

October 1, 2011

As the weather starts to turn cool and the leaves begin to change here in Minnesota, we look forward to the official start of our 2011-2012 programming season and to the many great events happening around our region and nation.

First, I am pleased to announce that Arts Midwest welcomed six new members to its Board of Directors: John Bracey (Executive Director, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs); Sandi Clark (Principal, Sandra Clark Counseling + Consulting); Matthew Harris (Administrator, Iowa Arts Council); Ashwini Ramaswamy (Company Dancer and Director of Publicity and Marketing, Ragamala Dance); Brian Tiemann (Associate, McDermott Will & Emery LLP); and Michael Louis Vinson (Reporter, The Post-Crescent). These individuals were selected for their outstanding commitment to the arts sector and we are looking forward to their guidance and leadership in the coming months and years.

ARTS MIDWEST WORLD FEST

September marked the arrival of our first Arts Midwest World Fest ensemble for the 2011-2013 cycle. Egyptian rock band Wust el Balad has been hard at work conducting school workshops, performing at venues large and small, and making lasting connections with residents across the Midwest. Amy Stoller Sterns, Executive Director of the Historic Holmes Theatre in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, shared the following message about their experience so far:



We are loving having Wust el Balad here! What great, great guys! Yesterday they performed at Lake Park Audubon High School. The guys rocked. The kids went wild with enthusiasm and the principal couldn't have been more proud...Then, last night we had a lovely dinner at a former board member's home...We had our local police chief who is also a sideline musician join us and he played guitar, sang, and jammed. Everyone loved it!...There was great conversation, music, and food...it all added up to a perfect night. One woman who was there told me it was one of her 'top 10 favorite nights ever.'



So, Wust el-Balad is touching lives, making differences, and, it appears to me, to be having a good time! Just wanted you to know that they will be unable to make it to Devils Lake and Hill City as we've decided to keep them in Detroit Lakes!

I encourage you to visit www.artsmidwestworldfest.org to read more about Wust el Balad's tour and to learn about the other exceptional artists we are featuring this cycle.

(LEFT): Wust el Balad perform in Wausau, WI. Photos by Shigeyo Henriquez.

MIDWEST ARTS CONFERENCE

September also brought the 24th annual Midwest Arts Conference. We were delighted to host the Conference in Minneapolis this year, and were equally thrilled to partner with our Arts Learning Xchange program to present an incredible keynote speaker, marketing guru Seth Godin, to Conference attendees and local arts marketers and leaders. Seth's dynamic presentation challenged us to overcome our fear of failure, take risks, and embrace new methods of marketing and leading organizations.

More than 1,000 artists, artist managers/agents, arts presenting organizations, and arts leaders joined us for the four-day Conference, which featured more than 100 live performances at the Pantages Theatre and across the city, a bustling Marketplace for attendees to connect and book their seasons and tours, and an expansive selection of professional development and skill building opportunities. In all, the event was a great success and we wish to extend our sincerest thanks to the many individuals, sponsors, and partners who made it happen.



(Left): Conference attendees connect in the Marketplace, Seth Godin delivers the Keynote Address, and ScrapArtsMusic performs a Spotlight Showcase at the Pantages Theatre. Photos by Tiffany Rodgers.

Plans are already starting to take shape for the 2012 Midwest Arts Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Grand Rapids—a vibrant and creative city—has much to offer our attendees and we are looking forward to planning lively events that connect our Conference to the city's renowned performing arts, design, and culinary arts scenes.

CARAVANSERAI: A PLACE WHERE CULTURES MEET

In early October, we excitedly welcomed the first Caravanserai artists to the United States. Qawal Najmuddin Saifuddin & Brothers arrived in Helena, Montana after a long journey from their hometown of Karachi, Pakistan. The ensemble, composed of five brothers and a nephew, have already begun to share their warm spirit and deep cultural legacy with local residents. The brothers are joined by drumming master Tari Khan and two dholi drummers, Abid Hussain and Abdul Rasheed, who are expanding on this rich musical experience with traditional and contemporary rhythms of Pakistan.

We are looking forward to the upcoming residencies in Helena, MT; Oswego, NY; Providence, RI; Northern New Hampshire; and West Long Branch, NJ, and invite you to join the journey by visiting www.caravanserai-arts.org or liking Caravanserai on Facebook.

Caravanserai is an international cultural engagement program launched by Arts Midwest on behalf of the U.S. Regional Arts Organizations with support from the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art. This groundbreaking initiative aims to expand the dialogue between American and Muslim societies through performing and media arts experiences.

(Right, from top): Qawal Najmuddin Saifuddin & Brothers pose outside of the Montana State Capitol. Photo by Lindajoy Fenley. Tari Khan conducts a workshop with second grade students in Helena, Montana. Photo by David Fraher.



ARTSLAB

While many of our programs are just beginning their season with the excitement and vigor of a new year, some of our initiatives are winding down and we are reflecting back on the great work they have accomplished. In September, ArtsLab conducted its last retreat for current program participants. More than 65 individuals from our 16 participating organizations convened in Northern Minnesota to share accomplishments, discuss the unique collaboration and friendships that were formed over the three-year program, and to offer visions for their sustained role in creating vibrant arts communities.

We were humbled by the incredible successes and hard work of these organizations, and were inspired by their deep desire to continue to gather and share their knowledge with the arts sector. While this cycle of the program is ending, the program will continue with more opportunities for organizations across Minnesota and beyond to collaborate and strengthen their work. We are looking forward to these future iterations of ArtsLab, to sharing our leadership and organizational development resources, and to engaging the wisdom and experience of our program alumni to advance our field and our communities.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS INITIATIVES

Arts Midwest continues to work with the National Endowment for the Arts to bring creative experiences to communities across the country. The Big Read is in the midst of another great programming year, with 75 grantees offering opportunities for their communities to celebrate and experience great American literature, and *Shakespeare in American Communities* is also continuing to build future theater audiences through 36 engagements designed to connect youth to the lasting work of William Shakespeare. Finally, over the course of 2011, the NEA Jazz Masters Live program is bringing the sounds and spirit of American jazz masters to audiences in 14 communities across the country.

We are continually grateful for the vision of our elected officials and the National Endowment for the Arts to sustain these important programs and ensure broad access to creative experiences.



(FROM LEFT): Author Ursula K. Le Guin visited Timberland Regional Library as part of their community's Big Read of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, photo courtesy of the library. American Players Theatre performs *As You Like It*, photo by Carissa Dixon, courtesy of American Players Theatre. Roy Hanes performs at the Litchfield Jazz Festival, photo by Adam DePaz.

As always, I thank you for your ongoing support of and belief in our work. Arts Midwest continues to achieve many successes—thanks in large part to the commitment of our funders, the support from the arts field, and the vision of our Board. I encourage you to stay in touch, and stay updated, by liking us on Facebook, following us on Twitter @ArtsMidwest, and visiting our website, www.artsmidwest.org.

I hope you have a wonderful fall season and I hope to see you soon.

Sincerely,

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

David Fraher
Executive Director