

March 30, 2009

As spring returns to the Midwest, please allow me to update you on our activities over the winter months as well as a new initiative in partnership with the Wallace Foundation.

Arts Midwest World Fest

Communities for the 2009-2011 Arts Midwest World Fest cycle have been selected! They include:

- Valley City, ND
- Aberdeen, SD
- Alexandria, MN
- Knoxville, IA
- Marquette, MI
- Hartford, WI
- Bloomington, IL
- Terre Haute, IN
- Sandusky, OH

760—that's how many sheets of paper were required to prepare the originals and copies needed to submit a P-3 and P-3S visa petition in order to bring Israeli group Esta to the Midwest for Arts Midwest World Fest. And that's just one ensemble. For Senior Program Director Ken Carlson, securing visas is time-consuming, unpredictable, and sometimes expensive work, but Arts Midwest provides a real service to the region simply by doing it. Few, if any, of the communities who participate in Arts Midwest World Fest would have the resources to tackle the visa process on their own. This process is the first step towards creating the successful residencies enjoyed by our communities.

After many weeks in the Midwest, An Da Union, a vibrant group from the Inner Mongolia region of China, embarked on a special extended tour made possible by support from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. The ensemble traveled to Philadelphia, PA, and the Washington, DC, area, where it led workshops as well as public concerts, performed for a special reception at the Chinese Embassy, and enthusiastically connected with members of the local Mongolian community.

With every Arts Midwest World Fest tour, we track the number of workshops and performances as well as attendance numbers. This information is important in demonstrating the program's ability to reach many students and adults in our communities. If only we could quantify emotional impact as easily! We've heard from so many people who, after meeting An Da Union, struggle to put into words what the experience meant to them. The ensemble's charisma and genuine warmth encouraged students and adults alike to reach out and learn about the ensemble's culture while sharing a bit of their own.

Arts Midwest World Fest



An Da Union at a school workshop in Ames, IA.

Photo credit: Patti Cotter, Iowa State Center

An Da Union traveled to Philadelphia, PA, and the Washington, DC, area to lead additional workshops and public concerts as well as a special reception at the Embassy of the People's Republic of China!



Photo credit: Sophie Lascelles



Watch a video of Mauvais Sort's workshops and public performance in Elgin, IL, at www.youtube.com/artsmidwest



A packed auditorium for a school workshop with Mauvais Sort in Jasper, IN.

Photo credit: Kit Miracle

"Student audiences at all levels loved participating in singing and dancing to traditional French Canadian songs, being called onstage, and in general, caught the fever of the performers and their message."

Kit Miracle
Director
Jasper Community Arts Commission

Midwest Arts Conference

The 2009 Midwest Arts Conference will occur in Saint Paul, Minnesota, from September 9–12. Planning for the Conference is underway and we are excited about the opportunities to partner with many local arts organizations and colleagues. In December, the Conference co-chairs joined Arts Midwest staff to tour the Conference facilities and attend a pre-event planning meeting. The discussion focused on how the current economy may affect attendance; ways to make the Conference a valuable experience that is accessible and affordable; professional development topics and potential keynote speakers that address the current issues in the field; and ways to increase the value of in-person networking.

A substantial part of the conversation was focused on creating showcases and live performances that will offer more in-depth exploration of art forms. As in past years, the Conference will continue its commitment to presenting high-quality artists from a wide range of performing arts disciplines; going forward, we will add a special emphasis on one major performance genre each year. At the 2009 event, we will highlight dance throughout the Conference with live performances and related educational programming.

Learn more about this year's Conference and see photos and video from past Conferences at www.artsmidwest.org.

If you would prefer to receive an electronic version of this newsletter, please contact Stephen Manuszak, development associate, at stephen@artsmidwest.org

Wallace Excellence Initiative

On November 13, 2008, the Wallace Foundation announced a four-year arts funding partnership in the Twin Cities designed to foster growth in public arts attendance and to identify, develop, and share useful lessons on how arts organizations can reach more people. The Wallace Foundation is collaborating with Arts Midwest and Minnesota Community Foundation over the next four years (2009-2012) to create a learning network for all Minneapolis/St. Paul arts organizations and foster arts engagement region-wide. The collaboration, funded by a grant of \$1.6 million from Wallace, will inform and support the participation-building work of many arts organizations. In addition, eight Twin Cities arts organizations were awarded Wallace's Excellence Awards, and will receive \$5.3 million in grants ranging from \$300,000 to \$750,000.



The Wallace Foundation takes a city-based approach to its arts funding to help improve arts engagement across whole communities. Wallace chose Minneapolis/St. Paul as one of six sites for this effort because of the area's high concentration and variety of arts organizations, and the robust collaboration among local funders and arts organizations. Seattle is the other city chosen for Wallace Excellence Awards grants in 2008. Philadelphia and San Francisco were chosen in 2007, and Chicago and Boston were selected in 2006. Arts Midwest staff is currently developing the plan for this initiative. We have conducted focus groups on arts organizations' needs, and are planning upcoming forums on engaging audiences for Twin Cities arts organizations.

The Big Read

The application deadline for The Big Read September 2009 – June 2010 received a total of 301 applications, our largest pool to date! Applications represented 45 states, plus Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Eight of the nine Arts Midwest states are represented. The applications are currently being reviewed by a panel of experts from across the country, and notifications are expected to be released mid-April. Meanwhile, the current Big Read cycle will conclude its programming June 30, 2009 with approximately 10,000 events and discussions.

The Big Read Films

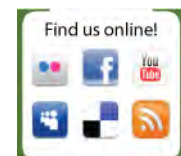
The Big Read is pleased to announce the release of *A Conversation with Ray Bradbury* and *A Conversation with Amy Tan*, now available in both short and long versions on The Big Read Web site, www.neabigread.org. These films provide an additional resource to engage readers across the country with the authors and their remarkable books.

The Big Read Egypt/U.S.



Programming commenced in Egypt at Big Read Egypt/U.S. Egyptian partner Bibliotheca Alexandrina with a day-long program launch event attended by over 1,000 Egyptian readers excited to learn more about the literature of the United States. Another program partner, the Egyptian Association for Educational Resources, kicked-off their programming with 85 people of different backgrounds attending an introduction to *The Grapes of Wrath* hosted by prominent Egyptian professors.

I hope this update finds you well, and I encourage you to visit www.artsmidwest.org for further details—subscribe to our RSS feed or the online version of this newsletter, view our ongoing YouTube efforts, and much more. Thank you for your continued support, and I hope to see you soon!



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Fraher'.

David Fraher
Executive Director

If you would prefer to receive an electronic version of this newsletter, please contact Stephen Manuszak, development associate, at stephen@artsmidwest.org