



October 6, 2009

Summer and fall have been extraordinarily busy for Arts Midwest. We just completed another fantastic Midwest Arts Conference, and are excitedly kicking off the 2009-2010 Performing Arts Fund engagements, The Big Read programs, and the 2009-2011 Arts Midwest World Fest cycle! We are also thrilled to announce that we just received a \$75,000 grant from The Hearst Foundations to support the planning and implementation of Arts Midwest World Fest. The Hearst Foundations' generous contribution will ensure that Arts Midwest can deliver high-quality, comprehensive arts-in-education experiences to thousands of youth and families in small- and mid-sized communities across the Midwest. In the following pages, please allow me to share with you some highlights of the past few months and bring you up to speed on our programming.

### Midwest Arts Conference

The 22nd annual Midwest Arts Conference was a great success! The Conference, based in Saint Paul, Minnesota, ran from September 9-12, 2009, and offered many networking and learning opportunities for the 905 attendees. The Marketplace served as a central meeting point for the 432 performing arts presenters to connect with the 262 exhibiting organizations, who represented more than 4,000 artists or ensembles.



There were a number of highlights from this year's Conference. I am excited to announce that we recently awarded the first **David J. Fraher Future Leaders Fund** scholarship to Megan Vetch, Marketing Assistant at the Paramount Theatre and Visual Arts Center in St. Cloud, Minnesota and recent graduate of the College of St. Benedict. The Fund was used to provide a full scholarship for Megan to attend the Midwest Arts Conference. Megan, who is pursuing a career in presenting the performing arts, spent her time at the conference attending educational workshops, networking with industry professionals, and observing the dynamic responsibilities inherent to arts leadership.

EmcArts, a leading arts consultancy, conducted dynamic seminars on the topics of management, innovation, and organizational change. Their keynote address, "**Building Our Future Together: Innovative Responses to Turbulent Times**," offered insight into the challenges and opportunities currently facing arts organizations. A follow-up question and answer session between Richard Evans, president of EmcArts, and myself called on participants to identify opportunities for innovation in their own organizations, to increase collaboration across agencies, and to explore ways in which Arts Midwest can further support this vast network of artists, agents, presenters, and organizations.

Featured Speed Lead sessions offered participants a fun, fast-paced way to connect in a "speed dating"-style setting. Professional development sessions offered attendees the opportunity to network and discuss topics on audience development, legal issues, and discipline-based presenting and marketing strategies. In addition to the formal workshops, many performing arts service organizations and presenter consortium groups held small group discussions about their current programming and grant opportunities.

We had incredible support for the Conference this year, and we would like to thank our generous sponsors:

- Americans for the Arts
- BAM! Baird Artists Management and Kevin Spirtas
- Baylin Artists Management
- Canadian Consulate General
- Dance St. Louis
- Delegation du Quebec a Chicago
- Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
- Ed Keane Associates
- Hyperion Productions
- IMG Artists
- James Sewell Ballet
- NAPAMA
- National Endowment for the Arts
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- New Frontier Touring
- Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
- Robin Klinger Entertainment LLC
- Synergy Brass Quintet

### **Performing Arts Fund**

We are thrilled to report that the 2009-2010 the Performing Arts Fund cycle will provide over \$575,000 in awards for more than 215 engagements across the Midwest. Please visit the Performing Arts Fund section of our website to learn more about artists and engagements in your area.

### **Arts Midwest World Fest**

The first tour of the 2009-11 Arts Midwest World Fest cycle is off to a great start! Beauty and Melody arrived on September 16 from Chengdu in Sichuan Province. The ensemble is noteworthy not only because of its wonderful music and beautiful performance attire, but also because its 16 member ensemble comprises the largest Arts Midwest World Fest ensemble and because the performing ensemble includes only women!



Over the next five weeks, the group will visit five Midwestern communities including Valley City, ND; Aberdeen, SD; Alexandria, MN; Hartford, WI and Marquette, MI.

Our communities are busily making arrangements for their tours and we're proud to announce a new tool to aid them in their work. Arts Midwest World Fest has just launched a new website, [www.artsmidwestworldfest.org](http://www.artsmidwestworldfest.org), that will be of interest and help to casual readers and our most dedicated community partners alike. We encourage you to take a look!

### **ArtsLab**

ArtsLab recently completed its fourth retreat, and the first in which the rural and urban cohorts have been together. The event, held in Bemidji, Minnesota, was exceptionally successful. As a first year “wrap-up” it pulled together and deepened discussions around the four areas of a balanced strategy—artistic product, audience, resources, and leadership. In addition to deepening their work in the development of a strategic roadmap, the event offered sessions on branding, culturally competent leadership, financial scenario planning,

and evaluation. We now prepare for year two of the three-year program, moving from the question “Where are we headed?” to a focus on “How are we going to get there?”

### **arts learning Xchange**

The inaugural arts learning Xchange forum was held on Thursday, July 16, with an inspiring presentation by nationally-recognized arts leader and grant maker **Ben Cameron**. Ben shared insights into how organizations can harness technology, innovation, and the media in their efforts to collaborate and adapt to the ever changing economy. More than 225 local arts managers, board members, volunteers, funders, journalists, and artists attended the successful event. To view the transcript to Ben’s remarks, access video clips shown during his keynote presentation, and to review Ben’s recommended reading list, visit the arts learning Xchange website.

### **The Big Read**

Programming for the September 2009 – June 2010 cycle began across the Midwest this month! We encourage you to visit the new Big Read website to check out maps and listing for the 2009-2010 grantee communities, listen to a radio show about a featured Big Read book, or to follow along with other participants on the Big Read blog.

### **The Big Read Films**

*The Big Read: A Conversation with Tobias Wolff*, is complete and has been sent to current Big Read grantees that are featuring his novel, *Old School* in their programming. The final Big Read film, *The Big Read: A Conversation with Cynthia Ozick*, is currently in post-production and is projected to be completed in September 2009. This will mark the completion of the Big Read Films, with six documentary interviews added to the NEA’s library of Big Read supplemental materials.

As always, our programs would not be possible without your ongoing support of Arts Midwest and its mission. I encourage you to visit our web site for further details about our programs, subscribe to our RSS feed or the online version of this newsletter, view our expanding YouTube presence, and much more. Enjoy these crisp days of autumn and I look forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DFraher', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

David Fraher  
Executive Director