

FROM NASCAR TO
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL:
FROM NASCAR TO CIRQUE DU SOLEIL:
LESSONS IN AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AND REPORT

The members of the WESTAF marketing project team that supervised this project are:
Linda Bukszar, Denise Montgomery, and Erin Trapp

Contributing to the preparation and editing of this publication were:
Sonja K. Foss, Krista Lewis, Glynis Jones, Daniel Buehler, and Daisy Whitney

Design and layout:
David Baker

WESTAF

Western States Arts Federation
1543 Champa Street, Suite 220
Denver, Colorado 80202

(303) 629-1166 ph
(303) 629-9717 fx
(303) 607-9019 tty

table of contents

ABOUT THE PROJECT SPONSOR	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
FOREWORD	7
INTRODUCTION	8
SECTION I FOR-PROFIT ENTERTAINMENT CONGLOMERATES	15
Disney	15
Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art	17
Cirque du Soleil	18
Branson, Missouri	21
SECTION II MEGA-CONCERT PROMOTERS	24
SFX Entertainment, Inc.	24
House of Blues	26
SECTION III NONPROFIT ARTS PRESENTERS	29
Fresno Art Museum	29
Asia Pacific Cultural Center	31
Arizona State University/Public Events	33
St. Louis Symphony Orchestra	36
La Peña Cultural Center	38
SECTION IV SPORTS PROMOTERS	42
NASCAR	42
Women's World Cup Soccer	44
SECTION V RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS	47
Focus on the Family	47
Cook Communications Ministries	49
CONCLUSION	50

THIS REPORT IS A
PUBLICATION OF WESTAF
WITH FUNDING FROM
THE DAVID AND LUCILE
PACKARD FOUNDATION
AND THE NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT FOR THE
ARTS.

about the project sponsor

WESTAF

WESTAF is a regional arts organization that serves the arts-development needs of the arts community in the 12 Western States. The 27-year-old organization is an active partnership of the state arts agencies of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Working with these states and in cooperation with public and private-sector funders, WESTAF's primary goals are to strengthen the arts infrastructure in the West and to expand the audience for all forms of the arts.

WESTAF is committed to programmatic work in the areas of visual arts, literature, Native American arts, performing arts presenting, and the folk arts. Work in these areas includes activities such as the convening of leaders from a discipline to discuss cooperative ventures; the development of model programs; and the sponsorship of long-

term, region-wide programs that fill a gap in the arts infrastructure in the West. WESTAF also is active in the area of arts and technology. It has launched *ArtistsRegister.com*, an ambitious online program that makes the work of visual artists available to the public worldwide. The organization also publishes *ArtJob Online*, a searchable database of jobs in the arts. The presence of the Internet has provided WESTAF with a much-sought-after means of serving artists and arts organizations across the vast reaches of the West.

WESTAF also remains committed to the improvement of the capacity and quality of public funding of the arts by the state arts agencies of the West. Position papers, advisory research, and professional development services are regularly provided to these agencies. The sustenance of this effort is one of the core commitments of WESTAF.

executive summary

FROM NASCAR TO CIRQUE DU SOLEIL: LESSONS IN AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

The demands on nonprofit presenters have become ever more acute as competition for audiences increases exponentially. This paper examines a number of broad marketing trends and principles and then concentrates on case studies of entertainment presenters in five categories: nonprofit arts organizations, mega-concert promoters, for-profit entertainment conglomerates, sports promoters, and religious organizations.

One dominant trend has been the narrowing gap between "highbrow" and "lowbrow" art experiences as well as the types of audiences who frequent both. These new art consumers are cultural omnivores, open to all kinds of art, including popular art. Technology helps close the distinctions among art forms by making information readily available in many formats, including CDs, audiotapes, television, and videotapes.

Another trend is that people spend more on entertainment-related experiences. The total number of people engaging in cultural experiences is growing. The audiences are primarily white, upper middle class, but they are being joined by growing numbers of ethnic minorities. Age is also an important factor. As Baby Boomers grow older, presenters are trying to find ways to reach Gen Xers and those just behind them, Gen Y ("Net-Gen"), born between 1977 and 1997.

If the audiences are growing and attending more events, why are nonprofit arts organizations struggling? One reason is the megaplex effect that is witnessed as people have become accustomed to a wide range of choices available (much like the multiple screens and movies at the mall). The emergence of the experience economy, where every retail

encounter is now a theatrical experience, is also a factor, as is Internet technology, which is an important component in the for-profit entertainment world. Time and money are other key factors as people earn more but have less time. This phenomenon causes a type of fragmentation that leads people to enjoy intermittently and to gravitate toward convenient entertainment options.

The challenge for nonprofits is to reach new audiences by concentrating on their traditional area of strength—providing compelling content—while packaging to emphasize entertainment value. The case studies that follow can provide important lessons to presenters and open a window to many models for success in this experience economy.

SECTION I – FOR-PROFIT ENTERTAINMENT CONGLOMERATES

Disney is the pre-eminent name in pop culture and practically invented experience entertainment. Even though Disney has vast experience in many venues—amusement parks, Broadway, television, film, and retail outlets—it is constantly developing new ways to hold audiences. Disney does this by making guests feel welcome and by overhauling and revamping attractions to stay competitive. Two major marketing initiatives are the company's Millenium Celebration event at Epcot in Orlando, Florida, and its expansion into the Internet.

The \$1.6 billion Bellagio Resort that includes a Gallery of Fine Art in Las Vegas is the brainchild of Stephen Wynn, CEO of Mirage Resorts, Inc. His effort to add some "class" to the Bellagio now draws 1,800 visitors a day

THESE NEW ART
CONSUMERS ARE CULTURAL
OMNIVORES, OPEN TO ALL
KINDS OF ART, INCLUDING
POPULAR ART.

EVEN THOUGH DISNEY HAS
VAST EXPERIENCE IN MANY
VENUES, IT IS CONSTANTLY
DEVELOPING NEW WAYS TO
HOLD AUDIENCES.

to see paintings by famous artists, including Cezanne, de Kooning, Manet, Miro, Monet, Picasso, Pollock, Rembrandt, Rubens, and van Gogh. The gallery's success is due in part to the incredible press coverage it has received and to its accessibility. Dress is casual, the hours of operation are long, and parking is convenient. Bellagio makes it easy to see great art.

Cirque du Soleil has reinvented the circus by concentrating on new concepts. The troupe employs a striking, dramatic mix of the circus arts and street entertainment featuring wild, outrageous costumes staged under magical lighting and set to original music. It has permanent homes in Las Vegas as well as Biloxi, Mississippi, and Orlando, Florida. Cirque gets 85% of its revenue from tickets and the rest from ancillary sales of products and sponsorships. Although the media have helped popularize Cirque, the company also treats its audience carefully in either a specially designed 2,500-seat tent or a 1,700-seat theater where everyone has the best seat in the house and can be entranced by a spectacular performance.

Branson, Missouri, was once a sleepy backwater town but now hosts more than six million visitors a year who come to this "Las Vegas without gambling and drinking." They are greeted by a squeaky-clean atmosphere and a town housing some 40 state-of-the-art theatres featuring performers like Roy Clark, Wayne Newton, Bobby Vinton, and Andy Williams. Branson is a family-oriented town, which appeals to older audiences. Attracting a younger audience—18 to 40 year olds—has become a major concern for Branson. The Chamber of Commerce hopes to solve this problem by presenting younger performers and making better use of the Internet, which it sees as an entrée to youth.

SECTION II - MEGA-CONCERT PROMOTERS

Mega-concert promoters focus on branded entertainment produced in their own venues and backed by a large-scale commitment to Internet technologies. SFX Entertainment, Inc. is now the world's largest promoter, producer, and venue operator for live entertainment. SFX prefers to ignore the issue of how SFX's selection and control of performances affect audience tastes by letting the market and consumers decide through their purchase of tickets. SFX leaves no stone unturned in its marketing efforts, including many cross-promotions (e.g., "Nokia Presents George Strait Chevy Truck Country Music Festival"). SFX sees the Internet as a direct extension of itself and has a far-reaching strategy that encompasses pay per view, fan clubs, and ticket purchases/exchanges.

SFX SEES THE INTERNET AS A DIRECT EXTENSION OF ITSELF AND HAS A FAR-REACHING STRATEGY THAT ENCOMPASSES PAY PER VIEW, FAN CLUBS, AND TICKET PURCHASES/EXCHANGES.

House of Blues operates seven venues nationwide that blend live music, food, retailing, and artworks into "an exciting, interactive entertainment adventure." Recently, House of Blues bought Universal Concerts, bringing it more venues as

well as exclusive booking agreements throughout the United States. Its success has been built on its understanding of the E-Factor—entertainment plus experience—which it provides to a primarily young male audience. House of Blues has managed to create national brand awareness through traditional and creative marketing efforts (targeted ads, fliers, and monthly newsletters). The company has established a presence on the Web with its own music portal that attracts one million unique visitors a month.

SECTION III - NONPROFIT ARTS PRESENTERS

The Fresno Art Museum is a small institution that has succeeded in an area of audience

development where many larger museums have failed—reaching multiple ethnic communities. The museum does this by combining outreach with creative programming. The San Joaquin Valley has a large Hispanic population, a growing Asian population, and a healthy mix of African Americans and Native Americans, and crowds are drawn to the Fresno Art Museum not for the regular exhibitions but for special events that showcase ethnic communities. "Threads of Tradition: The Textile Arts of Laos," for instance, included storytellers, food vendors, dancers, and other performers. The museum is also sensitive to the needs of families and recently renovated its Child's Space Gallery. The museum's deep commitment to inclusivity also can be seen in its retrofitting of its Sculpture Park to be accessible to the blind.

Asia Pacific Cultural Center is an institution that is not yet housed in a structure. An organization in Tacoma, Washington, that attracted more than 9,000 people to its one-day Asian New Year's Celebration 1999, the center's success demonstrates a need for this type of programming in the Northwest. The center shows how close ties to community leaders, organizations, and churches make a tremendous difference in connecting with new audiences and also provides a lesson in the positive symbiosis between culture and tourism in a community.

Arizona State University / Public Events is located in Phoenix, a major metropolis that has large Latino and Native American communities. The university has spent the last seven years in intensive community-outreach efforts. One effort centers around a year-long series called *Bridging Traditions: Asia, Arizona and the Arts*, which involves six Asian art groups in multi-week residencies. Most events depend on micro-marketing—partnering with restaurants, face-

MOST ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY/PUBLIC EVENTS DEPEND ON MICRO-MARKETING—PARTNERING WITH RESTAURANTS, FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATIONS, INVITATIONS TO REHEARSALS, BROWN-BAG CONCERTS, AND ADS IN LOCAL COMMUNITY PAPERS.

to-face conversations, invitations to rehearsals, brown-bag concerts, and ads in local community papers. Arizona State University tries to make everything as convenient as possible, from buying tickets to learning about the events on its Web site to parking.

Community outreach is also the hallmark of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. In 1994, the orchestra established a community partnership program that puts musicians directly in neighborhoods to teach, perform, and mentor. This effort is part of the larger community-outreach program, which is centered around a collaboration with African-American churches in St. Louis. The symphony also has a strong commitment to education

and lifelong learning and does extensive work through its Community Music School. Responding to competition from local casinos, the orchestra provides concerts at more convenient times and provides special promotions to attract elusive younger audiences.

La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, California, has spent 25 years celebrating multiculturalism. Over 20,000 people a year attend the 150-plus programs offered in La Peña's three spaces—a 175-seat theatre, the intimate Cafe de La Peña, and a classroom/lecture room. Programs—many of them from Latin America—are offered in an eclectic mix of poetry, theatre, dance, film, and music. The center has become sensitive to the need for increased earned income as government support has dwindled. As a result, the center takes fewer risks on the more popular Friday- and Saturday-night slots. Like other presenters, La Peña is concerned about its aging core audience and is working to lure younger people with special offerings like hip hop workshops and performances. The center would like to make

better use of the Web, but the resources—human and financial—are not available.

LA PEÑA IS WORKING TO LURE YOUNGER PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL OFFERINGS LIKE HIP HOP WORKSHOPS AND PERFORMANCES.

SECTION IV – S P O R T S PROMOTERS

NASCAR (National Association of Stock Car Racing) is just one part of Americans' obsession with sports

and has become a \$2-billion-a-year industry at the leading edge of the fastest growing sport in America. A new generation of fans is drawn by charismatic young drivers and the sport's accessibility. In its early days, NASCAR could not count on large media attention and television fees, so it always has courted strong ties to corporate sponsors. The association makes efforts to connect with local community businesses and charities and makes a big splash wherever sponsors race. One challenge in the years ahead is to broaden the audience beyond its primarily white profile.

Women's World Cup soccer became big news after the spectacular win by the U.S. Women's World Cup soccer team. More than 90,000 fans filled the Rose Bowl, and 40 million watched on television worldwide. In part, this interest is the fruit of many years of school athletic programs that have educated young women and their mothers about the game of soccer and the culmination of the strong marketing work done by small community soccer teams around the nation. The members of the winning team have become role models and show every indication of remaining popular for years to come.

SECTION V – RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Focus on the Family is an organization that offers "transformational experiences." Begun in 1977 as an outgrowth of Dr. James Dobson's book *Dare to Discipline*, Focus on the Family now has 1,300 full-time employees and 16 affiliates worldwide. It also has radio and

television programs, seminar retreats, and a retail store and publishes magazines all grounded in family issues. The original radio program, *Focus on the Family*, has 5 million listeners in the United States alone, and the organization also sponsors an old-fashioned radio drama for young children and a live call-in show for teens. To reach older teens, Focus began a Webzine on its Internet site; in fact, its most influential audience-development tools are the niche magazines crafted to fit specific demographics (teachers, teenage boys, physicians, etc.). Like many other presenters, Focus on the Family is worried about reaching minorities and Gen Xers.

(" FOCUS ON THE FAMILY'S ") MOST INFLUENTIAL AUDIENCE-DEVELOPMENT TOOLS ARE THE NICHE MAGAZINES CRAFTED TO FIT SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHICS (TEACHERS, TEENAGE BOYS, PHYSICIANS, ETC.).

CONCLUSION

Some trends are clear from the case studies:

- Demographics are in flux. Minority populations are growing, and Gen X and Gen Y are becoming more important as Baby Boomers grow older.
- Communications technologies are changing rapidly, and the Internet is a key factor in connecting with audiences, especially young people.
- Leisure time is more fragmented than ever before.

To tackle these issues effectively, arts presenters need to be more conscious of designing an entertainment experience by answering questions in four key areas:

1. Aesthetics: What can be done to improve the aesthetics of the experience?
2. Experience: Once there, what should the guests do?
3. Education: What are the guests expected to learn from the experience?
4. Entertainment: What can sponsors and presenters do by way of entertainment to encourage guests to stay?

foreward

Arts presenters in the West and across the United States confront a challenging future. They face mounting competition from the entertainment and leisure industries, some of which have demonstrated far greater success than the nonprofit arts industry in attracting new and diverse audiences. Arts presenters have yet to significantly tap and retain audience segments that include young persons, recent immigrants, and persons who identify strongly with ethnic traditions. To address the need for arts presenters to provide innovative and attractive offerings that will appeal to these audience sectors, WESTAF has launched a project to design and implement new models of program development and marketing for arts presenting.

This project was conceptualized in December, 1997, when representatives of the Western Arts Alliance, California Presenters, WESTAF, and presenter-advisors from the West met to consider ways in which WESTAF could assist the large presenters in the region. As a result of these meetings and further consultations, the WESTAF presenters marketing initiative was developed. The first phase of the initiative was the conduct of focus groups in five cities in the West to identify themes, model projects, and behaviors surrounding the relationship between arts presenters and underserved communities. This publication was completed as the second phase of the initiative. The work is designed to identify some of the critical features and practices of successful arts presenters, the entertainment

industry, and ethnic and religious organizations. This report especially illustrates practices in the commercial presenting sector that can be applied to the nonprofit arts sector.

WESTAF expresses its appreciation to The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts for their support of this publication. WESTAF also acknowledges the consultants and writers who contributed to this publication—Morrie Warshawski and Dinah Zeiger. They interviewed over 50 individuals, identified trends within the arts presenting and entertainment industries, and successfully identified and documented the motivations of a number of principal nonprofit arts and commercial presenters. In addition to these principal researchers, WESTAF Trustee Colleen Jennings-Roggensack was crucial to the success of this effort.

WESTAF also wishes to recognize the readers who reviewed this manuscript and suggested improvements to it. These readers were Julie Franz of The Arts Marketing Center of the Arts and Business Council of Chicago; Timothy B. Heath, Associate Professor of Business Administration at the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business, University of Pittsburgh; John Killacky, Executive Director, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; Tim Van Leer, President, California Presenters, and Executive Director, Center for the Arts at El Camino College; Tim Wilson, Executive Director, Western Arts Alliance; and Arts Consultant Gerald D. Yoshitomi.

audience development and innovative arts presenters

INTRODUCTION

Finding ways to identify and hold audiences is the challenge arts presenters face as they encounter greater competition than ever from sources undreamed of even a decade ago. The task will become more difficult in the years ahead unless presenters are open to new ideas and new ways of addressing audience demands. Audiences are becoming more demanding as a host of activities and events vie for their attention. Who, exactly, are the new competitors, and how have they managed to insert themselves so effectively into the entertainment arena? This paper identifies five broad categories of entertainment presenters whose marketing efforts have succeeded in attracting large audiences:

- Nonprofit arts organizations
- Mega-concert promoters
- For-profit entertainment conglomerates
- Sports promoters
- Religious organizations

Analyzing how each identifies and reaches its core constituencies may provide insight into strategies nonprofit arts presenters can use as they position themselves for success in the coming years.

HIGHBROW/LOWBROW

An appreciation of the arts and culture still carries the stigma of elitism. During the 19th century, patronizing “high art” became a status marker—a culturally constructed distinction designed to separate “highbrow” Anglo-Europeans from “lowbrow” immigrants and their corrupting forms of popular entertainment. Ever since, pop cul-

ture has had a difficult time shaking the accusation that it is aesthetically corrupt. According to a 1996 survey for the International Society for the Performing Artists Foundation, people who habitually attend so-called highbrow art functions found them “relaxing, stimulating, inspiring, moving.” Those who shy away from such events defined them as “stuffy, intellectual, dreary, embarrassing and abstract.” In the same study, those who attended lowbrow pop events described them as “relaxing, stimulating, fun, buzzing and laid back.” Non-attenders thought these events to be “crowded, remote, superficial, expensive and mass-produced.”¹

Another study recently identified a range of perceived barriers that impact the demand for cultural events. Price was at the top of the list that also included such considerations as whether public transportation was easily available, how safe the area was, timing, and whether there were alternative entertainment choices.² The study pointed out that nonprofit arts institutions are often their own worst enemy:

They restrict access by defining limited seasons; they perform in small halls at limited times for short seasons; and they sometimes charge high prices, believing that the demand for their product is small but the price inelastic. In addition, museums, following a time-honored, nineteenth-century European tradition, open at their convenience, not at the public's. Being open only during the day and not at night prevents the “unwashed” working classes from coming.³

Attitudes, however, may be changing. A recent study by Vanderbilt University researchers Richard Peterson and Roger Kern suggests that today's high-status individuals (as defined by economics and education), far from being culturally snobbish, have become increasingly eclectic in their tastes. Peterson and Kern call these people *cultural omnivores*.⁴ The term does not

mean they devour all art indiscriminately. Rather, it signifies their openness to appreciate everything—a kind of cultural rela-

**CULTURAL OMNIVORES...
SIGNIFIES THEIR OPENNESS
TO APPRECIATE EVERY-
THING—A KIND OF CULTURAL
RELATIVISM THAT ALLOWS
WIDELY DIVERGENT
CULTURAL EXPERIENCES
TO BE TAKEN ON THEIR
OWN TERMS.**

tivism that allows widely divergent cultural experiences to be taken on their own terms. In common with other research, Peterson and Kern trace the shift from snobbish exclusion to omnivorous appropriation to changes in social structures, values, and generational conflicts. They claim that the mass media have made highbrow culture almost as accessible as pop culture. Compared

to 20 years ago, standards of living have risen, levels of education have increased, and awareness of both high and low culture is more widespread.⁵

Economist Tyler Cowen argues that popular culture and capitalism are not killing culture. Instead, they are incubators for multiple artistic visions that appeal to diverse audiences. The market economy provides “a steady stream of new and satisfying crea-

**ECONOMIST TYLER COWEN
ARGUES THAT POPULAR CUL-
TURE AND CAPITALISM ARE
NOT KILLING CULTURE.
INSTEAD, THEY ARE INCUBA-
TORS FOR MULTIPLE ARTIS-
TIC VISIONS THAT APPEAL TO
DIVERSE AUDIENCES.**

tions, helping consumers and artists refine their tastes, and paying homage to the eclipsed past by capturing, reproducing and disseminating it.”⁶ Popular culture—entertainment with the broadest appeal—is often the seed from which new appreciation grows.

Cowen cites popular music as an example.

Popular music, in all its forms, is the product

of new technologies that have changed what people want to see and hear. Radio, records, CDs, and the jukebox are all technical achievements that brought multiple forms of new music to a large new public audience. Classical music, which Cowen identifies as a composition-based genre that was often part of family parlor entertainment, fell into “relative eclipse” when pop music, with its emphasis on the performer, became widely available. “Whether we like it or not, most customers prefer performer-based music when it is available at low cost.... Recording has consigned classical music to a minority taste,” Cowen writes.⁷ Classical music now accounts for only 4% of compact disc purchases in the United States, and it shows no signs of reversing its downward trend.

The 4% figure does not indicate that classical music (or serious drama and other such forms) is doomed to languish in the cultural cellar. Rather, what we are witnessing, Cowen says, is a “breakdown in the categorical distinction” between classical and pop music, forced by the economic imperative to focus on new products. Although many may scoff at the “Three Tenors” approach to mass marketing and recording, it has brought a new audience to opera and symphony halls.⁸ Again, technology and its market-driven cost open the way for many to appreciate and support other forms of music. Hypermodern innovations—such as original instrument recordings of classical music and super-titles that translate opera lyrics into English—bring a hard-to-reproduce performance to larger audiences and show how performer-based musical marketing has spread to the classical repertoire. These artists use modern technology to market the classics.⁹ As Cowen observes, “only the modern world can support so much fascinating production for the tastes of a small minority.”¹⁰

Michael J. Wolf, a leading consultant to media and entertainment companies, notes that entertainment—not cars, steel, or financial services—is rapidly becoming the driving force in the new world economy. American households spend 5.4% of their disposable income for entertainment, compared to 5.2% for both clothing and health-care needs. Even without consumer electronics—TVs, VCRs, CD players, etc.—entertainment is a \$480 billion-a-year industry.¹¹

At the same time, despite claims to the contrary, the audience for quality cultural experiences is growing. Murray Horwitz, vice president for cultural programming at National Public Radio, notes “an explosive change in taste” among consumers.¹² A recent story in *The Wall Street Journal* acknowledges that some of the transformation among American consumers may be “merely signs of conspicuous consumption in a gluttonous era.” The story also reports that nearly 27 million people attended theatrical stage shows during the 1997-98 season—almost 60% of them outside New York—generating \$1.3 billion in ticket sales.

Similarly, nearly 110 symphony orchestras have been founded since 1980. Opera attendance rose to nearly 7.5 million patrons in the 1996-97 season, up 33% from 1980.¹³

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Where are these audiences coming from?

As *The Wall Street Journal* points out, many are white, middle-class, mainstream Americans who have benefited from rising disposable incomes and are bored with television.¹⁴ Per-capita, Americans watch an estimated

1,610 hours of TV a year. Cable TV (and the Internet) are dynamic cultural influences

and offer a breadth of programming loaded with new ideas.

Ethnic shifts, too, are altering American tastes. Asian restaurants, exotic to most of America in 1970, are ubiquitous. By 2005, according to *Newsweek*, Latinos will be the largest U.S. ethnic group. The magazine claims, “Latinos are changing the way the country looks, feels and thinks, eats, dances and votes.” The Latino population has grown 38% since 1990 to 31 million; by 2050, it is projected to reach 96 million, a 200% increase.¹⁵ According to Wolf, African-American city kids are the source of many popular trends among the young. “Americans—and after them the rest of the world—have drawn generation after generation of styles from this culture...Capture these key taste generators and you capture the young.”¹⁶

One key demographic is age. A third of Hispanics today are under the age of 18, according to *Newsweek*. The driving force behind the Latino wave are members of the group sometimes called “Generation N,” the Latino Gen X. Members of Generation X

are tough to pin down; they reject labels and are hostile to the hard sell.¹⁷ *Rocking the Ages*, a recent Yankelovich report on generational marketing, describes Gen Xers as resistant to stereotyping as a target group. The way to their hearts and pocket-books is through understanding what turns them on—they are pragmatic, bottom-line oriented and motivated by survival and not by ideology or mission. According to the Yankelovich report, they are financial conservatives. They are the products of a vast variety of influences and, unlike their parents, are not interested in cultural revolu-

**ETHNIC SHIFTS,
TOO, ARE ALTERING
AMERICAN TASTES.**

**GEN XERS JUST WANT
CHOICES, AND
THEY'RE QUITE HAPPY
TO MIX AND PATCH
TOGETHER THEIR
ENTERTAINMENT.**

tion. Gen Xers just want choices, and they're quite happy to mix and patch together their entertainment. Yankelovich calls it "retro-eclectic chic"—reconfiguring the '60s, '70s and '80s in eclectic combinations to make something uniquely their own.¹⁸ They are playful and mocking. They are influenced by their peers to a greater degree than previous generations. Moreover, Gen X grew up with new media—from cable TV to home computers to the Internet—and view them quite differently from their Baby Boomer parents. For the latter, computers and the Internet are tools. For their Gen X kids, PCs are toys as well as tools—avenues to fun, exploration, and connections.

Generation Y is right behind Gen X as a veritable "tsunami" of young people, 81 million strong, born between 1977 and 1997, who spend \$130 billion annually. They have their own music and dress and grew up plugged in and online. As they become acculturated and socialized through the Internet, they look for entertainment on their computers.

"Eyeballs glued to a screen are audiences," Wolf notes. As children of multimedia, they have learned to "multi-task, or time stack, [their] media experience...today's young consumer can be watching something on TV, have a CD playing in the background and surfing the 'Net.'"¹⁹ Net-Gens, as they're also called, are just as tricky as Gen X to reach. They demand options; choice is a deeply held value, and they expect customization to meet their needs.²⁰ They also want flexibility, the option of changing their minds: "Let them try before they buy...and never forget that they will choose function over form."²¹

THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

Why, then, are nonprofit arts organizations struggling when more people say they attend cultural events? Wolf identifies sev-

eral trends that impact the way audiences engage entertainment. He calls one the "Megaplex effect."²² TV killed many American downtowns—where movie theaters, restaurants, and other entertainment

venues were heavily concentrated—as the population shifted to suburbs, where the mall became the focal point for shopping and entertainment.

Consumers grew accustomed to a wide range of entertainment choices on their televisions and the convenience of running to the mall when they wanted. Movie theaters caught on and encouraged customers to "movie surf"—the way they "channel surf" at home on TV—by offering multiple screens showing the same film starting every 30 minutes. The idea has matured, and today's theater complexes are more than just a bunch of screens in one spot. They now offer stadium seating, digital surround-sound, restaurants, video arcades, coffee bars, and even bank branches with ATMs.²³

Marketing experts Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore have coined a term for the new economy emerging at the end of the 20th century—the experience economy.²⁴ The subtitle of their book sums up the basic premise: *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business A Stage*. In order to compete in this new economy, businesses must produce memorable events. The model Pine and Gilmore use is theatre, and they urge businesses to see that work is (not as) theatre and "stage" their products to appeal to

CONSUMERS GREW ACCUSTOMED TO A WIDE RANGE OF ENTERTAINMENT CHOICES ON THEIR TELEVISIONS AND THE CONVENIENCE OF RUNNING TO THE MALL WHEN THEY WANTED.

BUSINESSES MUST PRODUCE MEMORABLE EVENTS.

the customer.

The model is readily apparent in the growing number of theme restaurants. For example, Rainforest Café is only partially about food and dining; it is also about experiencing a rainforest setting. Diners are immersed in a stage set of dense vegetation, rising mist, and cascading waterfalls replete with lightning and thunder. Customers encounter live tropical birds and fish, huge animated butterflies and spiders, and even a mechanical snapping crocodile. The cafe bills itself as “A Wild Place to Shop and Eat.” The restaurant’s retail store cannot be avoided since diners have to pass through it on the way in and out. The goal is not to simulate the actual experience of the rainforest but “to stage an authentic—and aesthetic—experience of the Rainforest Café.”²⁵

Most companies adopting experience strategies charge only for their goods or services. Pine and Gilmore predict that, in time, Corporate America will design richer experiences for which consumers also will pay. That model is the opposite of most arts presenters, who charge admission to audiences to experience an event. One example from Pine and Gilmore illustrates the potential: Movie theaters charge admission for a film, but as theater complexes become more carnival like, with computer games and food kiosks, operators may begin to assess a fee for admission, much as one pays to enter a fairground. For instance, the Star theater complex in Southfield, Michigan, charges three million customers a year 25% more to see a movie than a local competitor does because of the fun-house experience its facilities provide.²⁶

TECHNOLOGY, TIME AND MONEY

Arguably, the most significant component driving the experience economy is tech-

nology. New technologies—in particular, applications of Internet technology—are a consistent factor in the marketing strategies of for-profit entertainment companies.

Some—like Disney, House of Blues, and SFX Entertainment—have made substantial investments in Internet-technology companies. Their Internet sites are not merely listings of shows, dates, and directions to the venue. These companies use their Web sites creatively, signing up surfers as members, for example. Most have chat rooms and advertise dates when star attractions are available to answer questions. All hawk a variety of merchandise available for purchase online.

Some sell tickets to live online concerts or offer live shows that allow virtual participation from audiences around the world. Marketing experts consistently single out the Internet as an unexplored opportunity to engage audiences. The technology is still new, and selling entertainment products online is only beginning to emerge as a competitive factor; even so, the Internet is destined to be a prime factor in winning audiences.

Time and money are the other key factors that drive the experience economy. In 1996, 51 million households earned over \$35,000—more than double the \$16,036 poverty level for a family of four. In 1980, 39.7 million households earned the inflation-adjusted equivalent. The 30% increase came at a time when the population grew by only 19%.²⁷ With more money to spend, people increasingly want something unique. A broad range of niche products

**NEW TECHNOLOGIES—
IN PARTICULAR,
APPLICATIONS OF
INTERNET
TECHNOLOGY—ARE A
CONSISTENT FACTOR
IN THE MARKETING
STRATEGIES OF FOR-
PROFIT ENTERTAIN-
MENT COMPANIES.**

have emerged to exploit that desire from ethnic and regional cuisines and foodstuffs to Arts-and-Crafts-style furniture to concerts and the opera.

Wolf cites a survey that shows that given a choice of more free time or more money, consumers resoundingly choose more time. "Fun, entertainment, recreation, no matter what you call it, we have become a nation...of fun-focused consumers," Wolf says.²⁸ Time is of the essence not only for twenty somethings but also for their Baby Boomer parents. Although studies show that Americans have more leisure time today than 25 years ago, most people complain they don't have enough of it. Wolf says that perception arises because we simply have many more things to do in the time that is available. As a result, the average 30 hours a week of free time is enjoyed in ever smaller increments—an hour here and a half hour there.²⁹

Such fragmentation means consumers are choosing entertainment that can be enjoyed intermittently, when they can fit it into their individual schedules conveniently.

Convenience was a key factor in the growth of video rentals. Now the video industry is feeling the effects of the rapid pace of technological innovation. Industry analysts caution that Blockbuster Entertainment, which reported a 27% share of the \$8.1 billion U.S. video rental market in 1998, is not immune from incursions from cable and digital forms of home-entertainment delivery. "I think cable and digital will do to Blockbuster

what the automatic telecom answering services did to the answering machine," said Abhi Chaki, an analyst with the research firm Jupiter Communications. According to

Chaki, two thirds of American households now have some form of cable, compared to 95% that have a VCR. Forecaster Alexander & Alexander says movie rentals dropped 2.6% in 1998 to 3.98 billion and are expected to decline to 3.85 billion in 1999.³⁰ People still want to watch movies, but they want to watch at a time convenient for them. Watching pay-per-view movies delivered on cable or through satellite systems means the video does not have to be fetched or returned.

Videos do not fulfill people's desire to have an experience along with their entertainment. To accomplish that, they must go out and engage in an activity of some kind. According to Pine and Gilmore:

The kinds of experiences most people think of as entertainment occur when they passively absorb the experiences though their senses, as generally occurs when viewing a performance, listening to music, or reading for pleasure.... As the Experience Economy gears up, people will look in new and different directions for more unusual experiences.... There will be an opportunity...to add to the mix components of...the educational, the escapist and the esthetic.³¹

Wolf calls it the *E-Factor*—entertainment content plus experiences.³² Content is key, which is where nonprofit arts presenters often hold an edge, for content is what they sell. Packaging content to emphasize the entertainment value and offering an experience that engages consumers in something fresh, provocative, and involving are the challenges. One thing is clear: arts presenters must actively

CONSUMERS ARE CHOOSING ENTERTAINMENT THAT CAN BE ENJOYED INTERMITTENTLY, WHEN THEY CAN FIT IT INTO THEIR INDIVIDUAL SCHEDULES CONVENIENTLY.

PACKAGING CONTENT TO EMPHASIZE THE ENTERTAINMENT VALUE AND OFFERING AN EXPERIENCE THAT ENGAGES CONSUMERS IN SOMETHING FRESH, PROVOCATIVE, AND INVOLVING ARE THE CHALLENGES.

cultivate new audiences if they hope to remain viable players in the emerging entertainment-experience economy.

New kinds of audiences, time pressures, and the demand to be entertained all have implications for nonprofit arts presenters. Their challenge is to find new products, different venues, and creative approaches to marketing. This study examines five categories of entertainment, spotlighting for-profit and nonprofit presenters who are navigating the experience economy and finding new audiences. The first section examines how very large for-profit entertainment entities develop audiences. Using Disney as the most popular model for emulation, we consider how three entities market their activities: Bellagio Hotel Art Gallery in Las Vegas; Cirque du Soleil in Montreal; and Branson, Missouri, a country-western destination town. The second section is a study of the impact of two mega-concert promoters, SFX Entertainment, Inc. and House of Blues, both based in Los Angeles. Section three is an examination of marketing efforts by five nonprofit institutions—Arizona State University's Public Events; the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra; the Fresno Art Museum; the Asia Pacific Cultural Center in Tacoma, Washington; and La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, California. Two emerging sports franchises whose audience numbers have grown phenomenally in recent years—NASCAR and Women's World Cup soccer—are reviewed in the fourth section, and the fifth is a consideration of the enormous and still-growing audience for spiritual guidance offered by Focus on the Family, based in Colorado Springs, Colorado. From all of these experiences, clues emerge for nonprofits that are trying to compete in the changing cultural marketplace.

SECTION I

DISNEY

The Disney name is synonymous with American pop culture, and for many in the entertainment industry, it is the company that sets the standard. Walt Disney Company is a major media conglomerate, a \$23-billion-a-year empire that includes theme parks, movie studios, and cruise ships, as well as the ABC television network and ESPN, the all-sports cable channel. Disney also produces Broadway shows and operates retail outlets that sell everything from Mickey Mouse ears to musical *Belles* from *Beauty and the Beast*

Disney practically invented experience entertainment. Walt Disney envisioned “a cartoon that immerses the audience” and eventually orchestrated that vision into a themed environment, Disneyland, a self-proclaimed “new experience in entertainment.”³³ Now the company also operates several Club Disneys, specially constructed play sites for children under 10. The first opened in 1997 next to a strip mall in

Thousand Oaks, California, where children and adults pay \$8 to play in one of nine play modules. Posted at the entrance is a pledge: “Our mission is to create a place in the community where chil-

dren and their grownups have fun and bond with one another through enriching activities and imaginative play.”³⁴ The Clubs’ play spaces combine education and entertainment through arts and crafts classes, and one of the most popular events is Applaudville Theatre, where children don Disney-character costumes and act out their own stories. “As a result,” say Pine and Gilmore, “Club Disney is packed with chil-

dren and their grownups at play together.”³⁵

Like other media-entertainment companies, Disney continually grapples with the question of how to hold audiences and develop brands in a market where customers can choose from hundreds of TV channels or log on to the Internet. The Disney philosophy remains essentially unchanged: “Come up with the best TV shows, movies, whatever and the eyeballs will follow. But even Disney’s powerful brands and storytelling talents don’t guarantee success now.”³⁶ Disney’s old formula of creating endearing characters on film and then merchandising them “every which way” is no longer reliable. Even favorite attractions begin to wear and age.

What Disney excels at is making its “guests” feel welcome. One thing visitors complain about most is waiting in line. This past summer at Animal Kingdom, Disney rolled out a new ticketing scheme—FASTPASS—that lets guests bypass the line at popular exhibits using a time-stamped ticket.³⁷ Guests insert their theme-park admission ticket into a turnstile, which dispenses one of the passes with a return time stamped on it. Instead of waiting in line, they can visit other attractions and return at the time marked, where they go to the front of the line. The FASTPASS was introduced at a limited number of attractions in July of 1999. Marketing data still are being assessed, but FASTPASS represents a typical Disney solution to keep customers happy.

Disney has the economic muscle and creative talent to innovate, but it is also constantly prodded by new competition. For example, to compete with Universal

WHAT DISNEY EXCELS

AT IS MAKING ITS

“GUESTS” FEEL

WELCOME.

DISNEY PRACTICALLY
INVENTED EXPERIENCE
ENTERTAINMENT.

Studios, which operates rival theme parks in Hollywood and Orlando, Florida, Disney plans to spend more than \$2 billion to build a park near Disneyland in Anaheim, California. The company also plans to add rides and spruce up its Orlando theme parks.

Epcot, part of Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, is getting the biggest face-lift. The 17-year-old attraction was intended to showcase techno-marvels of the future, but it has struggled to keep abreast of fast-paced changes. As a result, Epcot has lost audience share to other Disney theme parks nearby, especially Animal Kingdom. To raise its profile, Disney will usher in the millennium at Epcot with a 15-month celebration beginning in October, 1999. Two of its major attractions will be revamped, and 6 of the 11 countries with permanent exhibits at the park will add to or renovate their exhibitions.

One exhibit slated for overhaul is "Innoventions," which was designed to showcase new inventions before they came to stores but has been a trouble spot for years because of the constant renovation required to keep it up to date. The free-standing structures that made exhibits easy to move and change also made Innoventions "user-unfriendly: Often a visitor would miss large chunks because there was no planned layout," according to an article in the *Orlando Business Journal*.³⁸ The facelift will include a pre-show with an audio-animatronic robot (named *Tom Morrow 2.0*) who will explain to guests how to navigate the attraction. When visitors leave the pre-show, they will walk along the "Technology Highway," leading to exit ramps to such exhibits as computers or health care.

In addition to such large-scale overhauls, the Millennium Celebration will launch several interactive attractions. "Leave a

Legacy" will allow visitors to leave their photographs on an etched commemorative metallic tile, which will be mounted in one of 430 sculptured granite monoliths near Epcot's Spaceship Earth. Borrowing an idea from the Olympics, Epcot will sell special commemorative pins and encourage pin trading between guests and Disney cast members.³⁹

Although Disney will not release figures, the company reportedly plans to spend \$50 million on marketing the Millennium event, nearly twice as much as was spent promoting the debut of Animal Kingdom.⁴⁰ As part of the marketing of the Millennium Celebration, Disney has upgraded its travel agent Web site to allow agents to customize itineraries for clients who book four- and seven-day trips to Disney's Orlando resort. "Itinerary planning is an important step in the sales process because time is a precious commodity," said Kim Davis Severini, director of domestic travel industry sales and marketing for Walt Disney Attractions.⁴¹ Highlights of special events at the resort pop up on screen according to travel dates and can be booked online, as can golf tee times and restaurant seats.

Disney's other major undertaking is its push into the Internet. In July, 1999, the company announced plans to create a single company that combines its own Internet holdings with those of Infoseek Corp. It will merge Disney.com, Disney's Club Blast, the Disney Store Online, and other operations with Infoseek and will be known as *Go.com*. Disney is adding content monthly and although it expects to incur substantial losses initially, the company anticipates that the merger eventually will add greatly to its revenue stream and increase audience share.

The lessons that can be gleaned from Disney include:

- Provide audiences with a “new experience and entertainment”
- Combining education with entertainment deepens people’s involvement
- Customers (“guests”) must be made to feel welcome in a user-friendly environment
- Constant innovation is a given in the new economy
- When possible, help customers customize the experience in order to save their time—an increasingly precious commodity
- Explore uses of the Internet.

BELLAGIO GALLERY OF FINE ART

A new experience in entertainment guided Stephen Wynn in the creation of the \$1.6 billion Bellagio Resort in Las Vegas. When Wynn, chief executive officer of Mirage

Resorts, Inc., decided to add some class to the Bellagio, he turned to art. Wynn is the same man who introduced white tigers and exploding volcanoes to the Strip at his Mirage Resort in 1989. Fine art was an entirely different undertaking, and it has paid off handsomely. Some 1,800 visitors a day pay \$12 each to utilize an audio tour narrated by Wynn. They visit the two-room gallery located in the Bellagio Resort, where paintings by Cezanne, de Kooning, Manet, Monet, Pollack, Rubens, Rembrandt, and van Gogh are displayed on dark fabric walls behind brass rails.

WHEN WYNN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF MIRAGE RESORTS, INC., DECIDED TO ADD SOME CLASS TO THE BELLAGIO, HE TURNED TO ART. WYNN IS THE SAME MAN WHO INTRODUCED WHITE TIGERS AND EXPLODING VOLCANOES TO THE STRIP AT HIS MIRAGE RESORT IN 1989.

Wynn has been a major player in the international art market for a decade. Even so, putting his treasures on display in the casino-hotel was a gamble. Today, the art

gallery is one of the most popular attractions in Las Vegas. “The same crowd that clamors for Siegfried and Roy is also attracted to a \$300 million collection of Cézannes, Manets, Miros, Monets, Picassos, Rubens and van Goghs,” wrote Evelyn Nieves in the *New York Times*.⁴² People willingly wait in line for 40 minutes or more to buy a ticket for admission three hours later. The \$12 admission price is steep, but it does not deter many visitors.

Many reasons account for the Bellagio Art Gallery’s popularity. The collection of rare and valuable works of art by recognizable names attracted the notice of the art press as well as the travel press long before the hotel opened and continues to do so. With so much written and said about it, the Bellagio Art Gallery became another major attraction in a city of neon and extravagant stage shows. Prior to its opening in October of 1998, the marquee outside the Bellagio Hotel read: “Coming soon—van Gogh, Monet, Renoir and Cezanne with special guests Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.”⁴³ In fact, the quality of the artworks—valued at \$300 million—have factored prominently in the hotel’s advertising. The vanity plates on hotel limos read *MANET, DEGAS, PICASSO, RENOIR*.⁴⁴

In addition, the gallery is easily accessible. It is open 15 hours a day every day (9 a.m. to midnight), and it is conveniently situated on a main strip where many people wander from one casino to another. The gallery does not have a dress code, and finding a parking space is not a problem. The art is accessible on another level as well; some of the works hang in the public spaces of the hotel. For example, a group of paintings and ceramics by Picasso are displayed in the hotel’s Picasso Restaurant.⁴⁵ At one time, a Modigliani portrait loomed over a baccarat table in the hotel’s casino.⁴⁶ Two Rauschenbergs hang on either side of the

registration desk in the lobby of the hotel.⁴⁷ As *New York Times* art critic Michael Kimmelman notes, "Not all paintings are at home in museums, after all. Most of them weren't painted with museums in mind. Museums are neutral and neutralizing spaces, which is why it's a lot more memorable to come upon a good 1970s Raushenberg near the registration desk of a Las Vegas hotel than in the Museum of Modern Art."⁴⁸

The location is convenient.⁴⁹ Unlike most attractions in Las Vegas, visitors to the Bellagio Art Gallery can get to the door without traversing the entire casino. Instead, the Gallery awaits visitors at the end of "a football-field-size bed of aromatic flowers."⁵⁰ The gallery is so popular that a larger space was constructed. The art gallery moved into the new space in August, 1999. The new gallery adds another 3,000 square feet of display and 1,000 square feet of retail space. The hours will be altered but still accommodating: 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.

The collection makes no claims to comprehensiveness, and visitors cannot even be sure they will see the same works on consecutive days. That is because Wynn set himself up as an art dealer when he opened the gallery in order to get a tax break on the collection. That stipulation requires him to sell the art on display. Works by Brancusi, Giacometti, Jasper Johns, Claes Oldenburg, and Roy Lichtenstein have already been sold.⁵¹ In a recent battle with the Nevada legislature, Wynn lobbied lawmakers to grant tax exemptions on the collection amounting to a one-time sales-tax break of \$18 million on the purchase of art. As part of his lobbying effort, he offered to halve the gallery admission for Nevada residents and let school children in for free during a 20-day-a-year art- appreciation program. The bill passed in the summer of 1999.

Some criticize the crass commercialism and hyperbole (Wynn's audio tour commentary includes such distinctions as "most valuable," "rarest") and question whether "valuable art is wasted on the typical Las Vegas tourist."⁵² *The New York Times'* Kimmelman defends Bellagio. "Good art is astonishingly elastic," he says. "It survives almost anything and adapts to whatever circumstances you put it in, opening itself up to new meanings and allegories." He says the attraction for most visitors is "wonderment." "The art here has acquired a life that seems to match its new, unorthodox environment. Las Vegas exists for the pursuit of pleasure. People who've never looked at art before (one woman in the gallery asked me who Renoir was) are discovering a new pleasure in Cezanne, which can't be a bad thing."⁵³

Bellagio suggests that:

- Fine art of high quality and with a high profile can attract large audiences and bring added value to commercial settings
- Extensive coverage in the art and travel press helps boost attendance by making an exhibit an event
- Attendance at Bellagio is directly affected by key comfort factors: geographic accessibility, convenience of parking, and absence of a dress code
- Great art is adaptable to many settings.

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

Cirque du Soleil, headquartered in Montreal, is a mainstay of the Las Vegas experience. Cirque du Soleil reinvented the concept of circus 15 years ago when it presented a striking, dramatic mix of circus arts and street entertainment set to original music, breathtaking costumes, and magical sets. In its fantastical world, a man can fly and a woman can walk on water. On any given weekend in 1999, an estimated

50,000 people saw a Cirque du Soleil performance somewhere in the world. All told, more than 23 million people have seen one of its 12 productions since its inception.⁵⁴

Why are people so drawn to Cirque du Soleil? Perhaps the answer lies in its “aliveness,” the immediacy of its performance. “As you sit watching you are exquisitely aware that this is most emphatically not a movie: These are special effects based on the human body rather than technological sleight of hand. Knowing this is your passport into the performance space, to that magical communion between audience and artist when everyone exists on the same plane,” a reporter for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* wrote.⁵⁵ Cirque’s particular brand of magic has been called “surrealistic art,” a show “so imaginative...that it simply astonishes.”⁵⁶ Its performers seem to defy gravity and make the impossible possible, providing a kind of involvement in wonder—an immersive experience—that engages intellect and emotion.

Cirque du Soleil, literally “circus of the sun,” began in 1984 in Montreal with a group of street performers—jugglers, stilt-walkers, fire-eaters and acrobats—who performed in a tent that seated 800. The goal of its first U.S. tour in 1987 was to make enough money to get back home to Canada.⁵⁷ In 2000, Cirque will stage eight shows on four continents, with 2,100 employees worldwide and four satellite headquarters to manage touring and permanent shows. Its International Headquarters in Montreal boasts a \$40 million facility where new productions are conceived and designed.⁵⁸

Touring was the original strategy that built the audience for Cirque du Soleil’s elaborately staged productions featuring original musical scores and spectacular costumes, sets, and lighting. In recent years, Cirque has turned to business partnerships to

build permanent homes for some of its productions. Mirage Resorts, Inc. in Las Vegas provides the venues for *Mystère* (Treasure Island, where it has played since 1994) and *O* (Bellagio, opened in 1998) and shares in the box-office revenue. *Alegría*, which began touring in 1994, settled into a custom-designed \$19.4 million stage in 1999 for a two-year stay in the Beau Rivage in Biloxi, Mississippi, also owned by Mirage Resorts, Inc.⁵⁹ Cirque also has a deal with *Walt Disney World Resorts*(, where its production of *La Nouba* is in residence in Orlando, Florida, until 2010.

According to Cirque’s public announcements, it generated \$204 million in sales in 1998 and is expected to hit \$420 million in 2000. While it draws 85% of its revenues from tickets, Cirque also generates income from sales of audio and videotapes, books, and licensing agreements for other memorabilia like T-shirts and hats. Cirque du Soleil Images manages production of audiovisual materials and oversees marketing of soundtracks with BMG Music, one of the largest music producers in the world. (The music for *Alegría* received a Grammy nomination in 1996 for “best instrumental arrangement with accompanying vocals.”) The company also is opening retail outlets—its first boutique opened in 1998 at Walt Disney World in Orlando. A feature IMAX film, *Journey of Man*, opens in theaters in 2000.⁶⁰

**AUDIENCES FLOCK TO
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL
BECAUSE TELEVISION
ALREADY HAS FAMILIAR-
IZED THEM WITH ITS
QUIRKY BRAND OF CIR-
CUS MAGIC, THEATER
CUM ATHLETICS.**

Audiences flock to Cirque du Soleil because television already has familiarized them with its quirky brand of circus magic, theater cum athletics. Several of its produc-

tions have been filmed and broadcast on PBS, Bravo, and other networks. Television plays a more intricate role. Gymnastics and ice skating competitions, once seen mainly during the Olympics, have become something of a staple on broadcast and cable sports channels and on live tours. The intricate movements and stylized grace of the athletes are now fairly common, so when the **Cirque-us** comes to town, everyone from preschoolers to grandparents wants to see it in person. One appeal of the productions is that although they have a nascent story line, they are not strictly narratives. *Alegría*, for example, is a Spanish word meaning “joy and jubilation.” In this production, a series of flying acts, clowning, and tumbling, accompanied by a haunting score, coalesce into an abstract performance that allows the audience to write its own script. Cirque shows bring the audience into a landscape fraught with unknown and unseen perils. *Mystère* blurs the line between humans and animals, while *Salimbanco*, another of Cirque du Soleil’s touring shows, is a gigantic production befitting an international success story.⁶¹ The producers have drawn on archetypes, creating bizarre yet familiar images—clowns, clerics in red robes, a hunchback in whiteface—recognizable but not entirely explainable.

Cirque du Soleil is production as spectacle, with the audience as a necessary part of each performance. To that end, each touring show uses its own “Big Top,” carefully

designed to ensure that each seat is the best in the house. Live musicians perform the original music and costumes, and sets are lavish. The hand-sewn costumes for *Alegría*, for example, include 1,600 yards of lace, 22 pounds of glitter, 2,500 yards

of silk, and 5,000 rhinestones, not to mention 400 pairs of shoes.⁶²

O, Cirque’s newest production playing at the Bellagio, plays on the French word for water, eau. It features a cast of 75 performers and a stage that shifts from solid flooring to liquid surface in the blink of an eye. Performers dive into the water and swim and float both under and over a 1.5-million-gallon tank equipped with hydraulic lifts, underwater breathing stations, and complex mechanisms on which they descend from the ceiling. One writer called the show something more than a pageant: “It’s an intimate spectacle, with extraordinary stunts balanced by quiet moments of poignancy. It’s virtually wordless and spins no obvious narrative, but it holds the viewers’ interest with an intense drive that gives it the urgency of a tightly written story.”⁶³

Ticket prices range from a reasonable \$40 at the Biloxi venue to \$100 for *O*. The high prices do not deter many. One retiree said she catches Cirque de Soleil whenever she can because it makes her happy. She is willing to drive 600 miles to see the show.⁶⁴

Cirque de Soleil suggests the following lessons:

- Audiences gravitate to performances that engage them through story, spectacle, magic, and immediacy
- Once an organization establishes itself as a “brand,” it can accrue substantial income through the sale of ancillary items (books, tapes, T-shirts)
- Exposure on television can familiarize a large segment of the population with a group’s work and help boost ticket sales
- Television can provide a cross-over audience if the performance relates to elements already known to audiences (e.g., gymnastics, ice skating)

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL IS PRODUCTION AS SPECTACLE, WITH THE AUDIENCE AS A NECESSARY PART OF EACH PERFORMANCE.

- Audiences appreciate a space that feels intimate and where each seat provides an excellent vantage point
- Price is no deterrent when people have a strong desire to see a show.

BRANSON, MISSOURI

Entertainment turned sleepy Branson, Missouri, a town of 3,700, into a mecca for music fans. More than six million tourists a year flock to this southern Missouri Ozarks town to see live shows by big-name entertainers. The town also offers theme parks, golf, shopping, and water sports.

Branson bills itself as “Las Vegas without the gambling and drinking,” and it plans to stay that way. “It [drinking and gambling] doesn’t fit our family-oriented programming,” says Dori Allen, marketing director for Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau.⁶⁶ The town that country-western music built wants to broaden its audience but not at the expense of driving away the loyal core of mostly 55-and-older tourists who return year after year.

Branson has been a tourist destination since around the turn of the century, when fans of Harold Bell Wright’s novel, *The Shepherd of the Hills*, made their way to the place he had written about so evocatively. *Shepherd of the Hills* became one of the most popular books ever published, eventually spawning a pageant-play of the same name, which has been performed in Branson every spring since 1960. In the late 1950s, Silver Dollar City, a turn-of-the-century theme park, opened just in time for the completion of Table Rock Dam and its Lake Taneycomo. The area became a summer destination for families, who could fish, water ski, and take the kids to the theme park for fun. The Presley family (no relation to Elvis) pioneered the family show concept in 1963,

when Lloyd Presley and his son Gary quit touring and opened their own theater in Branson.⁶⁶

The recent boom started in the late 1980s, when Roy Clark placed his name on a theater. Branson today boasts 40 state-of-the-art theaters, with 50,000 seats and 22,000 hotel rooms. Several factors make Branson unique: the entertainers own the theaters, the shows are family affairs with multiple generations on and off stage, and the ticket prices are low. Admission prices average \$25, compared to big Las Vegas shows, which can reach \$75 to \$90.

In 1991, Andy Williams became the first non-country entertainer to build a theater in Branson (the Moon River Theater), followed by the Osmond Brothers in 1992 and the Lennon Sisters, who joined the Lawrence Welk Champagne Theater, in 1994.⁶⁷ The town also includes Bobby Vinton’s Blue Velvet Theater and the Wayne Newton Theater. By owning the theaters, the entertainers cut out the intermediaries and reduce their expenses, says Allen; plus, they can close during slack periods (usually between January and March) or book other acts into the space when they are on tour.

Most theaters present two shows a day. Many offer a morning show beginning at 10 a.m., while others offer matinees. All do evening performances. With prices ranging from \$10 to \$25 and up to \$38 for some Christmas shows, tickets are a “super bargain,” which appeals to families, says Allen. “We’re a tourist town; all we have is entertainment,”

SEVERAL FACTORS MAKE BRANSON UNIQUE: THE ENTERTAINERS OWN THE THEATERS, THE SHOWS ARE FAMILY AFFAIRS WITH MULTIPLE GENERATIONS ON AND OFF STAGE, AND THE TICKET PRICES ARE LOW.

she says. "Doing morning shows, afternoon shows, it's why people come and we give them what they want."⁶⁸ —Dori Allen, marketing director for Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau."

**"DOING MORNING
SHOWS, AFTERNOON
SHOWS, IT'S WHY
PEOPLE COME AND WE
GIVE THEM WHAT THEY
WANT."**

**—DORI ALLEN, MARKETING
DIRECTOR FOR BRANSON/LAKES
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
AND CONVENTION AND VISITORS
BUREAU."**

Family is the theme that defines Branson. "We certainly don't have an elitist attitude," says Allen.⁶⁹ Still, Branson struggles with a country-western/senior citizen image that is hard to shake and makes it hard to attract newer, younger audiences. Branson ranks among the top 20 tourist destinations in the United States, according to a market survey by D.K. Shifflet.⁷⁰ The town is also the number-one "motor coach" destination—a favorite of the bus-tour crowd of retirees who like Branson because it is

inexpensive and offers many activities. "They can stay two days or a week and run themselves ragged with up to four shows a day," Allen says.⁷¹

In recent years, the theater owners and the Chamber have aggressively promoted other kinds of entertainment to try to broaden Branson's appeal. This summer, the Grand Mansion, the large theater in Silver Dollar City, brought in *Spirit of the Dance*, an Irish step-dance show similar to *River Dance*, and it has booked Tony Bennett for the fall. The theater also hosts the Miss USA pageant and the Radio City Music Hall Rockettes, who have presented a Christmas show in Branson for the past five seasons, filling the theater's 4,000 seats during their six-week run.

This past spring, the Welk Resort and Champagne Theater staged an "America's Hottest Accordionist" competition that drew

150 entries as well as media attention from *USA Today* to *The Wall Street Journal*. What was remarkable about the competition (dubbed a "publicity stunt" by *USA Today*) was that "none of the five [finalists] was a Polish man from Milwaukee."⁷² In fact, the winner was Dwayne Dopsie, a 20-year-old African-American zydeco enthusiast from New Orleans, who vaguely remembers watching *Lawrence Welk Show* reruns two or three times as a kid.

Even though the Welk theater—which showcases the Lennon Sisters in a morning show doing '40s swing as well as his orchestra and familiar performers from his TV show—draws crowds for the lively polka music, the performer who packs them in is Shoji Tabuchi, a Japanese violinist who moved to the United States 30 years ago. He mixes country, laser lights, Japanese Taiko drums, and his teenage daughter into a rollicking show that is often sold out.⁷³ Also popular are the Incredible Acrobats of China, a traditional Chinese acrobatic troupe of 20, who have performed in Branson since 1997, and Cirque Fantastique, a Russian circus family who appear during the summer on the Branson Belle, a riverboat dinner-theater.

Still, "we struggle to get the 18-40s," Allen admits. "They don't know Andy Williams or Mel Tillis. And we have hot new talent like Leann Rimes who can pack a house," she said. "We're trying to figure it out, but frankly we haven't pushed that hard yet. What we push in summer is family time. We figure, if they come when they're kids, when they grow up they'll want to come back as adults," says Allen.⁷⁴

The Chamber is beginning to explore the Internet, which it identifies as an entrée to a younger age group. "We think it's a way to sell to the younger crowd," Allen says. "We're thinking about things like a virtual video tour of the venues and the shows or

putting pay-per-view concerts online,” she said. Chamber planners are also aware that the second most popular use of the Internet is to book travel, and many over-50s use it for that. “We’re behind with this [technology],” she admits. “It’s still new to us, but we are also aware that people are using it to buy tickets and book tours.”⁷⁵

Branson teaches that:

- A commitment to family-oriented entertainment can be a successful strategy
- If families and the elderly are the audience, then pricing needs to remain modest and performance times need to be frequent and at convenient hours
- Once a venue becomes known for a particular type of performance and a specific audience, it is difficult to break out of that mold
- The Internet may be an effective way to attract younger people.

S e c t i o n 11

The arts-presenting industry is undergoing a massive realignment as a handful of mega-entertainment conglomerates buy up established promoters and producers. The rapid consolidation of corporations like SFX Entertainment, Inc. and House of Blues has the rest of the industry, for-profit and non-profit alike, wondering whether these megaplayers spell the end of their inde-

pendence and their ability to serve their unique communities. What both SFX and House of Blues have in common is a focus on branded entertainment and a large-scale commitment to Internet technologies. Both are, for all intents and purposes, vertically integrated. They own a significant number of performance venues, distribute the "product"—whether concert acts or stage plays—and they are their own producers. In effect, they marry the business of promotion to the

product for sale. Smaller players fear that a single company with so much control will end up with too much power and monopolize the entertainment market while shaping tastes as well. Megapromoters respond by pointing to AT&T's deregulation in the mid-1980s, which created more competition for customers, eventually resulting in

lower prices and better service.

SFX ENTERTAINMENT, INC.

To appreciate the juggernaut that is SFX Entertainment, Inc. requires a consideration of its origins. In less than two years, it has grown into the world's largest promoter, producer, and venue operator for live entertainment. According to a company-generated announcement when it joined the New York Stock Exchange on June 7, 1999, SFX owns—partially or wholly—82 venues, including 16 amphitheaters in the top 10 markets nationwide, making it the largest network of venues for concerts and performances in the United States.⁷⁶ It also develops and manages touring Broadway shows, selling subscriptions in 38 markets, and operates an integrated franchise that promotes and produces a variety of live events locally, regionally, and nationally. SFX says that during 1998, some 38 million people attended approximately 13,200 events that it produced or promoted. That included 6,250 music concerts, 5,800 theatrical shows, 800 family shows, and 350 specialized motor-sports shows. In addition, SFX is a sports-marketing and management company representing athletes and broadcasters.

Also in 1998, SFX completed more than \$1.4 billion in acquisitions and generated \$884.3 million in revenue, although it posted a net loss of \$68.7 million for the year. Much of the revenue was invested in acquisitions. The company's strategies for growth, including corporate sponsorships, are expected to generate new revenue streams. To put the company in perspective, consider a 1998 Goldman Sachs & Co. analyst's report: "It is virtually impossible for an artist to tour the United States without playing in an SFX venue. SFX has, in essence, become the gatekeeper for outdoor music

WHAT BOTH SFX AND HOUSE OF BLUES HAVE IN COMMON IS A FOCUS ON BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT AND A LARGE-SCALE COMMITMENT TO INTERNET TECHNOLOGIES.

concerts.”⁷⁷

The size and ambitions of SFX are daunting. Pace Theatrical, now an SFX subsidiary, enjoys the substantial financial backing of such a partner. Pace Senior Vice President Greg Holland cautions: “We’re still concerned about relationships we’ve built over the years. We care about how we fit the fabric of every community.” Pace remains a presenter, not a distribution company. How it constructs a season in Cincinnati is different from how it builds one in Phoenix, Holland said during a panel at the 1999 Western Arts Alliance meeting in Denver, “My job is to actively build a season relevant to a market and to sell tickets. We won’t do six shows if you can only sell five,” he said. “It’s no more bottom line oriented than before.”⁷⁸

The fear persists that megapresenters like SFX will block non-partners’ access to popular shows, “name” entertainers, and “must-see” events. Since so much control rests in SFX’s hands, its limited menu of Blockbuster-Broadway shows and the like may adversely affect tastes of theater audiences. Countering this, Holland cites industry studies indicating that the under-18 audience actually is rising for the first time in a generation, although he acknowledges that only about 1% attend “serious theater.” “Audience taste and corporate theater are old fears,” he says. “There’s a fear that SFX will only continue financial support to projects it cares about....But no corporation can *make* you like a show. Corporations fund it, but we don’t know how to create [a hit],” Holland said.⁷⁹ During the same panel discussion, Colleen Jennings-Roggensack, executive director of Arizona State University’s Public Events and a Pace partner, said the touring Broadway series “let’s us give life to our core mission...it supports education and outreach to do different things. It’s how you use it.”⁸⁰

The bottom line is generating an audience, and that task still rests with the local presenters who know their communities, Holland says.⁸¹ Steve Boulay of Magicworks, another SFX acquisition, which focuses on small markets, said blockbuster tours have “a positive impact” on local communities. “In Salt Lake City, *Phantom* played for 16 weeks and [brought] in people who’ve never seen theater before. It develops new audiences; we heard it even had a positive effect on opera audiences locally.”⁸²

Developing audiences and retaining loyalty is critical to SFX’s future; therefore, its strategy leaves nothing to chance. SFX overlooks no opportunity, however

SFX OVERLOOKS NO OPPORTUNITY, HOWEVER MARGINAL, TO GENERATE AUDIENCES.

marginal, to generate audiences. For example, in 1999, it licensed the worldwide rights from RMS Titanic, Inc. to exhibit some of the 5,000 artifacts recovered from the wreck site on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. SFX press releases described the exhibit as a “natural fit” and a “crowd magnet.”⁸³ The company, through its concert division, recently entered into a partnership with the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority to cross promote one another in Las Vegas venues. SFX has designated Las Vegas as its “Official Resort Destination” and agreed to bring nine events to the city over the next three years.⁸⁴

SFX is also aggressively pursuing corporate sponsorships. In 1999, it organized multiple sponsors to promote the George Strait Country Music Festival. The tour was renamed “Nokia Presents George Strait Chevy Truck Country Music Festival,” whose sponsors also included Brown & Williamson, Bud Light, Jack Daniels, Wrangler, Justin, Pemmican, and Resistol.⁸⁵

Mike Farrel, president and CEO of SFX, says such agreements are “indicative of the kind of synergies and cross promotional opportunities which can be structured using our extensive set of venues and participating tour artists.”⁸⁶

SFX also recently unveiled a far-reaching Internet strategy that weaves together pay-per-view live cybercasts of concerts, exclusive fee-based membership in online fan clubs, and ticket purchase and exchanges from its Web sites. As a first step, SFX consolidated multiple Web sites into *SFX.com*, “designed to be the primary destination for all Internet users seeking information about and access to live entertainment.”⁸⁷ *Tickettraders.com* is a novel idea that allows ticket holders to swap or trade tickets to sporting and other events for other tickets or merchandise. SFX’s partnership with Intel, deploying state-of-the-art technology, will put 20 live SFX concerts on the Internet, available worldwide. Customers who buy Intel’s Pentium III computers will be able to receive audio, video, and realistic graphics “to duplicate as closely as possible the reality of the SFX concert-going experience,” says its press release.⁸⁸ “We see the Internet as a great extension for ourselves,” says Robert Sillerman, founder and executive chairman of SFX.⁸⁹

Lessons from SFX include:

- Performing seasons need to be relevant to a particular market, and even a large global conglomerate needs to depend on local presenters who know their communities
- Large blockbuster shows can help develop new audiences for the art
- Look for the opportunities available through the synergies of cross promotion
- The Internet can be a powerful direct extension of a business, providing information and access to live

entertainment and tickets.

HOUSE OF BLUES

If SFX Entertainment is Godzilla, then House of Blues is the Atomic Ant. Unlike SFX, the House is still privately held. Still, it has managed to make a very big splash in the industry in the past few years. Based in Los Angeles, House of Blues was founded in Boston in 1992 by Hard Rock Cafe pioneer Isaac B. Tigrett. Today, it operates seven House of Blues venues nationwide, blending live music with food, retailing, and artworks “into an exciting, interactive entertainment adventure,” according to its marketing materials.⁹⁰

House of Blues’ genius has been to expand its early idea into an entertainment conglomerate that now includes live concerts, radio, television, and Internet programming, as well as restaurants, hotel development, music tours, and record production.

House of Blues is now in the touring business. According to its marketing materials, it is “regarded as the largest producer of live music content in the world [currently] booking, promoting and engineering more than 2,000 live music performances a year.”⁹¹ In July of 1999, it bought Universal Concerts, a unit of Seagram’s Universal Music Group, for \$190 million. The deal brought House of Blues 20 premier concert venues. Universal Music will retain ownership of the Universal Amphitheatre, located on the Universal Studios’ lot in Los Angeles, but House of Blues will operate it. In addition, it will own and provide the exclusive booking agreements for: The Gorge and Chateau St. Michelle Winery near Seattle; South Park in Austin, Texas; Fiddler’s Green Amphitheatre, the Paramount Theatre, the Hamilton Arena, and Magnus Arena in Denver; the new Coors Amphitheatre, the Cox Arena, and the Open Air Theater in San

Diego; Blossom Music Center in Cleveland; and L.B. Day Amphitheatre in Portland, Oregon.

New media, like the Internet, also will benefit from the merger. Universal's online music venture, *GetMusic.com*, will be the exclusive providers of House of Blues' online properties. House of Blues will support *GetMusic.com's* Digital Media Distribution system, and the two will work together to promote special concerts on its Web site.

House of Blues built its success largely on its grasp of the E-Factor—entertainment plus experience. As Pine and Gilmore point out, just hearing the name of a theme restaurant, “you know what to expect when you enter. The proprietors have taken the first crucial step toward staging an experience by envisioning a well-defined theme.”⁹²

How did House of Blues grow so fast? The answer is audience. It began in Boston (Harvard Square) as a showcase for blues musicians. When it opened, 90% of its programming was blues. That strategy made sense because the audience demographic for blues is comprised mostly of males, ages 25 to 50, who come to hear music, have a bite to eat, and drink. Dave Fortin, marketing manager for the House of Blues in Boston, admits the restaurant and bar are his “meat and potatoes. If we didn't have it, we wouldn't survive.”⁹³ Ticket prices for a performance have stayed at about \$25 since the beginning. Tickets are priced slightly higher on Sunday through Wednesday, when younger audiences attend, in order to make up for loss of bar receipts.

As venues opened in other cities, name recognition grew, and musicians clamored for bookings. “In short, we began to have national brand awareness,” Fortin says.⁹⁴ Today, House of Blues is a national show-

case for all types of music from rockabilly, rap, reggae, and swing to Haitian Band and World Music. Each House of Blues is open seven nights a week. Age requirements for admission vary from “all ages” to “21 and up,” with the Sunday-through-Wednesday shows usually reserved for all ages. Most House of Blues are set up like nightclubs with minimal seating. The music halls range from very small—230 capacity in Harvard Square—to the Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, venue, which can accommodate 2,300.

Next to each music hall is a juke-joint-inspired restaurant, serving Mississippi-Delta style cuisine, with entrees ranging from \$8 to \$18. The restaurants are open for lunch, dinner, and late night dining seven days a week and can seat from 160 to 500 diners, depending on location. Décor is one of the big attractions. The restaurants all feature artwork by outsider artists and form one of the largest collections in the world. One of House of Blues' most popular family features is its weekly Sunday Gospel Brunch, offering Gospel music performances by local and national groups at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

House of Blues is creative in reaching audiences. Its efforts range from the tried and true to more contemporary and nontraditional methods. The Harvard Square venue, for example, mails a monthly newsletter to 6,500 people. “We find a contact in the market for the specific audience we want to target to spearhead our marketing effort for that group,” says Fortin. If the group is the 18-to-21 market, “we know where they're (the audience) going to be on a Friday night, so we put ads in the publications they read, we have someone outside a concert venue handing out fliers.”⁹⁵

Fortin calls the hard-to-reach, 18–21 group a “word-of-mouth audience.” Members of this

**DÉCOR IS ONE
OF THE BIG
ATTRACTIVE.**

group hear a band on the radio or a friend has a CD, or they find a Web site featuring cuts from an album, and suddenly the band is hot. That kind of pipeline is hard to tap without an entrée from an insider, and often an 18-year-old crowd can't come into a bar to hear the music. "We started a Sunday through Wednesday concept in the clubs, with no drinks served," said Fortin. "It's favorable and when they're 21 we have a customer on a regular basis."⁹⁶

House of Blues' Web site may be the wave of the future not only for its own programming but also for concert promotions in general. Its digital division "cybercasts" four concerts a week from its seven venues via its Web site (*www.hob.com*). Not only can browsers drop in on a live concert, but they can listen to scores of archived concerts and artist interviews as well as find information on concert schedules and who is playing at each of the seven venues. In addition, the site offers online shopping, including CDs on the House of Blues label as well as the usual T-shirts and posters. The site logs 1.5 million hits a month and is considered one of the top 500 sites on the Internet.

**HOUSE OF BLUES
PRESENTED ITS FIRST
LIVE "CYBERCAST" IN
AUGUST OF 1999,
CHARGING ONLINE
VIEWERS \$4.95 TO
HEAR A CONCERT BY
ZIGGY MARLEY.**

Originally, the Internet site was just another promo point for the venues, with basic information like addresses and phone number and directions to each location. Now, Fortin says, the Internet site is a "music portal." "It's not just House of Blues' information but a music site, a gateway to other information and a place where you can hear live concerts." House of Blues was among the first to use "digital streaming" technology to present a live concert. The technology scrambles the signal and builds in a

10-second delay, which prohibits down-

loading or recording it, thus protecting artists' and record companies' copyrights. House of Blues presented its first live "cybercast" in August of 1999, charging online viewers \$4.95 to hear a concert by Ziggy Marley. Users surfed to the site, electronically paid for their tickets with a credit card, and sat in front of their computer screens to experience the event live and at home. "From a technology standpoint, it all worked great; we sold tickets, handled the volume and presented the show," Fortin says. "Is it [the online investment] worth it? It depends on your goals. For us, everyone is smiling. We have one million unique visitors a month coming to our site. That's a lot of tickets."⁹⁷

From House of Blues, the following strategies for audience development emerge:

- Young audiences are drawn to performances that are "interactive entertainment adventures"
- Understanding audience demographics is crucial so that the experience and marketing are appropriate and effective
- A competitive environment demands creative marketing efforts, including niche marketing to reach the 18-21-year-old group
- Name recognition and national brand awareness are invaluable tools for attracting artists
- A Web site is an invaluable asset that attracts audiences and generates revenues through direct sales

Section III

Nonprofit arts presenters struggle for relevancy at the beginning of the new millennium, searching for new audiences while trying to hold the attention of long-time patrons. Their challenge is to present a mix of works that grab the interest of people accustomed to short-attention-span activities. Blockbuster shows attract a new clientele, but how to keep them interested and coming back for less star-studded events is a puzzle.

Most presenters recognize that their communities are not monolithic and that reaching deeper and farther into ethnic groups

plays a significant role in the continued health and relevancy of their agencies.

FRESNO ART MUSEUM

The Fresno Art Museum is small by most museum standards, with an \$870,000 annual budget and only nine full-time staff. Nevertheless, it has succeeded in reaching its multiple ethnic communities when larger institutions often fail. The museum's recipe for success combines outreach with creative programming that piques the interest and curiosity of the community and gets neighbors to interact

with one another.

The museum, founded in 1948, serves communities in California's sprawling San

Joaquin Valley. Fresno's population—390,000 in the city proper and 700,000 in its metropolitan area—reflects trends evident in the U.S. population in general. Hispanics, at 41%, comprise the largest ethnic group. Since the 1970s, Fresno's Asian population has increased dramatically, today numbering 13% of the total population. African Americans make up 7%, with a smaller percentage claiming Native American roots. Fresno officials say the marked increase in its Asian population, which includes one of the two largest Laotian communities in the United States, is the result of the Valley's status as one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world.

Like many smaller art galleries, Fresno's 25,000-square-foot museum hosts 18 to 22 changing exhibitions a year, mostly of modern and contemporary work. Each runs about eight weeks, and Mary Lafollette, the museum's development director, acknowledges that "they don't attract the biggest audiences; it's why we do so many exhibits a year."⁹⁸ The museum also owns an extensive collection of Pre-Columbian artifacts and often combines contemporary art works from Mexico and Central and South America to offer a new perspective on Hispanic cultures. Those exhibits tend to draw larger audiences, especially from within the Hispanic community.

What really attracts crowds are events that showcase one of the area's ethnic communities. The events span several weeks and feature live demonstrations as well as exhibition-oriented displays. These events (and many of the rotating exhibitions as

**MOST PRESENTERS
RECOGNIZE
THAT...REACHING
DEEPER AND FARTHER
INTO ETHNIC GROUPS
PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT
ROLE IN THE
CONTINUED HEALTH
AND RELEVANCY OF
THEIR AGENCIES.**

**...ARTISTS-IN-
RESIDENCE...SPEND LUNCH
HOURS WALKING THROUGH
THE MUSEUM TALKING WITH
PATRONS ABOUT THEIR
WORK DURING REGULARLY
SCHEDULED
"CONVERSATIONS".**

well) include artists-in-residence, who not only demonstrate their art but also spend lunch hours walking through the museum talking with patrons about their work during regularly scheduled “Conversations”. In connection with these ethnic exhibitions, a “cultural day,” usually during the early weeks of the event, is scheduled, which includes ethnic foods and performances ranging from dance to puppets to artisans demonstrating traditional tools and methods. “Cultural Days bring in lots of families,” Lafollette says. “They come in droves.” She attributes the interest to parents who think the events are “good for kids.” In addition, a curiosity factor exists about others in the community. “It’s a way to address social issues through artwork,” she says. If a cultural day doesn’t necessarily bring the diverse communities together, at least it opens them up to understanding, so others don’t seem so foreign, she says.⁹⁹

One example was the museum’s recent exhibition, “Threads of Tradition: The Textile Arts of Laos,” which ran from November, 1998, through January, 1999. The exhibit explored the textile arts of Laos, including appliqué work and weavings of Laotian Americans representing the Lowland, Lao, Lahu, Mien, and Khmu cultures. The exhibit—the culmination of a two-year study by the Fresno Arts Council Folk Arts Program funded through the National Endowment for the Arts—began as a research documentary project to identify traditional Laotian crafts. According to a report from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, more than 500,000 Laotians had settled in the United States by the early 1990s, and 56% of them lived in central California. “We saw the exhibit as a way to promote understanding of the Laotian culture for the people of Fresno,” Lafollette says.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the exhibit provided a way to cultivate a new audience for the

museum.

“Threads of Tradition” explored the role and use of thread and fabric in five Laotian cultures. The event also included storytellers explaining the significance of Laotian story quilts; food vendors selling traditional Laotian food; and dancers, performers, and artisans plying their trade. “Threads” drew such crowds that the museum scheduled two, rather than the usual one, cultural days to accommodate the numbers. These events “let [visitors] take away a little knowledge of another culture. It’s way beyond entertainment, it’s enrichment,” Lafollette says. “These are ‘experience’ events. People are looking for experiences, I think that’s why our Cultural Days are so popular.”¹⁰¹

The exhibition’s strong media support from the local newspaper (the *Fresno Bee*) and several local television stations, which were corporate sponsors, helped draw a cross section of the Fresno community. In addition, schools brought groups of students, thus reinforcing the exhibition as a community “event.”

Most museum programs are attended by its members, a representative cross section of the region’s demography and ethnicity, with a skew toward an older audience (an average age of 47 years). However, when the museum hosts one of its ethnic spotlight events, entire families turn out. “I’d like to see more younger people. I think more experiences will draw them,” says Lafollette.¹⁰²

To tap a broader audience more consistently, the museum recently renovated its Child’s Space Gallery. Instead of a typical children’s crafts space with tiny chairs, Space Gallery houses larger, though still low, chairs and tables, as well as computer terminals. Families are encouraged to make projects that relate to specific exhibitions,

such as printmaking using simple materials and techniques. In addition, the museum plans an expansion of its Sculpture Park in order to develop the tactile possibilities by including objects that can be touched. An audio guide for the visually impaired will help make the Sculpture Park more accessible.

The Fresno Museum is also sensitive to the income level of its largely working-class community. General admission for adults is \$2, \$1 for seniors and students, and free for children under 15. The museum is free every Tuesday, when many of the less affluent attend, says Lafollette. "It's not our philosophy to charge much, and parking is free because we're located in a city park. It's a low-income area and we're sensitive [to that]," she says.¹⁰³

At Fresno:

- Creative outreach efforts have helped increase audience attendance
- Attention to the needs of specific ethnic communities has become a factor in programming decisions
- Programming that makes an exhibition an "event" and an "experience" has proven to be a popular formula
- The museum understands that accessibility on all levels is important and therefore engages in renovation efforts to upgrade its facilities.

ASIA PACIFIC CULTURAL CENTER

The unique needs of communities demand unique solutions. In Tacoma, Washington, the Asia Pacific Cultural Center intends to meet the needs of three intersecting interests—the business community, the cultural community, and the Asia Pacific community. Washington is home to 300,000 individuals of Asian/Pacific Islander descent—almost 6% of the state's population. Fully 250,000 of these representing 47 different cultures

live in the Puget Sound region surrounding Tacoma.

A recent report commissioned by Tacoma's Study Commission on Arts in the 21st Century presents some great ammunition for the center's plans. "Tacoma and Pierce County are on the verge of becoming a destination for people seeking arts and heritage experiences," claims the study. The report notes that "more than two million visitors come to Pierce County each year....Most drive to Mount Rainier and then leave."¹⁰⁴ The center hopes to become one of a cadre of current and new attractions that will keep people downtown, including the Tacoma Art Museum, the Washington State History Museum, the International Museum of Glass, the LeMay Auto Collection, and the Broadway Center for the Performing Arts.

The prime mover behind the center is founder and president of the board Patsy O'Connell, a first-generation Korean American. In November of 1996, she gathered together a small group representing three generations from four Asian and Pacific Island cultures—Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. They formed a non-profit organization devoted to creating a place to showcase art by contemporary Asian and Pacific Island artists now living in the United States and to teach Americans traveling to Asia something about traditional cultures.¹⁰⁵

The center is currently a "virtual cultural center" without a permanent building. Plans for the completed center include visitors encountering a flower arrangement of incomparable beauty and serenity, a research library, a tea house, an enclosed sculpture garden, a 500-seat multi-purpose performance hall with an adjacent kitchen, classrooms and studios, and a gift shop.

O'Connell wants the center to become

more than a place to make or display works of art; she envisions it as a place to present cultures, from traditional dance and performance to domestic forms, especially food. “Eating has a ritual place in most Asian cultures that it doesn’t have in the West. Food is a big selling point for non-Asian audiences, so we’ll offer classes and demonstrations. But it’s not just about how to put food together, but why you eat certain foods. It’s important for the immigrant communities as well as those from Western cultures because such subtleties are often lost when a family leaves the home country,” she says. “We’ll lose that knowledge if we don’t pass it on. Each country has its own traditions, its own manners and etiquette about food.”¹⁰⁶

The Northwest does have museums that own and display cultural artifacts from Asia. O’Connell envisions something more inclusive—a place that speaks about contemporary cultures and the hybrid that results when immigrants bring their traditions to

the United States. The city of Tacoma agrees with O’Connell and has given the center a grant to do a feasibility study for the facility.

Although it has no permanent space, in its short history, the center already has managed to stage a number of events, large and small. Some of the center’s offerings have included a Samoan luau in a south Tacoma community center, two

full performances of Chinese operas in the Pantages Theater, a Filipino dinner and fashion show in a Lakewood school gym, and the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts at the Pantages.

The Asia Pacific Cultural Center also has

begun reaching out to the business community with its series of international trade and culture lectures. The state’s chief economist, Dr. Chang Mook Sohn, was its first speaker. His lecture on “The Asian Economic Outlook and Washington State”—replete with a bento box lunch—was presented to a full crowd at the Washington State History Museum.

The event for which the center is most known and loved is its one-day Asia Pacific New Year Celebration. In February of 1999, more than 9,000 people (including performers and volunteers) turned out for a festival showcasing 14 cultures and offering performances and food and craft demonstrations in the Exhibition Hall of the Tacoma Dome (provided rent free). “We had a big turnout because each culture brought its own audience,” O’Connell says. “I think that demonstrates there’s a need for a place to come and do this for the Asian community—every day, not just once a year.”¹⁰⁷ The Anglo community also attended in large numbers.

Karen Kamara Gose, manager of development and operations, elaborates on the effort that generated such a large audience with only a small marketing budget. “We got great word-of-mouth because of strong grassroots community organizing,” she explains.^[108] Especially helpful was the assistance of the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition, which has access to all the communities in the area. In addition, the Vietnamese community, in a precedent-setting move, decided it would open the festival by showcasing in public for the first time its lunar New Year’s celebration complete with its lion dance.

Gose points to other factors that made the event a success. “For one thing, the Northwest has a long tradition of festivals—Bumbershoot, First Night and Northwest Folklife,” she explains. “In addition, we were

O’CONNELL ENVISIONS SOMETHING MORE INCLUSIVE—A PLACE THAT SPEAKS ABOUT CONTEMPORARY CULTURES AND THE HYBRID THAT RESULTS WHEN IMMIGRANTS BRING THEIR TRADITIONS TO THE UNITED STATES.

offering a fun, low-cost family oriented event during February, a cold and dank month in Washington.”¹⁰⁹ For O’Connell, the large and enthusiastic turnout only strengthens her resolve to create a center and reinforces her claim that communities are hungry for opportunities to display and appreciate their cultures.¹¹⁰

The Asia Pacific Cultural Center’s experiences underscore:

- The need to value and trust ethnic communities and to allow them to use their expertise to draw audiences
- The importance of partnerships with well-connected organizations when trying to reach out to new audiences and new communities
- The value of in-kind support to nonprofit presenters (e.g., free rent of facilities, volunteer help, and mailing lists)
- The role arts presenting can play in positively affecting cultural tourism.

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY/ PUBLIC EVENTS, TEMPE

Like many Sunbelt cities, Phoenix—and its suburbs, like Tempe—has grown phenomenally over the past decade. Retirees, blue-collar workers, and young urban professionals alike are drawn to its sunny climate and the prospect of high-paying jobs. The city’s roots, though, lie deep in the past, anchored by indigenous Indian and Hispanic communities. Nearly one third of the approximate 2.6 million residents of the Phoenix metro area are either Hispanic or Native American. Another 4% are African American, and 1% are Asian American.

Tapping those communities is the core of a seven-year effort by Arizona State University’s Director of Public Events, Colleen Jennings-Roggensack. She is no stranger to Joseph Pine’s and James

Gilmore’s experience economy; in fact, she and her marketing staff already have begun to incorporate these ideas into outreach efforts. “It’s a different world today. We have to drop our pre-conceived notions and make our [product] relevant to a broader audience,” she says.¹¹¹

Under Jennings-Roggensack’s guidance, Public Events produces some 100 events a year in its 3,000-seat Gammage Auditorium, as well as another 30 to 40 at the Sun Dome and 30 or so at the smaller Kerr Auditorium.

Although many of Arizona State University’s students are working adults who live in the area, town and gown rarely intermingle. With 41,000 students, the university is definitely a presence in the Phoenix suburb of Tempe. “But it’s a very big, very diverse community,” Jennings-Roggensack says.¹¹² The area generates a lot of competition for audiences—not only from such traditional spheres as sports but even things like national elections.

Community outreach is the key. Even with three full-time employees involved, outreach still presents a challenge. The usual problems—ticket prices, parking and timing—are compounded by the need to fulfill a mission to bring communities together. Arizona State University is trying several novel approaches to bridge the gap.

Public Events’ Broadway series is one of the most successful touring venues in the country, and Arizona State University uses it to pay for its Beyond Broadway series of offerings. These range from a yearlong *Untold Stories Festival* in 1998-99, which brought

**WE HAVE TO DROP OUR
PRE-CONCEIVED NOTIONS
AND MAKE OUR [PRODUCT]
RELEVANT TO A BROADER
AUDIENCE,”**
—COLEEN JENNINGS ROGGENSACK,
DIRECTOR, ARIZONA STATE
UNIVERSITY PUBLIC EVENTS.

together such diverse communities as children from the Ak Chin-Gila River Indian Reservation and senior citizens from the area's African-American community to this year's *Bridging Traditions: Asia, Arizona and the Arts*, a yearlong series exploring the bridge between contemporary and traditional Asia Pacific art forms. Six Asian art groups are scheduled to work in the various Asian communities as well as perform during multi-week residencies involving local artists and people from the community. The participating groups are H.T. Chen and Dancers, Halau O'Kekuhi, Khac Chi Ensemble, Great Leap, Lane Nishikawa, and Samu Nori.

How does Arizona State University attract an audience for events like these? Education is part of the answer. Tapping the right people in the community is another even more significant factor, says David Harrison, director of communications for Public Events. "We call it 'micro-marketing.' We don't rely on putting ads in the Sunday performing arts section of the newspaper. We partner with people in the local community. We target through face-to-face conversations," he said. For example, to kick off the *Asia, Arizona and the Arts* series, Arizona State University presented a Hawaiian performance troupe that premiered traditional hula dances never seen on the mainland. "This wasn't shopping mall hula, it was something different," Harrison says. To develop an audience for these performances, Arizona State University has partnered with two local Hawaiian restaurants, which provided customers with a coupon redeemable at the box office for tickets to

the performance. Because these restaurants are popular with Tempe area Yuppies, the "strategy resulted in an across-the-board audience, not just those from the Hawaiian community. The show was a huge success, attracting a large and multicultural audience of nearly 2,000 people, including

Hawaiians from all over the Southwest, Native Americans and Asian Americans."¹³ The outreach and marketing staff also regularly attend ethnic chambers of commerce meetings, meet with the editors of community newspapers, visit church and community groups, and actively solicit their input about how to reach deep into their neighborhoods.

Arizona State University also rethought its traditional marketing strategies. For the 1999-2000 season Broadway series package, Public Events placed an

insert in the Sunday *Arizona Republic*, the largest daily circulation paper, rather than mail out a four-color brochure on glossy paper. The insert, printed on newsprint, is both cheaper to produce and more widely disseminated. With the savings, Public Events plans to redirect a portion of its budget to buy ads in local newspapers that serve particular communities (e.g., the Spanish language newspaper or the two Asian papers).

The newspaper insert also directs potential patrons to Arizona State University's Web site for additional information. Once there, patrons can connect to the sites most of the Broadway touring shows have created. Those, in turn, can feature: information

**THE OUTREACH AND
MARKETING STAFF ALSO
REGULARLY ATTEND ETHNIC
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
MEETINGS, MEET WITH THE
EDITORS OF COMMUNITY
NEWSPAPERS, VISIT CHURCH
AND COMMUNITY GROUPS,
AND ACTIVELY SOLICIT
THEIR INPUT ABOUT HOW TO
REACH DEEP INTO THEIR
NEIGHBORHOODS.**

about the performers, scripts and song lyrics, shopping opportunities, and details on how the scenery is moved and constructed. “Nonprofit presenters are behind the curve on this technology,” Jennings-Roggensack says. “It’s the cost—it’s not free, even to a university presenter.”¹¹⁴ The Internet is a component that will only grow in significance.

Just reaching the audience is not enough, both Harrison and Jennings-Roggensack say. The programming also has to be relevant. That is why, for example, when Arizona State University brings in the Mexican National Symphony or Itzak Perleman, it cultivates particular segments of the larger audience. Cultivation might take the form of an after-show party for members of the Jewish community who have a particularly strong cultural tie to Perleman or “On Stage” events that invite audiences to rehearsals to watch performers prepare and talk about what they are doing. Even though brown-bag concerts have become a popular staple of orchestras and ensembles, added effort is needed to draw an audience. Targeting particular audiences gets people to turn out for the free lunchtime event and then pay for a ticket to the performance.

“We have to recognize that the experience is more than what’s on stage,” Jennings-Roggensack says. “The experience ranges from buying the ticket to what happens to you once you arrive—the “creature-comfort issues.” That includes parking, which is free at Arizona State University, but requires some searching. The experience also includes things like adequate restrooms, a perennial issue at many large performance halls, and one that Arizona State University is trying to address at its largest venue, Gammage Auditorium. Arizona State University understands the importance of restaurant services; its staff have worked

with the university administration to gain permission to serve alcohol on campus. For many events, the audience will appreciate the opportunity to have a glass of wine, which in turn will generate income. “It’s all part of the experience for the audience. And if it’s a hassle, they don’t want to come back,” she says.¹¹⁵

Another tactic is to wrap experiences around the performance. For example, for the Hawaiian component of Arizona State University’s Asian series, patrons arriving at Gammage were handed leis and met by car valets dressed in Hawaiian shirts. Food in the foyer included traditional items like poi, and an outrigger canoe was displayed, allowing visitors to explore its construction.

Convenience is a major factor for audiences—both the convenience of when a performance is presented and how and where people can buy tickets. Harrison acknowledges the difficulty of staging performances “on demand,” like taping a TV program to play back later or being able to catch a popular movie at 30-minute intervals. To

CONVENIENCE IS A MAJOR FACTOR FOR AUDIENCES— BOTH THE CONVENIENCE OF WHEN A PERFORMANCE IS PRESENTED AND HOW AND WHERE PEOPLE CAN BUY TICKETS.

be more responsive to audience demand, Arizona State University’s Broadway season, which used to run 5 weeks, now runs 16 weeks. “If we do something really big, like *Phantom*, it’s here for 5 weeks, and you can come when you want to come. It’s more like going to the movies,” he says.¹¹⁶

Public Events uses every avenue available to sell tickets. Patrons can call on a touch-tone phone and order by pressing the keys, or they can call in and talk to a customer-service representative. They can buy in person or by mail, and Arizona State

University is looking at a new online ticketing firm to allow purchases electronically via the Internet. Arizona State University also prices tickets starting as low as \$5 for some events and up to Broadway prices for blockbuster touring shows. Harrison says ticket prices should look like “movie prices” for some events because audiences might not be familiar with the product and will not take a chance if the price is too high.¹¹⁷

Arizona’s experience proves that:

- Community outreach is key to increasing audience involvement
- Audience share can increase through education and partnering with the right people in a community
- Micro-marketing has become a more important tactic than older, more traditional strategies
- Audiences want programming that is relevant
- The importance of “creature comfort issues” such as parking, adequate restrooms, and food cannot be underestimated
- Audiences crave convenience —performances presented at convenient times and days and ease of acquiring tickets through multiple channels of purchase (telephone, web, mail, in person).

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

St. Louis is a music town. “People here have always valued music,” says St. Louis Symphony Orchestra associate marketing director Stephen Duncan. The St. Louis Symphony, now in its 120th season, managed to survive even during the Depression in part because the community recognized that St. Louis could not be a “major league city without a major league orchestra,” Duncan says.¹¹⁸

Filling the 2,700 seats in Powell Hall, the orchestra’s main venue, is never easy. The orchestra manages to sell 67% of its seats through subscriptions, with attendance averaging 84% when single-ticket buyers are included. The orchestra performs 120 concerts a year, including free events. It maintains a staff of 100 (including the faculty of the symphony’s Music School), plus 100 musicians.

The orchestra has an enviable national and international reputation for musical excellence, but it also is hailed for its innovative community outreach and music- education programs. Many nonprofit arts organizations trace the decline in audiences for serious programming to the decrease in funding for arts education. The St. Louis Symphony stepped up to mitigate the effects, establishing a community partnership program in 1994 that puts its musicians directly into neighborhoods to teach and offer free recitals. In the 1998-99 season, the orchestra’s musicians participated in 480 performances throughout the St. Louis area. “Does it help sell tickets?” Duncan asks. “Maybe not, but it’s a way to expose them to the symphony, then maybe they will buy a ticket.”¹¹⁹

The partnership program is an outgrowth of the orchestra’s community-outreach program to reach nontraditional symphony audiences. The core of the outreach program is *In Unison*, a partnership between the orchestra and 28 African- American churches in St. Louis. In its first year (1994), with three churches involved, *In Unison* generated

**THE CORE OF THE
OUTREACH PROGRAM IS
In Unison, A PARTNERSHIP
BETWEEN THE ORCHESTRA
AND 28 AFRICAN- AMERICAN
CHURCHES IN ST. LOUIS.**

\$11,000 in ticket sales. In 1998, it generated \$100,000 in sales, according to Cheryl Havlin, marketing director for the orchestra. "Over 90% of those participating in the program hadn't been to Powell Hall before," she says. "We had to take our music into an environment where they felt comfortable before they would come to us. We didn't realize how alienated the African-American community felt," she says.¹²⁰

Necessity drove the orchestra to devise its community-outreach program. "We no longer knew our audience," Havlin says. "White flight to the suburbs" was a real factor. African Americans make up 54% of the city's population and 28% of the metropolitan area. "We had to rethink our audience and whether our products were inclusive," she says. "Then we had to find a way to speak to that new audience, make them feel welcome, break down the barriers like the formalized behaviors and rituals of going to a concert."¹²¹

One product is the *In Unison Chorus*, comprising singers from participating churches who present concerts during the regular season and appear with the St. Louis Symphony. "It's a two-way street," Havlin says. "We take symphony music to them, they bring gospel and blues to us."¹²²

In addition, the St. Louis Symphony Community Music School, the first in the nation, provides music-education classes and performance opportunities to students of any age at eight locations in the metropolitan St. Louis area. An outgrowth of this is the Whitaker Music Education Collaborative, a partnership among the Community Music School, the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and area public schools. Begun in 1996, Whitaker Collaborative enhances music education offerings in three St. Louis school districts. The orchestra helped build the curriculum, which includes composer studies, master class-

es, and concert attendance that begins in grade school and continues through high school.

"These programs are about repeated exposure and lifelong learning," Havlin says. "We've found that 80% of our core [symphony] audience has had some musical training. What we're doing here is growing the new audience. We'll have to wait a generation to see what the impact will be."¹²³

New competitors exist for the symphony's audience. "For a long time, the symphony had the place to themselves," says Duncan. "Twenty-five years ago people bought 24-concert series for Saturday night performances. Then it was 12, then six, now it's four or five concerts a year. A few still buy 24 concerts. It's not many if you're talking season baseball tickets, but it's a lot for the symphony."¹²⁴

Where did the audience go? "Casinos," says Duncan. "It's cheap, accessible, 24-hour entertainment, especially for the 55-plus crowd on fixed incomes."¹²⁵ In St. Louis, the casinos are on riverboats, in themselves an attraction. The casinos provide a show and a free buffet, and they are open all the time. Even the St. Louis Cardinals baseball franchise feels the pinch. The Cardinals estimate the casinos draw off 250,000 fans annually who gamble instead of going to the ballpark, Duncan says. One consequence is that the casinos often draw from the same lists of performers that the orchestra might have brought in for a pops concert, but the pay is higher on the riverboat, so the symphony is forced to pay more.

The St. Louis Symphony has responded with a series of Friday morning concerts. They start at 10:30 a.m. and are identical to the evening program. "They're very popular with people who are retired, who don't like to drive at night or are worried about secu-

rity,” Duncan says. “People come, hear the concert and are out by noon.” Duncan surveys the exploding 50-plus Baby Boom market and identifies a huge new wave of potential customers. “It may be that symphonic music is something people take to later in life. If that’s the case, it’s a great time to be part of the symphony industry,” he says.¹²⁶

Attracting the 18–30 crowd is a different matter. “They’re tough to crack,” Duncan acknowledges. The St. Louis Symphony has responded with its “Michelob Series,” striving for a more relaxed atmosphere. The premise is that a Friday evening “Happy Hour” with free food and inexpensive drinks will pull in younger audiences, who come for a good time after work. Anheuser-Busch, the giant brewer based in St. Louis, sponsors the event. Orchestra members and guest performers mingle with the crowd before the performance. Doors open at 7 p.m., and the concert starts at 8 p.m. Duncan says the event is somewhat successful, but he considers it an investment in long-term audience development. “We spend an inordinate amount of time courting the 20-plus group—we have to try to get them interested—but it’s a big drain on resources and there’s little immediate payoff,” he says.¹²⁷

Technology might be the key to finding the members of a younger audience. The symphony has created a fairly sophisticated Web site that offers browsers an online box office, an e-mail news signup, and Web-only ticket discounts. “The Internet is kind of like TV in the ‘50s,” Duncan says. “No one is really sure where it’s headed.” For example, the orchestra initially thought that the 55-plus age group would not be online, but that has not proven to be the case. One area that is ripe for exploration is to broadcast concerts via the Internet, Duncan says.¹²⁸ The orchestra already makes guest performers

available for online chats before concerts and is considering using the Internet to interact with audience members instead of scheduling pre-performance “music talks,” Havlin says.¹²⁹

The St. Louis experience points to the following:

- Creating larger audiences for symphonies will mean long-term investment in education programs
- New, nontraditional audiences need to be courted with innovative outreach programs that make people feel comfortable and break down the barriers of formalized behaviors associated with classical concerts
- Because repeated exposure and lifelong learning are key factors in symphony attendance, growing new audiences will be a slow process
- Casinos have had a dramatic and adverse effect on other entertainment industries by drawing away audiences (especially the elderly) and increasing the fees of touring artists
- Symphonies, like other art forms, are having difficulty courting the 18–30 crowd
- More work needs to be done exploring the potential of the Web to draw audiences to symphony concerts.

LA PEÑA CULTURAL CENTER

At La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, California, community outreach and a commitment to multiculturalism are not recent interests—they are concerns that were inherent in the founding of the organization 25 years ago. La Peña was formed in 1975 in the wake of the military coup that overthrew Salvador Allende of Chile in 1973 with a mission to provide information about conditions in Latin America and to share the rich cultural backgrounds of North and South

America. As Derek Richardson, Bay Area Music Critic, says: “Almost everyone in the Bay Area talks a good game of multiculturalism these days...but few have institutionalized it so thoroughly...as at La Peña Cultural Center.”¹³⁰

The organization remains true to its namesake, the Latin American tradition of *peñas* (“gathering places”)—temporary huts constructed by peasants to provide communal space to celebrate fiestas and holidays. With the urban migration of the 1960s, the rural tradition became much like the coffeehouse movement here in the U.S. In the cities of Latin America, they became gathering places where the authenticity of traditional folk forms were upheld against the onslaught of foreign-dominated cultural environments. The center maintains three different spaces—a theatre that seats 175, Café de La Peña for smaller performances, and a classroom/lecture room.

Over 20,000 people a year attend La Peña’s dizzying schedule of some 150-plus programs involving primarily artists of color. Few presenters nationally offer such a dense spate of events. One look at a typical monthly calendar shows an almost daily menu of programs, including a “timba” dance band from Havana, a hip hop program for children, a dramatic reading of a play by Fabiola Zepeda, poetry by young spoken-word artists, the silent German film *Bruder, Berber* dance and trance music, and much more.

Paul Chin, executive director, attributes much of the center’s eclecticism to its unusual administrative structure. “We work as a collective and everyone has an equal voice in programming,” he explains. “Our staff has varied interests that range from political and cultural issues that affect com-

munities of color to cultural interests in film/video, jazz, dance, music from Asia, Latin America, lesbian issues and environmental issues—you name it, we’ve programmed it.”¹³¹ Besides its regular programming, La Peña works with many groups involved in international and national peace and social justice issues. The center worked with student groups organizing against the anti-affirmative action proposition 209 and with immigrant rights groups working against California’s anti-immigrant initiative 187.

As a small nonprofit presenter, La Peña has had to face an issue common to other small- and mid-sized groups—shrinking federal grant support that has forced the organization to rely more heavily on earned income. The decrease in funding is a prime concern for an organization devoted to peace and social justice issues and to presenting new work. As a result of the pressure to earn more income, the organization has become more careful about the presentations on La Peña’s most popular nights—Friday and Saturday. “We cannot afford to have poorly attended programs on weekends,” says Chin.¹³² La Peña is committed to presenting performers from Latin America, which has

its own set of built-in challenges: publicity materials often inadequate for an urban American market, the looming and unpredictable issues surrounding visas, and the difficulty of getting media attention.

La Peña distributes a monthly “Calendar of Events” as its primary marketing tool. The organization also employs public service announcements on radio and television for larger programs (it occasionally presents off site at the University of California at Berkeley), enlists the help of social service

**SHRINKING FEDERAL GRANT
SUPPORT HAS FORCED THE
ORGANIZATION TO RELY MORE
HEAVILY ON EARNED INCOME.**

agencies, contacts community leaders, and has connections with area churches. La Peña often gives complimentary tickets away to introduce new groups to more challenging work like the performance art of Guillermo Gomez-Peña. In addition, the center clusters programs around holidays, performers, and events that are already popular—the comedy of Culture Clash, Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead), Cinco de Mayo, Chilean Independence Day, and *Quinceañeras* (parties celebrating a young woman's 15th birthday).

The clientele at La Peña is primarily bilingual, has traveled to or has lived in Latin America, is over 30, and is well educated. Chin estimates that 35% are Latino, 40% Euro-American, 15% African American, and the remainder a mix of Asian and Native American.¹³³ Two major challenges for La Peña are reaching new young audiences and connecting with disenfranchised people with little education. One powerful tool for bringing in younger audiences has been hip hop. La Peña offers workshops with hip hop artists like Boots and The Coup

and The Mystic Journeymen—performers with an interest in progressive issues and the use of art and culture for community empowerment.

To reach audiences on the lower rung of the economic ladder, La Peña sometimes has had to engage in work that makes it look more like a social service agency that provides job refer-

als and training. The center has increased its programming in new communities and, through its Presenting Partnership Program, the center works with emerging

artists, develops their work and marketing capabilities, enhances their stage presentations, and works with them over an extended period of time at the center and at specific sites in a specific community. The program also brings performers directly into the community and to schools for artist-in-residents programs that culminate in a performance at La Peña. Artists include people like Jackeline Rago, who teaches Venezuelan music, and Ras Mo, who teaches Eastern Caribbean percussion. Through these programs, La Peña has helped develop artists as well as an audience for their work.

Another offering that has proven popular and that makes the center a festive environment is its Café de La

Peña, which offers entertainment in an intimate setting plus great food from Latin America. "Our most successful programs include food," says Chin. "Food events bring people together. We have found that Latinos like to combine eating with

entertainment more so than other ethnic groups." Although this venture has been positive, La Peña recently decided to close another of its entrepreneurial efforts—its retail store called *La Tienda*. The center had hoped to tie e-commerce in with the store and also to offer outreach and dialog on its Web site, but this never materialized. "Like many nonprofits, we are under-resourced," explains Chin. "Our Web site is maintained with volunteer labor, but I still believe it has a lot of potential for us." As an example, he cites the use of e-mail to generate an audience on short notice to an Asian-American comedy performance. In any event, Chin

TO REACH AUDIENCES ON THE LOWER RUNG OF THE ECONOMIC LADDER, LA PEÑA SOMETIMES HAS HAD TO ENGAGE IN WORK THAT MAKES IT LOOK MORE LIKE A SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY THAT PROVIDES JOB REFERRALS AND TRAINING.

AS AN EXAMPLE, (CHIN) CITES THE USE OF E-MAIL TO GENERATE AN AUDIENCE ON SHORT NOTICE TO AN ASIAN-AMERICAN COMEDY PERFORMANCE.

intends for La Peña to spend at least another 25 years “making art a part of everyone’s daily diet.”¹³⁴

La Peña offers a number of lessons:

- If audiences in their teens and 20s are a necessary part of a presenter’s mix, they take a long time to materialize
- The reduction of federal and foundation grant support forces nonprofit presenters to be more cautious and take fewer risks
- Presenters need to take extraordinary steps if they want to reach disenfranchised audiences, including making close and ongoing connections with the community
- Web sites can be a powerful tool for reaching audiences, but nonprofits often do not have the resources to maintain an effective Internet presence.

Section IV

America's obsession with sports grew out of the nation's love affair with baseball, football, and basketball but today embraces nontraditional players and events that promise a wholesale jump in audience numbers. The U.S. Women's World Cup soccer team packed the Rose Bowl stadium in July of 1999 with 90,000 fans that watched the team squeak past China in a heart-stopping shootout. The National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) is rapidly shedding its image as the last stronghold of racist rednecks and today commands the second largest sports-viewing audience on television.

The field of sports is becoming as niche oriented as the magazine and television industries. Nearly 900 new magazines were launched in 1998 alone. TV, once dominated by the big three broadcast networks, today offers viewers a staggering choice of programming by an ever-increasing number of cable channels devoted to specialized interests from gardening to "extreme" sports. Marketing experts predict that this trend is likely to explode. As Michael Wolf notes: "There are entirely new content-hungry platforms that did not exist in the mid-century heyday of the mass-audience vehicles."¹³⁵

Fans of newly popular sports are participating in a cultural concept that builds products by giving them a "personality," Wolf says.¹³⁶ Both NASCAR and Women's World Cup soccer (and women's sports in general) have taken that message to heart.

NASCAR

NASCAR is a big business, a \$2-billion-a-year industry, founded 51 years ago by Bill France, Sr. from his family-owned garage in Daytona, Florida. Car racing is the fastest growing sport in America, drawing millions of TV viewers to watch broadcasts like those of the Daytona 500 and the Winston Cup circuit. On television, NASCAR races "blow away every sport but pro football," according to *Time*.¹³⁷ *TV Guide* says car racing is drawing a whole new generation of fans, lured by the charisma of a bevy of young drivers like Jeff Gordon, the 27-year-old racing superstar.¹³⁸

Gordon is the new celebrity of the sports world, and many attribute his California-blond good looks and proven track record for expanding NASCAR beyond its Southeastern roots. "NASCAR is as hot as a piston under the front-runner's hood these days and you can argue all day whether it's become so popular because it has a telegenic, Gen X superstar or whether Gordon happens to be the face of a sport whose moment has finally come," writes Roy Johnson in a cover story in *Fortune* about NASCAR. Attendance at Winston Cup races rose 64% between 1990 and 1999, and NASCAR-related paraphernalia are expected to gross more than \$1 billion in 1999—up from \$80 million in 1990. Even major corporations like Kodak, MCI Worldcom, and Home Depot are embracing a sport that they had ignored "as too regional, too downscale, and, frankly, too redneck to risk the bother."¹³⁹

Other major sports derive most of their revenue from TV rights fees and ticket sales; sponsorship dollars are pure gravy. Just the opposite holds true for auto racing. Because it was primarily regional, racing never was able to charge a fortune for TV rights or tickets, so it actively has courted sponsor

dollars to survive. The cost to support a racing team is about \$10 million a year, and most of that is covered by sponsorships. Racing may be the best buy in sports. The logos splashed on the racecars are rolling billboards, and fans spend to buy their products. One telling example:

NASCAR Barbie was Mattel's hottest collectible Barbie doll in 1998. More than one million were sold, generating about \$50 million in revenue.¹⁴⁰

What makes auto racing so popular? Accessibility is a factor. "These are souped-up replicas of real Pontiacs, Fords and Chevys—

not open-wheel, Indy-type cars—and nearly everyone in America has a car. Nearly everyone has driven too fast, too," writes Steve Lopez.¹⁴¹ NASCAR also has moved out of the Southeast. State-of-the-art racetracks have opened in urban markets like Las Vegas, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Los Angeles. Others are on the drawing board in Chicago and Kansas City. Real estate magnate Donald Trump is scouting for a suitable venue in the New York City area in partnership with International Speedway Corp., a \$190-million company with five tracks nationwide.

One thing NASCAR does is make a splash in local communities where it books races. In Bristol, Tennessee, for example, race fans dropped nearly \$70 million into the local economy last spring over four days of events. The NASCAR brand name is also good for local charities. In Bristol, the night before the big race included a fundraiser for local children's charities. Three hundred people bid on auction items like hats, uniforms, and a Jeff Gordon jacket (which alone raised \$10,000).¹⁴²

Even with its astounding growth in revenues and popularity, NASCAR struggles with familiar problems. One is rising ticket

prices, which now average \$50. Some worry that NASCAR's very popularity may attract the unwanted attention of one of the big entertainment conglomerates.

NASCAR's biggest challenge may be broadening its audience. NASCAR officials say car racing is similar to ice hockey in its appeal—mostly white but beginning to diversify. African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians are all but invisible in every level of the sport—in the stands, among drivers, on pit crews, among team owners, and in NASCAR offices with its 250 employees.¹⁴³

"As I go around the country, I see Black and Hispanic teenagers all over riding around in today's version of my generation's hot rod—a souped-up Accord or something else. Out of that group has got to come some crew chiefs, drivers, pit crews, whatever. It will happen," says Humpy Wheeler, president of Speedway Motorsports, the nation's largest track operator.¹⁴⁴ "Whether you're selling soft drinks, snack foods or a sport, all good marketers know it is important for every single person to want to buy their product. It is no different for us,"¹⁴⁵ says Bill France, Jr., son of NASCAR's founder.

To widen its audience, NASCAR teamed up with CBS Corporation and music promoters to combine stock car racing and rock music in a "NASCAR Rocks" concert series aimed at luring a new crop of young urban fans.¹⁴⁶ The tour played 30 venues. In addition to music and car racing (some venues did not have a local race), the festival-like concerts featured NASCAR-related activities and promotions designed

**WHAT MAKES
AUTO RACING SO
POPULAR?
ACCESSIBILITY IS
A FACTOR.**

**EACH EVENT INCLUDED
HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES
PROVIDED BY TOUR CO-
SPONSORS LIKE TRUE
VALUE HARDWARE STORES
AND DO-IT-YOURSELF CAR
PARTS INTERNET SITE
WRENCHEAD.COM.**

to get fans under age 25 interested in the sport. Each event included hands-on activities provided by tour co-sponsors like True Value Hardware stores and do-it-yourself car parts Internet site *Wrenchhead.com*. "NASCAR is big in certain regions, but we still need to grow with younger fans and in certain urban markets and places where there's no NASCAR track, such as Seattle, Chicago, Kansas City and Las Vegas. We decided to bring NASCAR to these folks," says George Pyne, NASCAR's vice president of marketing.¹⁴⁷

NASCAR is instructive to presenters in that it:

- Proves the power of being associated with a charismatic "performer"
- Underscores the importance of accessibility to drawing large audiences
- Emphasizes the current issues of raising prices and the difficulty of drawing in young fans
- Reiterates the dangers of not placing extra marketing attention on the changing demographic face of America, which is becoming increasingly non-white.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP SOCCER

The games women play suddenly became big news after the spectacular win by the U.S. Women's World Cup soccer team in July of 1999. The final game, in double overtime, came down to a single penalty kick. U.S. team member Brandi Chastain made the winning goal against the Chinese team and tore off her shirt in celebration. Chastain's baring of her sports bra made headlines and magazine covers and ignited a marketing rocket that may put women's sports in the same league as male-dominated games. What cannot be underestimated was the huge appeal of the event, which

drew in a new batch of fans, many of whom never before had seen soccer or watched a women's team.

The numbers are exciting—90,185 fans crammed into the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, and an estimated 40 million more watched at home on television.¹⁴⁸ Some 2.9 million U.S. households watched the U.S.-Brazil match on July 4, surpassing the ratings for the seventh game of the 1999 Stanley Cup ice hockey championship. Even more impressive, 657,000 tuned in to watch the replay on ESPN cable network the same night as baseball's all-star game. The final game was not the only one that attracted fans. Some 650,000 tickets were sold to the 32 Women's World Cup matches, bringing in almost \$23 million.¹⁴⁹ More fans attended the U.S.-Denmark match in New York than made it to the New York Jets' football playoff game.¹⁵⁰

Instant celebrity is not unknown in sports, even women's sports, but marketing experts say something different is at work with the Women's World Cup soccer champs. Team members immediately picked up product endorsements—Nike and Adidas already had signed individual players for ads, and 19 companies put up \$6 million for sponsorship rights. General Mills picked five of the women to feature on boxes of Wheaties cereal as part of what the company is calling "a new era of heroes."¹⁵¹ This marks the first time in Wheaties' 75-year history that a soccer player has been on the box. In many ways, the cereal box endorsement is even more important than one from a sporting goods maker—nearly everyone buys cereal. Michelle Akers, one of the team members featured on the cereal boxes, says it "should encourage every little girl out there to follow her dreams."¹⁵²

Some marketing experts say the team's notoriety could prove short lived because of the lack of a women's professional league

and Americans' relative lack of interest in soccer compared to sports like football, basketball, and baseball. Soccer used to be seen as a dull sport "played by skinny foreigners in short pants."¹⁵³ For more than a generation—supported by Title IX legislation mandating equal financing for girls' athletics—girls and now women have been encouraged through school programs to participate in all kinds of sports, soccer included. According to the Women's Sports Foundation, 40% of all high school and 39% of all college athletes are women, and women's NCAA soccer participation grew 120% between 1990 and 1996.¹⁵⁴ Among girls ages six to eleven, participation in "vigorous sports" increased 86% between 1987 and 1997, the foundation says, and nearly one third of girls in this age group are actively involved in a sport. In 1970, only one girl in 27 took part in high school sports; today the ratio is one in three. "As more and more soccer moms began to learn about the game, and kids and parents began attending local high-school and collegiate soccer matches, millions have developed a real understanding of the sport," writes one reporter.¹⁵⁵

Matt Robinson, assistant professor of sports management at York College of Pennsylvania, says demographic changes occurring in the United States favor continued support. Trends indicate a substantial increase in the Hispanic population—traditionally a fanatical soccer community—over the next decade, which will sustain the current popularity. "I think teams in California ...have done a pretty effective job of marketing themselves to that community. It is reality that the Hispanics will be a large portion, and I think that bodes well for soccer," he says.¹⁵⁶

In addition, marketing experts point to the strong foundation upon which a women's soccer league would be built. Most of the

current stars are in their 20s and 30s and still have competitive years ahead of them. The new, younger members of the national team will have the advantage of learning from them. With more than 100,000 girls taking up soccer between 1990 and 1997, there will be no shortage of Mia Hamm wannabes.

The team's commitments include a 12-city "victory tour" of indoor arenas, which began in October, 1999, as well as memorabilia signing and book and movie deals. The arena tour is expected to generate \$1.5 million. Jerry Solomon, a commercial buyer at SFM Media, said the soccer team captured Americans' imaginations "not only by their playing but by their demeanor." He expects the feeling will have "some staying power. They don't argue, they didn't bad-mouth anybody. The whole idea of the teamwork aspect captured the fancy of the public," he says.¹⁵⁷ Unlike most high profile male athletes, the product marketing featuring the women's soccer team emphasizes teamwork and togetherness. Nike's ads feature the tag line, "We will take on the world as a team." The team is shown on a bicycle built for seven, going en masse to the movies and the dentist.¹⁵⁸ Gatorade's "I can do better" spots paired Mia Hamm against Michael Jordan, squaring off in a series of sports contests.

John Langel, hired by the team to handle marketing contracts, says the market potential is enormous. "Look at the hundreds of thousands of little boys and girls playing soccer right now. These women are perfect role models for them."¹⁵⁹

Women's World Cup soccer is a reminder of:

- The importance of education and the schools in building a base of support for a sport or an art form
- The effect that the increase in Hispanic

population (and, by extension, other ethnic minorities) can have on the presenting world

- The growing and still untapped power of the young women's market in sports
- The public's strong need for positive role models.

S e c t i o n V

Why do people pay money and devote ever-increasing amounts of time to change their own behaviors? Pine and Gilmore's research suggests it is because people want to be affected by the experience, to be transformed.¹⁶⁰ People always have sought experiences to learn and grow, develop and improve, mend and reform. Increasingly, they are willing to invest both time and money to gain those experiences. The pattern is evident in many spheres of culture from personal trainers to individuals seeking spiritual growth outside the bounds of their traditional places of worship.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

Focus on the Family, based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, is an example of a business that offers "transformational experiences" to individuals and families seeking change. If numbers alone determine success, Focus on the Family is successful beyond imagining. What makes it work is a carefully orchestrated strategy to develop and maintain a life-long constituency. As Pine and Gilmore point out, "Transformation elicitors must care enough to offer up-front diagnosis, to direct the staging of multiple events required for the buyer to change, and to follow through relentlessly" to develop a long-term caring relationship.¹⁶¹ They say those goals are achieved first through training employees to be caring people who work to transform customers and through adoption of endur-

ing principles that promise a continuing relationship.

Focus on the Family began in 1977, when Dr. James Dobson, a clinical psychologist at the University of California Medical School, published *Dare to Discipline*, a book that grew out of his work with troubled children. In it, he expounded his philosophy of old-fashioned, Bible-based rules for raising healthy kids. The book was a bestseller, and Dobson became a hit on the lecture circuit.

He asked his publishers for a \$300,000 advance and bought airtime on 36 radio stations for a 15-minute call-in show where he answered questions from worried parents. "He tried to answer every question personally," says Steve Kenny, community relations representative for Focus on the Family. "He has this incredible work ethic, and it made him exceptionally responsive to his audience. His philosophy is to treat them as special members of our family."¹⁶² Over time, the number of listeners and readers, many seeking guidance for particular problems, spawned an organization that now has 1,300 full-time employees in Colorado Springs and in 16 affiliate offices worldwide.

Pine and Gilmore's "enduring principles" are the backbone of Focus on the Family's mission, one from which it never wavers. Its five pillars are:

1. Life is sacred.
2. People are meant to have a relationship with God.
3. Children are a blessing.
4. Marriage is for life and between a man and a woman.
5. There is a relationship among family,

**WHAT MAKES IT WORK
IS A CAREFULLY
ORCHESTRATED STRATEGY
TO DEVELOP AND
MAINTAIN A LIFE-LONG
CONSTITUENCY.**

church, and government.

All of Focus on the Family's outreach efforts—which range from radio and television programs to two-to-four-day seminar retreats to a host of niche magazines—reinforce that message. Everything the organization does is grounded in family issues, from parental training to husband-wife relationships.

Kenney says some 225,000 people a year visit its visitors center in Colorado Springs, taking it in as part of a vacation. They stop by to shop in the retail store; visit the art gallery; and let the kids play in its free “Kids Corner,” a combination amusement park and hands-on learning center that features touch-screen computers that allow them to make short animated videos.¹⁶³

The original radio program—begun in 1977 and still called *Focus on the Family*—airs six days a week on 1,300 stations in the United States. The show is now 30 minutes long and is heard in 9 different languages in 91 countries worldwide. The organization estimates the show reaches 5 million listeners a year in the United States alone. Kenney believes that the program is now being heard by a third generation of people who grew up with Focus' family values. “We've raised this audience over 22 years. Parents coming to see us today were raised by parents who were listening to Dr. Dobson,” he says.¹⁶⁴

Focus on the Family is only one of a stable of radio and video programs now produced by the organization at its Colorado headquarters. Kenney says its most popular program may be *Adventures in Odyssey*, an “old-fashioned radio drama” for kids between 5 and 15 years old.¹⁶⁵ *Odyssey* has been on the air since 1984 and now numbers 400 30-minute episodes that run six days a week on some of the 1,100 radio stations that carry it in the U.S. The program usually starts in Mr. Whitaker's soda shop, called *Whit's End*, and always features a

moral ethical lesson about consequences of actions. One of the more popular attractions at Focus on the Family's extensive Colorado Springs visitors center is a re-creation of the Whit's End soda shop, where visitors can “meet” the characters in the drama.

To reach teens, Focus produces a weekly 30-minute live call-in show on Saturday nights called *Live LOTE* (which stands for “life on the edge”). The average age of callers is 14, Kenney says, but the program is designed to span the 10–18 age range.¹⁶⁶ Focus on the Family also produces news programming, such as *Family News in Focus*, a regionally customized five-minute program that covers legislative and other issues impacting families.

Older teens are harder to reach. With that in mind, Focus on the Family recently added a Webzine called *Boundless* to its Internet site. When it started in March of 1999, the site was getting 600 hits a day; now it generates “thousands,” according to Kenney. “It's [the Internet] a route to college age kids. Actually, they asked us to do it. They'd grown up with our magazines, and we weren't producing anything for that particular age group,” he says.¹⁶⁷

Magazines are one of Focus on the Family's most influential audience-development tools. The organization's publications are crafted to fit specific demographics. Its *Focus on the Family* flagship publication reaches 2.5 million people monthly. It also publishes niche magazines for physicians, teachers, single parents, teenage girls, and teenage boys as well as an 8–12 children's magazine and *Focus Over 50* for older adults, many of them raising grandchildren.

All this costs money. Focus on the Family's 1998-99 budget was \$120 million. “Everything we produce is paid for by private donations and a few foundations,” Kenney says. The donations come from the

sale of tapes, both video and audio, and other materials including books and manuals. The average gift is \$35, but Focus on the Family also has a substantial list of donors who give more than \$500 a year. The latter group worries Focus on the Family, Kenney says. The average member of that group is now 48 years old; 10 years ago, the average was 37 years, he says. "We need to get to those Generation Xers. Maybe we're not communicating with them very well," says Kenney.¹⁶⁸

Money is not the biggest challenge facing Focus on the Family, Kenney says. "Our challenge is that in almost 23 years we've grown to the point where most of our time and energy is spent on maintenance and upkeep, on internal policies, and not enough is being directed outward. We have to look out on the horizon and not in on ourselves," he says. Nor does the organization effectively reach minority populations. Its penetration into African-American, Asian, and Hispanic communities is minimal. Kenney says the organization is making a concerted effort to bring onto its staff pastors and outreach workers from within those communities who "understand the culture, the language and the family structures" to make connections there. "It's not as good as we'd like it to be," he admits.¹⁶⁹

COOK COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRIES

Simply being identified with good works is not enough. Cook Communications Ministries, the largest non-denominational publisher of Sunday school materials, decided in 1997 to stage a Christian art exhibition to introduce itself to its new community of Colorado Springs. The show, "Visual Expressions of Christian Faith," featured 500 pieces from 300 regional artists in a range of media. The juried show awarded \$12,000 in prizes to winning entries. About

5,000 people, mainly adults, attended over the four-week run. Cook, however, had expected more support from a community that boasts some 300 churches.

Randy Maid, creative director at Cook Communications and curator of the exhibition, says he was frustrated when people told him later that they had not known about the exhibit. Even though he bought ads in local newspapers and ran two TV spots, attendance was generated mainly by word of mouth. Maid is planning another exhibit, but next time, he intends to cultivate the church community well before.¹⁷⁰

Part of the problem with attendance was that the churches did not support the exhibit in a big way. "It was disappointing," says Maid. "We contacted the clergy from all the churches and invited them to a 'pastor's night.' We were going to give away framed prints from the show and explain what it was about. We invited 300 and we got back maybe seven responses, so we cancelled it [pastor's night]," he says. "There's still a shadow of suspicion among some churches about art and Christianity, still beliefs about graven images and lingering attitudes that blew up in the '60s about radical art. We just didn't reach them."¹⁷¹

A review of Focus on the Family and Cook Communications Ministries shows that:

- If packaged properly, a large cross section of the population will flock to transformational experiences
- Presenters can ensure staying power by developing long-term caring relationships based on the adoption of a set of principles that resonates with its audience
- Outreach needs to be done in a niche fashion that is sensitive to the differences between and needs of each demographic or psychographic unit
- Even experienced organizations have

difficulty reaching Gen Xers—a great frustration as the average age of the current audience increases

- Organizations with a traditionally white audience base have to face the reality of the increased numbers of African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics.

CONCLUSION

Several themes emerge from these examples. All organizations—for-profits as well as nonprofits—recognize that audience demographics are in flux. A new generation has overtaken the ubiquitous Baby

Boomers. Reaching Gen X (and Gen Y) is a very different proposition from marketing to their parents. Presenters will need to commit long-term as opposed to short-term efforts and shift away from mass marketing to niche marketing tools.

In addition, large and growing ethnic popula-

tions are increasingly important audiences, but capturing their attention remains a time-consuming one-to-one effort. These communities are sensitive to ticket prices, expect programming that is relevant to their own concerns, and want to engage with entities they trust. Reaching them will mean more intensive commitment to working directly in communities and to creating strategic alliances with a variety of agencies, including churches and social service organizations.

Equally significant are rapid changes in communications technologies. How to use them effectively is a critical issue for any organization trying to build audience interest and loyalty, especially among young people. Many presenters understand that

the Internet can be a powerful tool for communicating with and educating audiences, selling tickets and ancillary items, and even presenting performances. For-profit presenters are investing heavily in this new communication and promotion tool. Nonprofits must overcome resource issues— personnel and finances—that inhibit their exploration of the Web. The field as a whole is looking to find examples of best practice that will help lead the way.

Finally, people are using their leisure time in new ways. Leisure is more fragmented, and people often do several things simultaneously. Figuring out how to connect to that fragmentation scheme is a major issue for many arts presenters.

One starting point might be to rethink the product, using Pine and Gilmore's matrix of questions for designing an entertainment experience:

- What can be done to improve the aesthetics of the experience? The aesthetics are what make your guests want to come in, sit down, and hang out. Think about what you can do to make the environment more inviting, interesting, or comfortable. You want to create an environment in which your guests feel free "to be."
- Once there, what should your guests do? The escapist aspect of an experience draws guests further, immersing them in activities. Focus on what you should encourage guests "to do" if they are to become active participants in the experience.
- The educational aspect of an experience, like the escapist, is essentially active. Learning requires the full participation of the learner. What do you want your guests "to learn" from the experience? What information or activities will help to engage them in the exploration of knowledge and

**PRESENTERS WILL NEED
TO COMMIT LONG-TERM AS
OPPOSED TO SHORT-TERM
EFFORTS AND SHIFT AWAY
FROM MASS MARKETING TO
NICHE MARKETING TOOLS.**

skills?

- Entertainment, like aesthetics, is a passive aspect of experience. When guests are entertained, they are not really doing anything but responding to the experience. What can you do by way of entertainment to get your guests “to stay”? How can you make the experience more fun and more enjoyable?¹⁷²

- 1 Ann Millman and Steven Wolff, “High Art...Popular Culture,” survey for 1996 ISPA Conference, 28 May 1998, 9.
- 2 William S. Hendon and Anna M. Starvaggi, “Using the Nonprofit Arts in the Growth of Trade?” *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society* 22 (Summer 1999):157.
- 3 Hendon and Starvaggi, 163.
- 4 Richard A. Peterson and Roger M. Kern, “Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore,” *American Sociological Review* 61 (October 1996): 900.
- 5 Peterson and Kern, 905.
- 6 Tyler Cowen, *In Praise of Commercial Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1.
- 7 Cowen, 145-146.
- 8 Cowen, 151.
- 9 Cowen, 152.
- 10 Cowen, 154-155.
- 11 Michael J. Wolf, *The Entertainment Economy: How Mega-Media Forces are Transforming Our Lives* (New York: Times Books-Random House, 1999), 4.
- 12 Murray Horwitz, quoted in Douglas A. Blackmon, “Metamorphosis: Forget the Stereotype: America is Becoming A Nation of Culture. ‘Madame Butterfly in Waco,’” *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 September 1998, sec. A, 1.
- 13 Douglas A. Blackmon, “Metamorphosis: Forget the Stereotype: America is Becoming A Nation of Culture. ‘Madame Butterfly in Waco,’” *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 September 1998, sec. A, 1.
- 14 Blackmon, sec. A, 1.
- 15 Brook Larmer, “Latino America,” *Newsweek*, 12 July 1999, 48-49.
- 16 Wolf, 65-66.
- 17 Larmer, 48-49.
- 18 J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, *Rocking the Ages: The Yankelovich Report on Generational Marketing* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997).
- 19 Wolf, 34.
- 20 “Kaleidodscope,” *American Demographics*, August 1998, 56.
- 21 “Kaleidodscope,” 56
- 22 Wolf, 8.
- 23 Wolf, 9.
- 24 B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 15.
- 25 Pine and Gilmore, 35-36.
- 26 Pine and Gilmore, 100.
- 27 Blackmon, sec. A, 8.
- 28 Wolf, 31.
- 29 Wolf, 39.
- 30 Abhi Chacki, quoted in Brett Sporich, “Analysts Wary of Blockbuster’s Future Success,” *Video Store*, 16 May 1999, Unpaginated.
- 31 Pine and Gilmore, 31.
- 32 Wolf, 54.
- 33 Pine and Gilmore, 47.
- 34 Walt Disney Company, quoted in Pine and Gilmore, 41.
- 35 Pine and Gilmore, 41.
- 36 “Disney: Out on a Limb,” *Business Week*, 19 July 1999, 40.
- 37 “Disney’s FASTPASS Gives Disney Park Guests Alternatives to Waiting in Line,” *PR Newswire*, 8 July 1999, 7, 94.

- 38 Alan Byrd, "Epcot Gets Face Lift for 21st Century," *Orlando Business Journal*, 2 July 1999, 2.
- 39 Disney press release, "The 15-month Walt Disney World Millennium Celebration: A Celebration Too Big For Just One Night," *PR Newswire*, 24 June 1999, 5, 961.
- 40 Byrd, 2.
- 41 "The Disney Travel Agent Web Site," *Travel Agent*, 28 June 1999, sec. 2, 13.
- 42 Evelyn Nieves, "Las Vegas Journal: Casino Seeks Tax Break for Art's Sake," *New York Times*, 12 April 1999, sec. A, 18.
- 43 Ronald Grover, "Liza Minnelli, Neil Sedaka, And...Claude Monet?" *Business Week*, 12 October 1998, 47.
- 44 Kenneth Baker, "It's No Mirage: Paintings by Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Picasso Draw Crowds at the Bellagio Gallery," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 July 1999, 33.
- 45 Baker, 33.
- 46 Michael Kimmelman, "In An Unreal City, Real Masterworks Beat the Odds," *New York Times*, 6 December 1998, sec. 2, 45.
- 47 Gloria Goodale, "Bring Van Gogh and Monet to Casino Land," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 April 1999, 18.
- 48 Kimmelman, sec. 2, 45.
- 49 Baker, 33.
- 50 Goodale, 18.
- 51 Kimmelman, sec. 2, 43.
- 52 Goodale, 18.
- 53 Kimmelman, sec. 2, 43.
- 54 Cirque du Soleil-[cited 2 August 1999]; available from INTERNET@www.cirquedusoleil.com.
- 55 S.M. Hahn, "Fantastic Feats: Cirque du Soleil Brings its Lavish Costumes and International Cast to Biloxi for 'Alegria'," *The Times-Picayune*, 28 May 1999, sec. L, 20.
- 56 Robert Trussell, "Spirit and Spectacle: Cirque du Soleil Offers Grand Entertainment That Takes Us Beyond the Infinite," *The Kansas City Star*, 13 June 1999, sec. J, 1.
- 57 Hahn, sec. L, 20.
- 58 Cirque du Soleil, www.cirquedusoleil.com.
- 59 Hahn, sec. L, 20.
- 60 Cirque du Soleil, www.cirquedusoleil.com.
- 61 Hahn, sec. L, 20.
- 62 Hahn, sec. L, 20.
- 63 Trussell, sec. J, 1.
- 64 Hahn, sec. L, 20.
- 65 Dori Allen, telephone interview with Dinah Zeiger, 26 August 1999.
- 66 Julie Cooper, "Tiny Missouri Theater town is a Mecca for Music Fans," *The Vancouver Sun*, 17 November 1998, sec. C, 9.
- 67 Cooper, sec. C, 9.
- 68 Allen, telephone interview.
- 69 Allen, telephone interview.
- 70 D.K. Shifflet, quoted in Cooper, sec. C, 9.
- 71 Allen, telephone interview.
- 72 Craig Wilson, "In the Heartland, a Real Squeeze Play: Accordionists Face-Off for 'hottest' Title," *USA Today*, 29 March 1999, sec. D, 1.
- 73 Ellen Graham, "Music: Word of Mouth Creates an Idol," *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 June 1999, sec. B, 1.
- 74 Allen, telephone interview.
- 75 Allen, telephone interview.
- 76 SFX Entertainment, Inc. press release, "SFX Entertainment Moves to New York Stock Exchange," *Business Wire*, 7 June 1999, 329.
- 77 Goldman Sachs & Company, quoted in Neil Strauss and James Sterngold, "The Concert Juggernaut," *The New York Times*, 20 July 1998, sec. B, 6.
- 78 Greg Holland, *SFX and the Non-Profit Presenters*, Panel discussion at Western Arts Alliance, Denver, 3 September 1999.
- 79 Greg Holland, *SFX and the Non-Profit Presenters*, Panel discussion at Western Arts Alliance, Denver, 3 September 1999.

- 80 Colleen Jennings-Roggensack, *SFX and the Non-Profit Presenters*, Panel discussion at Western Arts Alliance, Denver, 3 September 1999.
- 81 Greg Holland, *SFX and the Non-Profit Presenters*, Panel discussion at Western Arts Alliance, Denver, 3 September 1999.
- 82 Steve Boulay, *SFX and the Non-Profit Presenters*, Panel discussion at Western Arts Alliance, Denver, 3 September 1999.
- 83 SFX Entertainment, Inc., "SFX Entertainment Licenses Worldwide Rights to Exhibit the Titanic Artifact Collection," *Business Wire*, 21 April 1999, 152.
- 84 "Vegas, SFX in Unusual Cross-Promotional Deal," *Entertainment Marketing Letter*, March 1999, sec. 12, 3.
- 85 SFX Entertainment, Inc., "SFX Entertainment Announces Corporate Tour Sponsors for George Strait County Music Festival," *Business Wire*, 9 March 1999, 1260.
- 86 Mike Farrel, quoted in SFX Entertainment, Inc., "SFX Entertainment Announces Broad-based Internet Strategy," *Business Wire*, 18 June 1999, 1490.
- 87 SFX Entertainment Announces Broad-based Internet Strategy," 1490.
- 88 "SFX Entertainment Announces Broad-based Internet Strategy," 1490.
- 89 Robert Sillerman, quoted in SFX Entertainment, Inc., "SFX Entertainment Announces Broad-based Internet Strategy," *Business Wire*, 18 June 1999, 1490.
- 90 The Seagram Company Ltd. and House of Blues Entertainment, Inc., "Seagram Sells Universal Concerts to House of Blues Entertainment, Inc.; Acquisition Fuels House of Blues Digital Content Strategy," *Business Wire*, 26 July 1999, 240.
- 91 House of Blues Entertainment, Inc., "Corporate Information," House of Blues Company Information, August 1999, 3.
- 92 Pine and Gilmore, 46.
- 93 Dave Fortin, telephone interview with Dinah Zeiger, 24 August 1999.
- 94 Fortin, telephone interview.
- 95 Fortin, telephone interview.
- 96 Fortin, telephone interview.
- 97 Fortin, telephone interview.
- 98 Mary Lafollette, telephone interview with Dinah Zeiger, 17 August 1999.
- 99 Lafollette, telephone interview.
- 100 Lafollette, telephone interview.
- 101 Lafollette, telephone interview.
- 102 Lafollette, telephone interview.
- 103 Lafollette, telephone interview.
- 104 Asia Pacific Cultural Center, *Commission on Arts in the 21st Century: "Case Statement,"* December 1999, 5.
- 105 Patsy O'Connell, telephone interview with Morrie Warshawski, 24 August 1999.
- 106 O'Connell, telephone interview.
- 107 O'Connell, telephone interview.
- 108 Karen Kamara Gose, telephone interview with Morrie Warshawski, 30 December 1999.
- 109 Gose, telephone interview.
- 110 O'Connell, telephone interview.
- 111 Colleen Jennings-Roggensack, telephone interview with Dinah Zeiger, 19 August 1999.
- 112 Jennings-Roggensack, telephone interview.
- 113 David Harrison, telephone interview with Dinah Zeiger, 19 August 1999.
- 114 Jennings-Roggensack, telephone interview.
- 115 Jennings-Roggensack, telephone interview.
- 116 Harrison, telephone interview.
- 117 Harrison, telephone interview.
- 118 Stephen Duncan, telephone interview with Dinah Zeiger, 23 August 1999.
- 119 Duncan, telephone interview.
- 120 Cheryl Havlin, telephone interview with Dinah Zeiger, 30 August 1999.

- 121 Havlin, telephone interview.
- 122 Havlin, telephone interview.
- 123 Havlin, telephone interview.
- 124 Duncan, telephone interview.
- 125 Duncan, telephone interview.
- 126 Duncan, telephone interview.
- 127 Duncan, telephone interview.
- 128 Duncan, telephone interview.
- 129 Havlin, telephone interview.
- 130 Derk Richardson, "Derk Richardson's Best Microcosm of the Global Village," *The East Bay Express*, 18 October 1991.
- 131 Paul Chin, telephone interview with Dinah Zeiger, 29 December 1999.
- 132 Chin, telephone interview.
- 133 Chin, telephone interview.
- 134 Chin, telephone interview.
- 135 Wolf, 89.
- 136 Wolf, 224.
- 137 Steve Lopez, "Babes, Bordeaux & Billy Bobs: How I Learned to Love NASCAR and not to Hate Superstar Jeff Gordon," *Time*, 1999, 70
- 138 Reid Spencer, "Rising Stocks," *TV Guide*, 17 July 1999, 28.
- 139 Roy S. Johnson, "Speed Sells" *Fortune*, 12 April 1999, 57.
- 140 Johnson, 58.
- 141 Lopez, 71.
- 142 Lopez, 71.
- 143 Johnson, 68.
- 144 Humpy Wheeler, quoted in Johnson, 70.
- 145 Bill France, Jr., quoted in Lopez, 74.
- 146 Kate Fitzgerald, "Nascar Rolls in Rock: Young Urban Set Exposed to Racing Brand Via Concert Series," *Advertising Age*, 14 June 1999, 30.
- 147 George Payne, quoted in Fitzgerald, 30.
- 148 Jennifer G. Hickey, "World Champs," *Insight on the News/Washington Times*, 16 August 1999, sec. 15, 30, 10.
- 149 Sam Register, "It Went Down to the Wire," *Newsweek*, 19 July 1999, 46.
- 150 Hickey, 10.
- 151 "Wheaties boxes to honor World Cup Women Soccer Stars," *Associated Press*, 11 August 1999.
- 152 Michelle Akers, quoted in *Associated Press*, 11 August 1999.
- 153 Hickey, 10.
- 154 Women's Sports Foundation, "Women's Sports Facts-Participation" 1 August 1999, 9-10.
- 155 Hickey, 10.
- 156 Matt Robinson, quoted in Hickey, 10.
- 157 Jerry Solomon, quoted in Skip Wollenberg, "Women's Soccer team becomes Madison Avenue's latest hot property," *Associated Press*, 14 July 1999.
- 158 Barbara Lippert, "Team Mia," *AdWeek*, 21 June 1999, 42.
- 159 John Langel, quoted in "Sports Agent Helps U.S. Women Soccer Players Exploit Marketing Potential," *The Star-Ledger*, 25 July 1999, 9.
- 160 Pine and Gilmore, 163.
- 161 Pine and Gilmore, 182.
- 162 Steve Kenny, personal interview with Dinah Zeiger, 2 September 1999.
- 163 Kenny, personal interview.
- 164 Kenny, personal interview.
- 165 Kenny, personal interview.
- 166 Kenny, personal interview.
- 167 Kenny, personal interview.
- 168 Kenny, personal interview.
- 169 Kenny, personal interview.
- 170 Randy Maid, telephone interview with Dinah Zeiger, 2 September 1999.
- 171 Maid, telephone interview.
- 172 Pine and Gilmore, 39-40.