an update of what the team is learning:

**F**rom its research, the evaluation team has learned that the strategies being used to achieve audience diversification and expansion goals fall into three areas:

- **Undertaking programming, artistic and educational initiatives:** This includes mounting plays intended to appeal to specific groups and using other kinds of activities, such as readings and workshops, to introduce current and potential audiences to what's being offered.
- **Launching marketing, sales, public relations and outreach efforts:** Among these activities are new ways of selling subscriptions, offering special discounts, running advertising and placing news and feature stories (some of the topics covered in this issue).
- **Making organizational and staffing changes and developing new and enhanced internal management systems:** These changes involve adding staff to handle special outreach programs, bringing on new board members to reflect the community a theater serves or adding new systems to do a better job managing overall theater operations.

In examining changes taking place at theaters during their grant periods, the evaluation team tries to find a correlation between what happened to the audience and one or more strategies used. Although still early, some evidence points to direct relationships between changes in total attendance figures and activities theaters undertook.

For example, theaters that hold special festivals, take productions on tour and hold performances at off-site locations have registered increases in the number of audience members at mainstage and second-stage performances. Also, where board and staff members have taken part in community activities to raise a theater's profile, positive changes in attendance have resulted.

The evaluation team has traced increases in audience size to activities such as conducting audience surveys and offering student ticket subsidies.

To date the factors that appear to correlate most frequently with changes in audience composition are "word-of-mouth" comments about productions from people who saw the plays, followed by touring productions to other locations and running newspaper ads targeted to specific audience groups.

The evaluation team has also explored possible links between changes in the racial and ethnic mix of audiences—regardless of the targets they were trying to reach—and the strategies that had been used. Theaters that recorded increases in the percentage of African American attendance tended to be those that had a person on staff responsible for serving as the liaison between the theater and the African American community.

The team's look at strategies is just one of the analyses that it will conduct on data collected during the eight-year evaluation. Although these findings are far from conclusive at this early stage, they will contribute to the final analysis of what has worked best for theaters trying to achieve their diversification and audience expansion goals.

## Resources: Contact information for theaters participating in the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund initiative

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### **Alabama Shakespeare Festival**

State Theatre  
One Festival Drive  
Montgomery AL 36117-4605  
(334) 271-5300  
Kent Thompson  
Artistic Director

### **Alliance Theatre Company**

1280 Peachtree Street, NE  
Atlanta GA 30309  
(404) 733-4650  
Curtis King  
Director of Community Relations

### **American Music Theater Festival, Inc.**

123 South Broad Street, Suite 1820  
Philadelphia PA 19109  
(215) 893-1570  
Marjorie Samoff  
Producing Director

### **Arena Stage**

Sixth & Maine Avenue, SW  
Washington DC 20024  
(202) 554-9066  
Stephen Richard  
Executive Director

### **Berkeley Repertory Theatre**

2025 Addison Street  
Berkeley CA 94704  
(510) 204-8901  
Susan Mendak  
Managing Director

### **Bilingual Foundation of the Arts**

421 North Avenue 19  
Los Angeles CA 90031  
(213) 225-4044  
Margarita Galban  
Artistic Director

### **Center Stage**

700 North Calvert Street  
Baltimore MD 21202  
(410) 685-3200  
Irene Lewis  
Artistic Director

### **Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum**

135 North Grand Avenue  
Los Angeles CA 90012  
(213) 628-2772  
Luis Alfaro & Diane Rodriguez  
Directors, Latino Theater Initiative

### **The Cleveland Play House**

8500 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland OH 44106  
(216) 795-7010  
Dean Gladden  
Managing Director

### **Crossroads Theatre Co.**

Seven Livingston Avenue  
New Brunswick NJ 08901  
(908) 249-5581  
Ricardo Khan  
Artistic Director

### **Dell'Arte, Inc.**

P.O. Box 816  
Blue Lake CA 95525  
(707) 668-5663  
Michael Fields  
Managing & Co-Artistic Director

### **El Teatro Campesino**

P.O. Box 1240  
San Juan Bautista CA 95045  
(408) 623-2444  
Luis Valdez  
Artistic Director

### **Freedom Theatre**

1346 North Broad Street  
Philadelphia PA 19121  
(215) 765-2793  
Jocelyn Russell  
Marketing Director

### **Goodman Theatre**

200 South Columbus Drive  
Chicago IL 60603  
(312) 443-3811  
Roche Schulfer  
Producing Director



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**Guthrie Theater Foundation**

725 Vineland Place  
Minneapolis MN 55403  
(612) 347-1100  
David Hawkanson  
Managing Director

**Hartford Stage Company**

50 Church Street  
Hartford CT 06103  
(203) 525-5601  
Stephen J. Albert  
Managing Director

**Indiana Repertory Theatre**

140 W. Washington Street  
Indianapolis IN 46204  
(317) 635-5277  
Janet Allen  
Artistic Director

**INTAR Hispanic American Arts Center**

420 West 42nd Street  
New York NY 10036  
(212) 695-6134  
David Minton  
Managing Director

**Irish Arts Center**

553 West 51st Street  
New York NY 10019  
(212) 757-3318  
Marianne Delaney  
Executive Director

**Jomandi Productions, Inc.**

1444 Mayson Street, NE  
Atlanta GA 30324  
(404) 876-6346  
Marsha Jackson-Randolph  
Co-Artistic/Managing Director

**Manhattan Theatre Club, Inc.**

453 West 16th Street  
New York NY 10011  
(212) 645-5590  
Barry Grove  
Managing Director

**The Mixed Blood Theatre Company**

1501 South Fourth Street  
Minneapolis MN 55454  
(612) 338-0937  
Jack Reuler  
Artistic Director

**The National Theatre of the Deaf- CT**

Five West Main Street  
Chester CT 06412  
(860) 526-4971  
TTY: 526-4974  
David Hays  
Founder and Artistic Director

**Oakland Ensemble Theatre**

1428 Alice  
Oakland CA 94612  
(510) 763-7774  
Zerita Dotson  
Managing Director

**Pan Asian Repertory Theatre**

47 Great Jones Street  
New York NY 10012  
(212) 505-5655  
Tisa Chang  
Artistic/Producing Director

**Penumbra Theatre Company**

Martin Luther King Center  
270 North Kent Street  
St. Paul MN 55102  
(612) 290-8683  
Louis Bellamy  
Artistic Director

**The People's Light & Theatre Company**

39 Conestoga Road  
Malvern PA 19355-1798  
(610) 647-1900  
Gregory Rowe  
Managing Director

**Perseverance Theatre**

914 Third Street  
Douglas AK 99824  
(907) 364-2421 Ext. 8  
Molly Smith  
Artistic Director

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**Pregones Theater**

700 Grand Concourse  
Bronx NY 10451  
(718) 585-1202  
Rosalba Rolon  
Director

**Repertorio Español**

138 East 27th Street  
New York NY 10016  
(212) 889-2850  
Gilberto Zaldivar  
Executive Producer

**Roadside Theater**

306 Madison Street  
Whitesburg KY 41858  
(606) 633-0108  
Dudley Cocke  
Director

**San Diego Repertory Theatre, Inc.**

79 Horton Plaza  
San Diego CA 92101  
(619) 231-3586  
Sam Woodhouse  
Producing Director

**San Francisco Mime Troupe**

855 Treat Avenue  
San Francisco CA 94110  
(415) 285-1717  
Patrick Osbon  
General Manager

**Seattle Group Theatre**

305 Harrison Street  
Seattle WA 98109  
(206) 441-9480  
Jose Carrasquillo  
Artistic Director

**Second Stage Theatre, Inc.**

P.O. Box 1807  
Ansonia Station  
New York NY 10023  
(212) 787-8302  
Carole Rothman  
Artistic Director

**Seven Stages, Inc.**

1105 Euclid Avenue NE  
Atlanta GA 30307  
(404) 522-0911  
Del Hamilton  
Artistic Director

**The Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger Library**

301 East Capitol Street, SE  
Washington DC 20003  
(202) 547-3230  
Michael Kahn  
Artistic Director

**St. Louis Black Repertory Company**

634 North Grand Avenue, Suite 10F  
St. Louis MO 63103  
(314) 534-3807  
Ronald Himes  
Producing Director

**Theater at Lime Kiln**

P.O. Box 663  
Lexington VA 24450  
(540) 463-7088  
Barry Mines  
Artistic Director

**Victory Gardens Theater**

2257 North Lincoln  
Chicago IL 60614  
(312) 549-5788  
Denis Zacek  
Artistic Director



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The mission of the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund is to invest in programs that enhance the cultural life of communities and encourage people to make the arts and culture an active part of their everyday lives.

*General Editors:* Rory MacPherson and Bruce S. Trachtenberg, Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund;  
*Writer:* Kristen Simone; *Design:* Chris Gorman Associates

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