October 1, 2010

Arts Midwest has had another extraordinarily busy summer and fall preparing for our 2010-2011 Arts Midwest World Fest cycle, convening another productive Midwest Arts Conference, designing and supporting new programs, reconnecting with old friends, and building new relationships. In the following pages, please allow me to share program highlights and accomplishments from the past few months.

Arts Midwest is proud to be named one of the BEST PLACES TO WORK in the Twin Cities by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal! This is the third time we have been recognized by the Business Journal for our strong organizational culture, committed and talented team, and enduring capacity to fulfill our mission. We are honored to receive this award.

More than 20 years ago, Arts Midwest developed the MINORITY ARTS ADMINISTRATION FELLOWSHIP program, a groundbreaking effort to change the leadership demographics for arts and cultural organizations in the United States. Between 1989 and 1994, the program graduated twenty arts and cultural leaders, each of whom went on to play a dynamic role in shaping our communities, our cultural organizations, and our educational institutions. In August, we hosted a reunion of program fellows in conjunction with The Association of American Cultures’ Open Dialogue 2010 symposium. The lively reunion allowed us to reconnect with these visionary and dedicated leaders, who continue to inspire us with their passion for cultural pluralism and democracy.

Please mark your calendars! November 16, 2010 is the second annual GIVE TO THE MAX day, sponsored by the online giving platform, GiveMN.org. Last year, donors generously contributed more than $14 million to nonprofit organizations throughout the state of Minnesota during Give to the Max Day, making it the most successful one-day online fundraising drive in history. We were humbled by your generous support last year and hope you will help us spread the word about this important event.

We just concluded another outstanding MIDWEST ARTS CONFERENCE. From September 13-16, more than 900 performing arts professionals from across the U.S., Canada, and beyond convened in Indianapolis, Indiana for dynamic networking and business opportunities; engaging professional development sessions; and more than 125 live performance showcases. Arts advocate, educator, singer, and composer Nnenna Freelon delivered a beautiful and moving plenary session, The Grace of Great Things, on the power of the arts in educating youth, healing the infirm, and thriving in turbulent conditions.
We had incredible support for the Conference this year, thanks to our generous sponsors:

- Lilly Endowment, Inc.
- Ricky Nelson Remembered and the Brad Simon Organization
- Ball in the House and The Betsy DuBois Agency
- National Endowment for the Arts
- America’s Best Pop, Jazz & Standards featuring Peter Oprisko
- Center Productions, Inc.
- Dan Kamin
- Délégation du Québec à Chicago
- IMG Artists
- Indiana Repertory Theater
- Indianapolis Motor Speedway
- KMP Artists
- NAPAMA
- Riders In The Sky and New Frontier Touring

This year, we were also excited to award two **DAVID J. FRAHER FUTURE LEADERS FUND** scholarships to Maarten Bout and Anne O’Brien. The Fund was used to provide scholarships for Maarten and Anne to attend the conference and experience diverse professional development and networking opportunities. Last year’s Fund recipient, Megan Vetsch, also joined us at the conference to reconnect with colleagues and share her successes over the past year. We extend a warm welcome to Maarten and Anne and wish them the best of luck in their artistic and professional endeavors.

In September, we had the pleasure of welcoming eight students from Egypt to participate in a two-week cultural exchange program as part of the **BIG READ EGYPT** project. The students spent their time touring South Dakota and visiting local landmarks such as the Badlands National Park, Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse Memorial, the Journey Museum, and Custer State Park. Their delightful adventure also included an unexpected but welcome cultural exchange with American teenagers at the Cold Stone Creamery, where the two groups of teens instantly connected over ice cream. The Egyptians’ South Dakota visit ended with a special session on American and Egyptian literature presented by National Endowment for the Humanities Chair Jim Leach.
Beauty and Melody, a music ensemble composed of young women from Chengdu, China, arrived in Chicago on September 14 to begin their second ARTS MIDWEST WORLD FEST tour. Since their arrival, the ensemble has conducted very successful workshops with students and community members in Elgin, IL; Milwaukee, WI; Sandusky, OH; and neighboring communities. Michael Shirtz, Director of Choral Activities in the Department of Music, Arts and Humanities at Terra State Community College in Fremont, Ohio, sent us the following remarks about the wonderful ways in which the ensemble and community have connected:

“IT HAS BEEN AMAZING! With another larger audience than expected, the college was overjoyed last night by the mini-concert and the work the students had done in researching Chinese culture before their arrival. The workshops at the high schools were wonderful and it truly is a blessing to have this type of opportunity and experience for our area.

Tomorrow evening – to give the girls a break from cooking in the hotel, my wife and I have offered our house kitchen and dining area for them to cook in...It is cool to see how they experience our culture just as much as our interest in theirs. I hope they enjoy their time in Ohio. It was great!”

(Left and right) Members of Beauty and Melody perform for and connect with students in the Alumni Band in Port Clinton, Ohio. Photos courtesy of Mike Shirtz, Terra State Community College. (Center) A musician from Beauty and Melody performs at the Milwaukee Community Chinese Center. Photo courtesy of Joel Xue, Milwaukee Chinese Community Center.

Beauty and Melody continues from Sandusky to Terre Haute, IN; Bloomington, IL; and Knoxville, IA. In early October, we will welcome the Israeli Ethnic Ensemble for their second tour throughout the Midwest. Over the course of five weeks, the ensemble will tour to Marquette, MI; Hartford, WI; Alexandria, MN; Aberdeen, SD; and Valley City, ND. We anticipate another great tour with this ensemble and look forward to sharing their stories and photos with you in the near future.

In September, we were pleased to learn that a group of 144 experts affiliated with PHILANTHROPEDIA identified Arts Midwest as a top arts nonprofit. We are proud to have earned this distinction and to be highlighted on www.philanthropedia.org, a new, online giving platform that helps donors connect with high impact nonprofits in the field. We encourage you to visit the Philanthropedia Web site to learn more about this initiative and to read the expert’s reviews of Arts Midwest.

In August, Arts Midwest, in collaboration with the Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio, began touring an exhibition, “SHOUT FREEDOM! PHOTO LEAGUE SELECTIONS FROM THE COLUMBUS MUSEUM OF ART.” The Photo League was founded in 1935 as a group of novice and professional documentary photographers working to use art to effect social change, and has since become one of the most influential photography movements of the twentieth century. Photo League members were primarily working class New Yorkers, who used their cameras to artistically capture a defining
moment in our nation’s history as well as make statements on the social and economic climate of the era. The exhibition is supported by dynamic educational materials and videos, available on the Columbus Museum of Art Web site “Shout Freedom!” opened at the Muskegon Museum of Art in Muskegon, Michigan on August 26 and will run until November 7, 2010. The exhibition will then travel to the Ball State University Museum of Art in Muncie, Indiana, where it will be on display from January 21– March 20, 2011; and to the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where it will be on view from May 21 – September 4, 2011. We are continuing to secure additional tour dates and locations.


As always, our programs would not be possible without your ongoing support of Arts Midwest and its mission. I encourage you to visit www.artsmidwest.org for further details about our programs, subscribe to our RSS feed or the online version of this newsletter, find us on Facebook, and much more. I hope you enjoy these crisp days of autumn and I look forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely,

David Fraher
Executive Director