

## ***Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts, Round 9 Innovation Lab for Arts Development Agencies, Round 2*** Grantee and Applicant Project Summaries

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**We believe it's helpful for the field to learn a bit about the range of complex challenges that were submitted to our two recently announced rounds of the *Innovation Lab*.** As part of the application process, we ask each organization to write a short summary of their complex challenge, which guides their project throughout the *Innovation Lab* process.

What follows are the complex challenges submitted by applicants to Round 9 of the *Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts* and Round 2 of the *Innovation Lab for Arts Development Agencies*.

To learn more about these two new rounds of the Innovation Lab, please read the full press release: <http://bit.ly/2014LabGrantees>.

Because we aim to share knowledge, identify common themes, and recognize the forward thinking and deep thought that went into each submitted proposal, this compilation of summaries includes not only those from our eight grantee organizations, but *all* applicants to these two rounds of the *Innovation Lab*.

### **Grantees' Complex Challenges** ***Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts, Round 9 Cohort***

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#### **Center Stage – Baltimore, MD**

*How can we use the Fourth Space digital programming initiative to provide theater in a way that does not replace the live work on our stages, but transforms it?*

Center Stage is the State Theater of Maryland, and takes that designation very seriously by doing everything it can to make the theater experience more meaningful to their audiences. It is more than 50 years old, and a recognized leader in producing new, challenging, and high quality work, but Center Stage is striving to connect differently with audiences in order to stay relevant. To go beyond "butts in seats" to "eyes on theater," Center Stage leadership strongly believes the way to leap forward is through an initiative called "CS Digital," an intersection of live art and digital programming. However, Center Stage leadership has not been able to fold the thinking around CS Digital into their day-to-day work. Their challenge is to build consensus among their constituencies that the CS Digital presence does not mean either live theater or digital theater, but rather is an entirely new place. This presents challenges in how to measure success for digital programming, and how to avoid a disconnect between theater live on the mainstage and in the CS Digital realm. In the *Lab*, they will get the much-needed time, space, and clear-eyed counsel to move from talking about making digital theater happen to actually doing it.

#### **Intermedia Arts – Minneapolis, MN**

*How will we enroll a new physical space in creating artistic and structural models that have equity and inclusion at their core?*

Intermedia Arts is planning a facility expansion on their current property that will provide increased performance, rehearsal, and learning spaces for artists and allow them to reach an additional 20,000 people annually. As they plan for this new physical space, they are challenged by what they see as an outdated curatorial process, financial model, and production process for supporting performing artists and curators of color locally. They are asking: How will creating new curatorial

and financial models set conditions for local emerging and established performing artists and curators in the Twin Cities? How can Intermedia Arts provide those professionals the support and platform to be in key decision-making roles in the future of the organization? How can organizational dynamics change to create the conditions for artists or color to not just present work but to curate, vision, strategize, AND lead?

**Pillsbury House + Theatre – Minneapolis, MN**

*How can designing and using evaluation processes stimulate authentic community engagement, develop a distribution system for communications, and generate art?*

Since 2010, Pillsbury House + Theatre has been developing their capacity for evaluation which has helped them clarify what they care about measuring and why it is important. Moving forward, they are looking to increase Access, Attachment, and Agency for audiences, neighborhood residents, and artists. However, none of the evaluation tools and processes they have worked with so far are up to the task of measuring these things, and many of them are no fun for audiences, artists, or staff members to work with. In the *Lab*, they imagine identifying an evaluation system that: creates a point of connection for people to both learn and teach; broadcasts information; and becomes part of the process of making a work of art – either by being embedded in the art itself or by becoming a piece of art through implementation.

**The Public Theater – New York, NY**

*How can we sustainably mirror artists' creative processes in the way we produce their work?*

The Public Theater's Under the Radar Festival – a decade-long commitment to the development and presentation of devised work – is uniquely positioned to address some of the most pressing issues facing the theater field. In response to factors such as economic instability, weak governmental support, and a shrinking theater audience, independent artists have responded by disrupting traditional theater models and devising new ones, crossing disciplines, and forging new relationships with audiences. Meanwhile, theater organizations have responded by strengthening institutional structures, addressing sustainability, and formalizing efficient producing models. However, the needs of independent artists are not being fully met by these organizations, leading to missed opportunities, producing inefficiencies, and costs for both artists and theaters. Through the *Lab*, the Public Theater aims to address the need for a field-wide ethos of nimbleness and flexibility that asks how independent projects can be realized with the support of theater institutions. Through this work, they hope that these explorations will have significant impact on—and be replicable across—the field.

**Grantees' Complex Challenges**

***Innovation Lab for Arts Development Agencies, Round 2 Cohort***

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**Association of Performing Arts Presenters – National, Headquartered in Washington, DC**

*In order to move beyond historical organizational models infused with cultural superiority/inferiority assumptions, 21st-century performing arts presenting professionals must respond adaptively. How can we examine the needs of those in cultural leadership roles and support their adaptive efforts?*

The Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) seeks the capacity necessary to fulfill its goal as a leading national service organization that champions the live performance experience and supports its constituents in the presenting industry to enrich communities through the arts. A recent series of think tank discussions with a range of arts and community stakeholders identified several emerging needs in the field. These discussions noted that new cultural leadership roles will require

adaptive responses to issues surrounding diversity, inclusion, globalization, and power dynamics – moving beyond historical legacy models infused with cultural superiority/inferiority assumptions. Participation in the *Lab* is timely, as APAP has just completed three years under new leadership that turned around a period of instability in staffing, operations, and member discontent. This work will enable APAP to focus on adaptive strategies to attain leadership and catalytic capacity as a national service organization.

**Network of Ensemble Theaters** – *National, Headquartered in Los Angeles, CA*

*How do we let go of old definitions and discover new models in order to share learning with our sister organizations and the field at large?*

The Network of Ensemble Theaters (NET) represents a sector of the field that is known for research, innovation, and adaptability. Yet as an organization, they find themselves lagging behind: holding on to definitions of "ensemble" that may no longer accurately reflect the types of work created by its members, and continuing to use an outdated business model. By exploring new business models, NET will provide learning and examples for sister service organizations, many of whom are facing similar problems. Through their *Lab* work, they are searching for solutions that will benefit not only NET, but also a field that is evolving as rapidly as they are.

**National Association of Latino Arts & Culture** – *National, Headquartered in San Antonio, TX*

*How do we ensure that our programs and services change and develop alongside the rapidly diversifying Latino community?*

National Association of Latino Arts & Culture (NALAC)'s primary challenge is centered around developing effective ways to support the growing Latino arts community and identifying new ways to build resources for the evolving Latino arts field. With a Latino population that is expanding and diversifying, it has become more challenging for NALAC to capture a membership base and bring new artists and arts organizations into their community. Further, the vast and diverse Latino arts community represents many different cultures, generations, economic classes, and political views. Without a common link or shared identity, NALAC has found it difficult to find funders to invest in an artistic movement that does not fit neatly under one umbrella term (e.g., first generation artists, artists for social justice, traditional or folk art). NALAC celebrates the diversity within its community, and recognizes the need to work through challenges around identity and investment in order for NALAC and the Latino arts field to thrive.

**Urban Bush Women** – *Brooklyn, NY*

*How can we catalyze a paradigmatic shift in how the dance field identifies and nurtures female choreographers of color?*

Urban Bush Women (UBW) seeks to identify how the dance field might embrace a paradigmatic shift in how it designs and delivers systems of support for the creative development of female choreographers of color, and how it brings new work by these artists forward into public discourse. This work will require deep investigation and a fundamental shift in UBW's organizational structure: one in which UBW intends to position itself as a choreographic center unbound by space, offering mentorship, residencies, and resources to foster, further, and promote these artists. UBW believes the contemporary dance field is losing out by overlooking this body of potentially strong, visionary talent, and thus seeks to mobilize support by expanding its organizational model to provide service for female choreographers of color.

***(Summaries of all other applicants' complex challenges continue on the next page.)***

## **Applicants' Complex Challenges**

### ***Innovation Labs for the Performing Arts & Arts Development Agencies***

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#### **Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts – Miami, FL**

The Arsht Center is in the heart of Miami, a diverse, dynamic and young city. Delivering innovative programming that excites this population and encourages community is one of our constant challenges. Currently, we are developing a theater trilogy – “The Iron Stag King” – that presents an opportunity to rethink the way we engage and grow audiences. Our challenge is to engross the public in a continuing, epic story that requires ticket purchase and attendance to three separate performances over six weeks in early 2016. Within this challenge, our larger, more complex undertaking calls for a shift in the traditional ways that audiences and artists interact in a traditional stage environment. Theatergoers typically are introduced to a new work when they attend the performance. They often have little rapport with the playwright or actors. This project calls for opening lines of communication and engrossing audiences in the work or story long before they enter the theater, rejecting the historic passive role of attendees for a more active, integrated experience. We need to parlay our culture’s current fascination with serial storytelling from books, movies and video games (“Harry Potter,” “The Hunger Games,” “The Legend of Zelda”) to the live theater experience. We know that technology and social media can play a key part in establishing these new pathways for audiences and creative artists, but day-to-day demands, financial constraints and organizational structures have prevented us from exploring creative solutions with our partner, House Theatre of Chicago.

#### **American Jazz Museum – Kansas City, MO**

The American Jazz Museum in Kansas City celebrates and exhibits the experience of jazz as an original American art form through performance, exhibition, education, and research at one of the country’s jazz crossroads - 18th & Vine. In upholding the four pillars of our mission, the museum interacts with our patrons as both a performing arts institution and a museum. At the heart of the organization, we want to offer fertile ground for jazz music to thrive by interpreting the music within a social and historical context and guaranteeing that the general public has access to quality performances, educational programming, and exhibitions. As we examine patron engagement, the Board of Directors and staff of the museum arrive at the challenge: How does the American Jazz Museum synthesize the four pillars of our mission into a more unified experience for patrons? We hope to be able to address this challenge by exploring potential solutions through the development of an online engagement platform where patrons could engage with the organization more deeply and create a community of people connected to each other, the museum, and our mission.

#### **Art-Reach – Philadelphia, PA**

Art-Reach operates from a dynamic place at the crossroads of the community service and cultural engagement sectors. We partner with over 150 human service agencies and 170 arts and cultural organizations. As an organization dedicated to serving the underserved, our first priority has been to our human service partners and their clients. However, we know that our services to the cultural community are important to the accessibility of the arts in Philadelphia and to our overall success and sustainability as an organization. In the Innovation Lab we hope to explore the complex challenge of developing a more effective service role within the cultural sector. Art-Reach has not consistently met its goals in building strong services to its cultural partners beyond the tactical level of ticketing exchanges. The complexities inherent in these services have been an internal top for many years, and strategic discussions have made it clear that in order to address this challenge we must test new ideas, examine the inherent nature of these relationships, adapt elements of our core programming and find new avenues to meeting this side of our mission. We must take part in and encourage conversations at area venues regarding access, diverse audiences, the importance of the arts' impact on vulnerable populations. This challenge forces Art-Reach to examine the

fundamental question of who we truly serve, and how that manifests itself: how do we guide the cultural community forward to elevate the conversation and improve cultural accessibility throughout the region?

### **Arts for Learning Connecticut – Hamden, CT**

The complex problem Arts for Learning Connecticut (AFLCT) is addressing is the lack of a comprehensive marketing plan to promote arts in education learning opportunities and meet the capitalization needs of AFLCT into the 21st Century. The theory AFLCT proposes is to pursue the development of a complete marketing plan including a marketing professional to engage current and future earned income clients with extended arts programming as well as increase contributed income based on cooperative marketing with businesses and other not for profit organizations across the state. AFLCT successfully moved through a name change two years ago which better suited an updated mission statement; to engage participants of all ages and abilities in learning creatively through the arts. The staff, board and administrative structure of the organization moved forward; however, there are gaps and holes in how AFLCT promotes and markets AFLCT services. It is agreed by the staff and board that clarity and a marketing action plan are needed for adaptive change. The goal of solving this complex problem is to successfully brand the new name, create a campaign leading to greater brand awareness, brand loyalty, fulfilling board member involvement and adapt the staff/administrative structure to accommodate desired growth and positive cash flow change to sustain the organization over the next couple decades.

### **ArtServe Michigan – Wixom, MI**

ArtServe Michigan stands at a turning point as a statewide arts advocacy/service organization. In a challenging economic/political climate, ArtServe strengthened its advocacy through Creative State MI research affirming the economic/social value of arts and creativity to Michigan's reinvention. Aligned with national/international trends, this creative economy focus is elevating the arts as a strategic priority for Michigan and its communities. "Creativity" resonates as essential to the economy, education, talent and placemaking and as a framework in which the arts are vital. In June, our Board of Directors is expected to rename ArtServe "Creative Many" with a new mission to "develop creative people, creative places and the creative economy for a competitive Michigan", and as an economic development organization with a creative advocacy/service agenda. This strategic shift maximizes the influence/impact of our advocacy benefitting Michigan's nonprofit arts/cultural organizations, artists, creative practitioners, entrepreneurs and businesses, aligns our core identity and program portfolio, and emphasizes our desire to be inclusive and collaborative with these creative forces in our work. This is the pathway for ArtServe to gain heightened influence in advancing a creativity agenda for Michigan. Challenges lie ahead. We must bring along our nonprofit arts/cultural constituencies while cultivating relationships with the for-profit creative sector. How do we maximize new roles/relationships in the economic development realm? Deepen our regional presence as a statewide entity? Develop talent and financial resources needed to realize our goals? ArtServe must infuse collaborative, innovative and entrepreneurial thinking as it redefines business/governance models, staffing, technologies and partnerships to ensure success.

### **Athens Area Citizens for the Arts – Athens, OH**

In collaboration with arts groups in the Athens, Ohio community, we seek a structure to foster interaction between practicing artists and health researchers that will generate an evidence base documenting the benefits of arts participation for health and well-being. The Lab we envision will bring together professionals, faculty, visiting artists, and local artists, some of whom already lead initiatives to advance health and wellbeing, with health researchers equipped to conduct quantitative studies of outcomes, that in turn can be used to improve the success of these initiatives and document their value. Such evidence-based analysis provides a pathway to sustainability, when health insurers are convinced that reimbursement for arts participation provides

a cost-effective alternative to traditional medical interventions. In this early stage our proposal seeks assistance for a “creative sandpit” to define an organizational pathway that will support this vision. The challenge we are grappling with is how to fully engage the parties who are essential to this endeavor and who come from different cultures in terms of vocabularies, working environments, and assessment of outcomes. While our preliminary efforts have generated great enthusiasm for this collaborative endeavor, we need a pathway that will enable us to negotiate diverse disciplinary norms, academic boundaries, institutional bureaucracies, and community sensibilities to achieve our collective goal.

**Barter Theater – Abingdon, VA**

Barter’s primary complex challenge is meeting the needs and wants of patrons. This challenge has many layers. Barter must build solid sustaining relationships with a diverse set of patrons, in order to first identify their needs and wants. At the same time, as an arts organization with a specific artistic vision, Barter must not unduly compromise this vision. So the challenge remains, how must Barter connect with patrons in a manner that is true to the desires of both individuals and the organization?

**Bedlam Theatre – New York, NY**

Both access to and service from theatrical practice is limited by the current regional theatre model. As part of the thriving Twin Cities cohort of multimediam arts organizations already working to blur the lines between arts and administration as well as arts and community development, Bedlam is leading theatre toward an entirely new business model where the practice of theatre is a viable vocation. After a century of regional theatre models based on audiences dressing up and sitting down quietly, some of the most intractable practices have become major challenge for contemporary arts organizations, most clearly demonstrated in the "butts in seats" mentality. Concurrently, "work" in America has come to be both the primary source of individual identity ("I am a dentist. What are you?"), and the source of socially mandated stress and loathing ("TGIF, amiright?"). These attitudes are reinforced in very practical and concrete ways through methods of hiring, budgeting, fundraising, marketing, and even nonprofit office culture. Bedlam seeks to challenge the assumptions inherent in these practices as part of the EmcArts Innovation Lab. We hope to gain clarity in methods to allow staff to bring their "whole self" to the vocation of theatre, and to increase our capacity to invite others to join in. Dissecting these practices and adapting them to a fun and flexible model where community theatre practitioners drive the processes of access and service will help Bedlam revolutionize our infrastructure with the goal of pushing toward a more equitable society.

**Center for Dance, Movement and Somatic Learning – Stony Brook, NY**

Swimming the River, a project of the Center for Dance, Movement and Somatic Learning, seeks to develop innovative artistic strategies to address the complex challenges of human beings as they adapt to the new and emerging systems that are demanding vast amounts of attention and changing our lives. Such challenges are disrupting ideas of what it means to be fully human and fully educated in the 21st Century. Not only is it difficult to keep up with the pace of the digital, technological world of today; but it is also disturbing; not knowing where we are heading as individuals, societies and cultures. Disruptions can offer us new, exciting and efficient ways to rethink and change our lives; however, there is also a tendency to coast, pull back or feel overwhelmed by information overload. Swimming the River asserts that through the investigation of “symbiotic relationships between human beings and machines,” we can build a new practice of emergent behavior, one that becomes comfortable with the expectation to get into the river and swim. The project asserts human creativity as a means to collaborate with the high levels of information. Our goal is to enhance the way we inhabit our human experience while, at the same time, live within the changing current of the world and our environment. But what this means as a

dialogue and conversation among global partners is unknown. And how we manifest what we know through emergent global translations of language, image and action is also unknown. The choice is to swim the river because “the partnership between humans and technology will always be more powerful than purely artificial intelligence.” The work is urgent. Numerous individuals and societies are standing on the banks of the “moving curve of comprehension” fearful that the current is too fast, the water too deep or the skills needed as swimmers will eventually fall short of what is needed to navigate such an immense and changing current. Humanity fears the drowning... and rightly so. The situation calls for creative and imaginative solutions that equip us to negotiate the world today.

### **Chicago Children’s Theatre – Chicago, IL**

Chicago Children’s Theatre (CCT)’s most significant and urgent complex challenge is the expansion, piloting, and continued support of the company’s special needs programming. CCT needs to strengthen its ability to innovate, empowering the company to create adaptive programs that continue throughout the life of the organization. Discovering ways to financially support the development of new initiatives while remaining flexible creatively will empower CCT to explore international training, funding expansion, new communities, and increased capacity. These challenges are as complex as they are intertwined, as the company must address new approaches to funding and staffing in order to support the expansion of its programs and audiences—all of which we hope to explore through the Innovation Lab. By exploring these challenges at the Lab, CCT will improve its vitality by stabilizing its infrastructure, strengthening its adaptive responses, and pioneering new work that is responsive to the community.

### **Dancers’ Group – San Francisco, CA**

Why are modern dance performances presented for a limited time? Dancers’ Group is interested in questioning and therefore revealing some of the historical realities that have continued to inform how modern dance is presented in the San Francisco Bay Area and nationally. The large majority of modern dance performances in our region take place in traditional theaters and studio settings for one or two weekends. We consider the persistence of one-two weekend runs of dance performances to be a significant and complex challenge facing the health of our field, with financial, artistic and audience engagement implications. We consider the challenge to be complex because its ripples touch the outermost reaches of our ecosystem, impacting everyone from artists to large institutions, audiences, designers, spaces, teachers, etc. Dancers’ Group’s goals in addressing this challenge are to discover, support and ultimately implement practical means for dance-makers to access information and resources they need to think innovatively about financially and artistically empowering ways to present modern dance. Dancers’ Group views addressing the challenge of extending performance runs of modern dance as both a local and national issue that is a multi-layered and complex, and our current assumption is that failing to address the challenge is deeply limiting for the modern dance field. As such, the Lab process and any potential programmatic outcomes have the potential to make an impact on Dancers’ Group, the artists and organizations we support, and maybe even other dance service organizations across the country.

### **EMP Collective – Baltimore, MD**

The presence of artists in an underperforming or economically disadvantaged neighborhood often signals the first phase of development there by attracting new residents and employees who seek to live and work in a creative environment. This in turn triggers an increase in developer interest and an influx of capital to the area that boosts economic vitality and brings about crucial redevelopment work. But these rising tides do not always lift all boats. Artists and arts organizations are routinely left without a home when a neighborhood improves. Elevated demand leads to rising rental rates that drive out the creative enterprises that laid the groundwork for initial growth. Smaller arts organizations with limited funding and resources are oftentimes most highly affected, and run the risk of collapsing before getting the chance to build a more tenable infrastructure and audience. In

a best-case scenario, they move to another underdeveloped neighborhood or they receive short-term assistance through subsidization, operational grants, or popup programs in order to remain in their spaces. However, these solutions are not ideal: changing addresses confuse audiences and staff, constant moving and searching for new spaces wastes time, and uncertainty lowers morale and makes it difficult to establish consistent programming and seek long-term funding. Performing arts organizations and local communities alike stand to benefit from permanent artistic presence during periods of external economic growth. It is necessary now to develop a model whereby sustainable space for the performing arts can be created and secured in perpetuity in developing and developed neighborhoods.

### **FringeArts – Philadelphia, PA**

Last year, FringeArts relocated to its first permanent facility, which houses a performance space, rehearsal studio, administrative office, and a restaurant/bar with outdoor plaza (to open September 2014.) In the new building, FringeArts presents programming and hosts artist residencies year-round, while continuing to host an annual, city-wide arts Festival. FringeArts founder, president and producing director Nick Stuccio envisions this new facility as a vibrant destination where artists and audiences can gather to share ideas and cultural experiences. At this critical time, the most significant and urgent complex challenge facing FringeArts is: How can we infuse our new facility with the artistic energy and social excitement that have fueled our annual Fringe Festival for the last two decades? The challenge of transitioning from a nomadic annual event to a grounded, sited year-round organization with a social space is complex in that a drastic shift in internal processes and external communications is required. Staff, board, other stakeholders and audiences alike must re-envision FringeArts in its new role in the cultural landscape of the city, region, and the world. Therefore FringeArts seeks to participate in EmcArts' Innovation Lab in order to explore ways of leveraging the new space, devise new long-term strategies for engaging audiences and potential donors, and provide FringeArts staff and leadership with a structure for the analysis and evaluation of current organizational strategies.

### **Gibney Dance – New York, NY**

Gibney Dance faces the complex challenge of developing a presenting vision that integrates and amplifies the organization's established activities. In January 2014, Gibney Dance dramatically expanded to include a second location at 280 Broadway. The organization is currently in the process of transforming this second facility into a premiere performing arts center that will house a training ground, an affordable workspace hub, a springboard for social justice, and a tri-partite performance complex. The first three of these components directly build on Gibney Dance's 22-year history of excellence as a home for classes and rehearsals and as a model for integrating arts and social action. However, the final component—the performance spaces—offer an entirely new challenge. Developing a presenting vision is a complex proposition for Gibney Dance. It must grow from, build on, and integrate Gibney Dance's existing fields of action—Center, two performing arts facilities at 890 and 280 Broadway; Company, the resident dance ensemble led by choreographer Gina Gibney; and Community Action, a social action program that unites dancers with survivors of domestic violence. In Gibney Dance's history, the interrelationships between these fields of action have catalyzed artistic innovation and robust fiscal health. A successful presenting vision will create further synergies between Gibney Dance programs and contribute to the dynamism of the organization as a whole. Presenting initiatives will provide more opportunities to the diverse communities that Gibney Dance has been serving for decades—from Community Action workshop participants to dance artists to the general public.

### **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council – Pittsburgh, PA**

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council (GPAC) seeks to collaboratively design a responsive model of professional development that offers targeted, intensive, and customized learning, programs, and



services to three cohorts--1) African-American arts and culture organizations, 2) contemporary, artist-led organizations crossing artistic boundaries, and 3) mid-size arts organizations working on capitalization issues--while also building the capacities of all participants to engage issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. GPAC knows it needs to address the complexity surrounding its professional development programs more deeply. This proposal is a departure from how we design and deliver professional development programs and services. By documenting and evaluating the process and outcomes of designing and implementing the innovation, we expect our participation to be an extraordinary organizational learning experience. Adapting strategies to match the needs and aspirations of cohort participants will require detailed needs assessment and active listening on GPAC's part, in collaboration with EmcArts partners, as well as group work within the cohorts themselves. This initiative will allow us to pursue an ongoing, grounded approach to understanding what works, what does not, and keys to success. As a result, GPAC will be well-positioned to design and implement ever-more-effective, targeted, and impactful programs and services. Further, GPAC expects our participation in the Lab to grow our abilities to strengthen the capacity of the area's arts and culture community to deliver public value--artistically, socially, economically, and educationally. Finally, GPAC also looks forward to sharing our learning with fellow participants in the Innovation Lab.

### **Hi-ARTS – New York, NY**

As Hi-ARTS moves into Artspace PS109 in East Harlem, we want to take advantage of a unique opportunity to work with PS109 and its other resident nonprofits (including Harvest Home and El Taller Puertorriquena) to create an integrated arts and cultural hub in the neighborhood. Since moving into its current East Harlem storefront in 2012, Hi-ARTS has been working with community organizations to launch public arts and education programming. We have rooted ourselves in the neighborhood's vibrant Hip-Hop activity while striving to contribute to its arts revitalization. Following significant program expansion, Hi-ARTS is now making a pivotal move into a larger 7000 square foot space in PS109, a renovated building designed to house local artists and nonprofit organizations with an established history of serving a unique community niche. At this exciting juncture in organizational growth, Hi-ARTS seeks to creatively explore collaboration opportunities in its new home. We would like to work towards a vision of PS109 as a community center at which residents may, for instance, participate in sustainable gardening alongside free events with exciting local artists. A second goal is to directly engage residents, on a large scale, in creating and responding to programming that accurately meets their needs and their vision for the community. As Hi-ARTS continues to expand, we will draw upon East Harlem's artists and existing Hip-Hop vitality to feed our programs while bringing increasingly more young, diverse audiences to East Harlem as a new urban arts center.

### **In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre – Minneapolis, MN**

In the Heart of the Beast Puppet & Mask Theatre's (HOBT) 40-year old, beloved and much-anticipated community event is the annual MayDay Celebration. This event was created from deep listening to the community, is built with a combination of volunteers and artists, and financed largely through donations. HOBT will confront challenges that are deeply entangled with its organizational culture; for example, MayDay has become a "gift" that costs the organization's daily operations and capacity for organizational evolution, and their year-round programming suffers from the need to produce this signature event. Addressing these challenges will allow HOBT to continue the work they've always loved, while allowing for increased flexibility and authentic, community driven growth.

### **Kennesaw State University, Department of Theatre and Performance Studies – Kennesaw, GA**

Technology has created a new kind of collaboration defined by fluidity and the crowdsourcing of ideas. It puts the creative authorship into the hands of individuals allowing them to work across multiple platforms and organizations. We are interested in applying this distributed and

interdisciplinary approach to an artistic process between individual artists and different arts and educational organizations. We are exploding the traditional partnership model to create one that is reactive and adaptive. Our goal is the development of a new process of artistic collaboration and, further, one that uses the technology that inspired it. Applying this process to organizations that are inherently rigid and hierarchical in nature is complex. Institutions that historically operate within set contractual guidelines, universities in particular, have concerns that are antithetical to the core philosophy of this collaborative process. Funding, resource allocation and copyright issues present additional challenges to organizations. Fundamentally, we face the challenge of finding a way to create definitive boundaries that are also flexible and permeable. The artistic landscape is changing. Artists and arts organizations are redefining what they do and how they do it. Traditionally we focused on specialization, but now success is determined by multiple skills across disciplines. Individuals are transforming, but arts organizations, particularly those housed in universities, are slow to adapt. It is critical for our future success to grow our organizational abilities as well as demonstrate new approaches to our students to make both ourselves, and them, more competitive, agile and relevant in this new artistic landscape.

### **La Jolla Playhouse – La Jolla, CA**

La Jolla Playhouse is facing the challenge of how to transform our relationship with the San Diego community by growing beyond the model of a physical theatre offering entertainment options into a community center – a place for people to gather; interact with artists, staff and other patrons; engage in dialogue about provocative issues; and be inspired to create change as a result of meaningful relationships and experiences. We aim to do this through the La Jolla Playhouse Leadership Council (PLC), a cross-cultural, collaborative group of community members and staff whose mission is to build relationships with specific communities; work to overcome barriers to attendance; and create a welcoming environment at the Playhouse. The transition from approaching diversity and inclusion as a marketing initiative to an audience engagement and community initiative is complex. Part of the complexity comes with defining terms such as “inclusion,” “equity” and “cultural equality” in the process of determining which groups to engage. It would be logistically impossible to have a cross-cultural Council that is 100% representative of all of the groups we strive to reach. Additionally, these various communities have a strong self-definition and the PLC struggles to create one conversation about the art on our stages to which every group can relate. We envision the Council as a model for engaging the community out in the community through conversations and forums inspired by our art. We hope that these conversations will ultimately change the culture of the Playhouse and the wider San Diego community.

### **The Martin E. Segal Theatre Center – New York, NY**

The Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, a field resource and provider of free public education in performance, occupies a place unlike any other organization in New York City— in the interstices between public arts presenter, academic publisher, and research institute. Exceeding the limits imposed by our physical location as part of The Graduate Center, CUNY, and the capabilities of our theatre space there, the Center seeks to enhance its digital activities to better serve the global theatre community. We seek to document and share the daily fabric of The Segal Center, which has become a home for leading and emerging artists and scholars. Ongoing conversations and partnerships with the greater performance community, currently uncaptured, can augment our mission to bridge the academic and professional performing arts communities. The Segal Center will develop a means to providing digital programming and publications that are reflective of the totality of our annual activities.

**MCC Theater – New York, NY**

Recognizing the relatively homogeneous makeup of our audience and our industry, MCC Theater wants to initiate industry-wide change by building diversity from within. Our Youth Company (YC) enrolls high school students who represent the great diversity of New York City. Most of these teens would not otherwise have access to arts education, but the YC helps ignite in each of these young adults a passion for all aspects of theater. It would be simple to overlay new programming to keep these youth involved beyond their graduation. But it is a more complex challenge and a more sustainable endeavor to do so in a way that is fully integrated with the artistic work we do as a theater company and that takes seriously the financial obstacle to theater that many of our youth will continue to face. Now is a time of unprecedented growth for MCC Theater as we build our first permanent home, which will nearly double our operating budget over five years and house all of our programming—including educational programming—under one roof for the first time. As we lay the foundation for such growth, we must integrate our complex challenge—building diversity from within—into the blueprint. By providing MCC Theater with the intensive structure and support of the Innovation Lab, and by summoning a broader range of voices to invest in program development as members of the Innovation Team, this project will enable us to create a model with potential for resounding change across the theater industry.

**The Music Center – Los Angeles, CA**

As it celebrates its 50th anniversary, The Music Center has begun to re-examine its role in serving a younger and culturally diverse community, and it has made a commitment to provide relevant and reflective programming. Building upon its 11-year leadership role in participatory art-making and active work in diverse communities, The Music Center recently received partial funding from The James Irvine Foundation to integrate these ideas throughout all facets of the organization. This funding also supports internal work to ensure the values of engagement are truly at the core of the institution, informing future board development, internal operations and communication. With this partial funding, it is now timely and critical for staff to focus attention on the dance series, The Music Center’s most visible program, to determine how engagement can genuinely be represented.

**National Corporate Theatre Fund – New York, NY**

National Corporate Theatre Fund (NCTF) was founded by a group of 11 resident theatres in 1978. At that time, this group of similarly sized LORT theatres in major US markets was unable to tap into national corporate support for their theatres. NCTF was created as an umbrella development office to aggregate national corporate support for resident theatres, founded on the assumption that New York- based corporations have an interest in supporting local performing arts organizations. We are finding, however, that national corporations tend to prefer sponsoring broader national and international causes which provide more tangible, measurable outcomes, and specific opportunities for brand visibility. Corporate philanthropy has become more complex, and certain growth sectors, like technology, have little or no engagement with mainstream arts organizations. NCTF has experienced fewer corporations in our Annual Fund over the past 10 years and less sector diversity. However, our remaining supporters have increased financial participation. This smaller group of funders has become more active in their usage of our benefits of support and, in our organizational oversight through board leadership. NCTF looks forward to exploring this issue deeply in order to determine whether and how to realign the organization’s mission and activities with the needs of the theatres we serve and the nature of the funders who support the work. Recent significant NCTF success in the national foundation sector, and a growing list of individual patrons of our education initiative, Impact Creativity, may hint at the rewards of resource diversification, for example.

**National Performance Network – New Orleans, LA**

National Performance Network’s primary leader for the past fourteen years will be transitioning out of her role as President and CEO. Instead of approaching her departure as a typical “succession,”

NPN's staff and board are approaching the change in leadership as a transition that presents a significant opportunity for the organization to strategically adapt in order to remain relevant and responsive to the needs of its constituents. What makes NPN's challenge unique is that it functions first and foremost as a network, which positions it as an alternative model compared to other membership--focused service organizations. The goal of the transition is to re-envision NPN, including identifying a leadership structure and revisiting possibility for alternative program structures in order to position the organization for the future.

### **New Hazlett Theater – Pittsburgh, PA**

The New Hazlett Theater has provided space, equipment, and technical expertise for 1,086 events of partner artists and organizations since opening in 2006. This level of activity is a result of a lean, multifaceted and dedicated staff that must wear many hats, typical of many small performing arts organizations. Here, however, the similarities end: NHT is only able to provide this level of service through an early-sanctioned alliance with a privately owned AV company operated by the Technical Director. This for-profit business has supplied both skilled labor and cutting edge technology – at below market cost – and ensured a superlative experience for 165 presenting partners at the Theater. While staff turnover is a reality every organization must plan for and adapt to, this particular inevitable situation requires measures that will have tremendous impact on our visiting artists, patrons, community members and the funding community. Is our entire business model, which is dependent on a partnership with a for-profit enterprise, faulty? Five years from now, will we say, “What the hell were we thinking, how did we ever expect this to work?” The New Hazlett sees this Innovation Lab opportunity as the perfect time to rethink and reorganize the known relationships between skilled technical labor and the performing arts environment. The need for a dynamic pool of capable individuals that value the arts and can execute at a world-class level is not just a problem the New Hazlett Theater faces. A creative solution could benefit nearly every small to mid-sized arts organization

### **Old Town School of Folk Music – Chicago, IL**

Old Town School of Folk Music is well positioned to pursue innovative, adaptive responses to our complex challenges. Through experiments that will generate public programs and a resulting identity that supersedes Old Town School's folkie history and institutional stance, we aim to establish the imprimatur of a dynamic organization with contemporary relevance. Old Town School of Folk Music believes that "tradition" spans the entire spectrum of artistic practice, encompassing reverence for the past with highly innovative practice. What could we learn by curating ongoing, creative interactions between contemporary dance makers and the School's traditional artists? How can Old Town School hold multiple art forms and their sub disciplines in equal regard and measure? Old Town School's history is demonstrably long and durable with one of the oldest and largest multi-disciplinary, multi-generational dance programs in the country. The School's dance programs have yet to fully realize their creative arc. We know that Old Town School of Folk Music is poised to become a leading place-maker for dance in Chicago in much the same way that it is for music. Yet, challenges remain. Chicago's metropolitan area is widely dispersed. As a result, dance makers lack places where they can meet to move together with artists from multiple disciplines, ages and backgrounds. We are grateful for the inspiration that EMC Arts has already provided our leadership team and hope that we may have the opportunity to submit our most complex institutional challenges to the Innovation Lab's more personalized rigor and expertise.

### **On the Boards – Seattle, WA**

On the Boards (OtB) is excited to create a new K-12 education program to include families in our programming, complement our mainstage season and adult education activities, and train the next generation of contemporary performance audiences and artists. OtB is currently in the process of reframing our home as a place for Seattle's community of arts lovers to enjoy performances and

social experiences that surround them. To this end we are currently in a window of change; we have added new programs to deepen the experience of attending shows at OtB, invited leaders in our cultural community to assist our team in bringing previously underserved communities to OtB, and restructured our staff toward a more collaborative approach to administrative work. Programmatically we focused our next two seasons on community building and social justice. However, we are facing a complex challenge in this work; as more of our audience, artists, staff, board and other stakeholders become parents, we realize we want to include children in our programming; at the same time, not all of the cutting edge contemporary performance we present is appropriate for young audiences. Through the Innovation Lab, we want to create classes and/or camps for children and find a way to invite families to enjoy our mainstage season when possible. This process will give us the time and space to build a program that is unique to our city and possibly our field, eliminates barriers to participation and broadens our audience, and is sustainable and vital for OtB.

### **One Reel** – *Seattle, WA*

One Reel's most urgent complex challenge is to dynamically engage our audiences, artists, and community partners in a unifying Bumbershoot experience. How can we adaptively transform our festival into a connective hub of interdisciplinary cross-collaboration and discovery? Our current festival model has a built in degree of financial stability and serves the immediate needs of our organization, community, and audiences. We rely on specific artistic elements within the festival to attract diverse audiences. This challenge is complex because many of the attributes, which make us successful in the short term, impede our potential for innovation and experimentation—limiting our ability to respond adaptively to the shifting festival landscape. The diversity in our programming increasingly compartmentalizes our audiences rather than unifies them, resulting in fewer opportunities to expose audiences to new work. We perceive a very real need for us to develop a cross-disciplinary programming model to best serve our jazz, dance, and theater programming in particular.

### **Pentacle** – *Los Angeles, CA*

Pentacle hopes to participate in the Innovation Lab to explore creative ways to meet the challenge of providing infrastructure to dance organizations/artists in New York and California. An opportunity that happened organically in 2006 with a staff move to LA sparked Pentacle's proactive embrace of a growing, yet still field-wide unacknowledged precept: that dance communities outside of New York are percolating and providing some of the most exciting dance in the U.S. Further, work in the LA, San Francisco and Chicago dance communities has shown that direct management support services in these communities are seriously lacking. These precepts form a starting point towards Pentacle's organizational future as it begins its next 40 years. Stemming from its mission to meet direct management needs of performing arts groups/artists, Pentacle's staff and Board has agreed to work towards a bi-coastal organization that is more than just the opening of an LA office or running a San Francisco program. A key step in this process has been entering in to a one-year agreement with Dance Resource Center, the Southern California dance service organization, to explore a comprehensive organizational collaboration/"merger." This pilot collaboration is a first for a dance service organization and a management support organization, and is certainly unique in the history of LA's dance community. The Innovation Lab provides the perfect safe space to delve deeply into this challenge, bring new thinking to planning and initial steps, and discover effective organizational solutions that will better serve the U.S. dance community.

### **Ping Chong + Company** – *New York, NY*

Ping Chong + Company (PCC) is a mature company with a national reputation for producing works of the highest artistic quality and social integrity. Ping Chong, Founding Artistic Director, is a master artist, working at the height of his creative powers. In his fourth decade as a working artist, he and

the company that developed to support him must address looming issues related to the career of a mature artist and questions around organizational sustainability. Ping Chong + Company is looking for new ways to sustain and move the organization forward, honoring Ping Chong's role as artistic leader while continuing to bring in new artists and new artistic approaches to making work- Over the last five years, we have seen a great expansion of activity particularly in the interview-based, community-specific Undesirable Elements program and training areas. We now face the challenge of activating and re-vitalizing an existing body of work that extends over four decades, and remains relevant and contemporary, but may be widely unknown by current audiences. We are looking for ways to bring that organizational and artistic history forward into the current moment, to be a vibrant force alongside our extensive community engaged programs.

### **Ragamala Dance – Minneapolis, MN**

Ragamala's work is at the vanguard of 21st century cultural hybridity. For 20 years, our work has profoundly engaged the intersection of tradition and innovation, ancestral wisdom and creative freedom, idiom and spontaneity, history and the present moment. As a mother-daughter team, our working relationship—a partnership of equals across generations—transcends traditional narratives of inheritance. The fluidity of this partnership is an integral part of the ethos of our work... and one of the most misunderstood, as audiences, presenters, funders, and press reflexively project onto it assumptions of what a mother-daughter relationship would be. How do we talk about our unique hybrid aesthetic and the pioneering intergenerational partnership that underlies it? How do we acknowledge Aparna's contribution over the last ten years without ignoring Ranee's pioneering work in the 1980s and 90s? And how do we frame the discussion in a way that accurately represents our vision, speaks to constituencies across the spectrum of American society, and articulates a new vision of hybridity for the 21st century? Much more than an issue of marketing, fundraising, or audience development, this is about making a place for true hybridity on the contemporary dance scene. As pioneers, we must chart our own course. And because our work will continue to evolve, we are not looking for a one-time solution. We seek to develop strategies to which we can keep returning to ask the question, "Where are we going and what are we outgrowing?"—an ongoing process to articulate new narratives as we grow into the future.

### **Rattlestick Playwrights Theater – New York, NY**

Rattlestick, along with our peers, is experiencing a difficult time in attracting and retaining audiences. The traditional marketing, social media and PR model that has been effective in bringing audiences into our theater is in need of an overhaul. Although we continue to deliver strong work, audiences for new plays (especially those that contain edgy content) are becoming harder to attract. We have used the Cynefin framework to sense that the challenge we face is complex in nature. It is unordered, the right answer is elusive and we find ourselves forced to base our decision on incomplete data. We face a myriad of unknowns. As such, Rattlestick recognizes that the course of action we must take in addressing the issue is to probe first, then sense and finally respond. We must utilize an experimental mode of management and are fully prepared to tolerate failure as we allow the opportunity for informative patterns to emerge. We understand that we will need to foster an environment that encourages interactive communication. By solving the problem at hand, we will be crafting a future for our organization and our constituents. When we have attracted robust audiences to experience our art, we will have created an environment that allows us to achieve our mission. Rattlestick strives to nurture the emerging voices of the American theater. So, by drawing the community in to engage with the work and by helping to cultivate the next generation of theatergoers, we will be providing our artists with a future.

### **The Schauer Center – Hartford, WI**

The Schauer Center's complex challenge is finding ways to engage younger audiences, and when we say younger, we mean under the age of 55. When younger people are asked about the Schauer

Center, they reply, "That's where my parents (or grandparents) go." Our established audiences don't show emotion during performances nor do they react to them outwardly (smiling, applauding, interacting with artists) so that when younger audience members do attend, they question whether they should be there, are welcome, or allowed to have fun. If we don't make changes soon, we will not outlive our current audience nor will we be able to help our region through the forthcoming changes it must make in order to remain viable and relevant (over 50% of the workforce is retiring in the next 15 years and we don't have the people to fill the opening positions). Not only is it a matter of developing programming and opportunities that are of interest to new audiences, but we must find ways to truly engage them and consider all options including taking more opportunities off-site in order to be accessible and more visible. We must change perceptions as well, as our established audience makes it so that younger audiences don't feel welcome and don't want to return. How can we serve all audiences while helping to transform the region into one that attracts and retains talented people who want to live, work and play here?

### **Shakespeare Theatre Company – Washington, DC**

The Shakespeare Theatre Company is facing a complex challenge that requires an adaptive solution. Despite the Theatre's acclaimed productions, programs and presentations, STC is struggling to demonstrate its accessibility, relevance and value and to build meaningful relationships with potential audience members. STC's challenge is complex as it is composed of three distinct audience building problems: 1) Potential audiences perceive STC as unaffordable and exclusive; 2) The region's newly relocated millennial residents (in their early 20s through mid-30s) •have not demonstrated an interest in building relationships with the Shakespeare Theatre Company; 3) The Theatre's STC Presents series of contemporary international plays attracts unique and desirable audiences who do not also purchase tickets to the organization's mainstage producing season. In the past, STC has utilized technical strategies in effort to remedy these problems. An adaptive response is now required to successfully address the individual problems underlying the Theatre's complex audience building challenge. Through an adaptive response, STC will increase and sustain the Shakespeare Theatre Company's vitality by building relationships with these new audiences through a collaborative and highly engaged strategy. Addressing this challenge will assist STC in meeting the needs of these new patrons, and connecting them to classical, and other live, theatre.

### **SOMArts – San Francisco, CA**

SOMArts (South of Market Arts, Culture, Technology and Services) is a multicultural, multidisciplinary organization with a diverse, non-majority board and staff throughout its 35-year history. Recently SOMArts has responded to the affordability crisis in San Francisco by investing more time in partnerships with performing artists and nonprofits who need a "leg up." This has resulted in occasional diversions of our service model from the straightforward per-use, fee-for-service model—providing free or deeply discounted venue and support services—to a more collaborative approach. Evidence suggests that partnership is desired by many of our constituents. Artists and organizations are demonstrating a need for more integrated support by approaching SOMArts to propose deeper collaborations and by shaping their performance projects to fit existing relational models. SOMArts seeks to evaluate the potential of a new model and challenge the assumption that no-strings-attached affordable access is the best way to serve artists and nonprofits, particularly communities of color, LGBTQIA and marginalized communities who experience barriers to participation elsewhere. This challenge is complex because it is unclear how many organizations choose SOMArts for affordability and autonomy above all else. Change will upend predictable revenue streams. Furthermore, there is the consideration of time as a valuable resource—deeper partnerships require more coordination. To adapt to what we are observing, we suspect we should develop a more integrated service "road map" that is more replicable and scalable than the status quo, to achieve an increased number of sustainable, ongoing relationships that extend the reach of performance through partnership.

### **Southeastern Theatre Conference – based in Greensboro, NC**

SETC's current importance to the field of theatre, and our economic success, relies on an annual convention gathering theatre "practitioners" of all ages from across the country to participate in diversified programs and services. SETC's most valued services connect theatre people to jobs and educational opportunities; theatre companies to talent, skills and audiences; and, workshop based learning and critiques across theatre disciplines. These services are delivered live within the heart of our organization, the annual convention, where personal and professional networks are easily built. Requests for additional programming and services create organizational challenges that push us beyond our physical and fiscal capacities. Exploring year-round services to meet new programming interests and responding to outside influences are further complicated:

- SETC is a membership organization, governed by membership. SERVICES drive membership. 95% of the current 4,284 members only attend convention.
- Increased national participation raises questions of accessibility and our capacity in serving the larger geographical area.
- Partnerships with ten southeastern state theatre organizations still operate on the original 1965 governing and services model. What opportunities are we missing?
- Convention venues are limited by space, costs and accessibility.
- Delivery service and communication methods (live versus electronic) have changed.

We are challenged to build additional processes and services that emerge from our membership, appeal to members and are relevant to the greater theatre community without diminishing the synergy of our annual convention.

### **Synetic Theater – Arlington, VA**

Synetic Theater faces the complex challenge of attracting a Young Professional audience who will become the theater's primary patrons in the years ahead. This is a challenge shared with many arts organizations across the country. American Theaters are facing this urgent need, and we feel that Synetic Theater is uniquely positioned to develop successful responses to address this challenge. The Synetic aesthetic is well suited to the transformations in technology and world-view that we see taking place in and around us – work that is visual, physical and evokes a visceral response – making our work accessible and stimulating to our growing Young Professional audience. We believe that meeting this challenge will help to secure Synetic Theater's future, as we develop theater-goers and patrons who will support the work done by Synetic and other theaters through the region and across the country.

### **Teatro Del Pueblo and Pangea World Theater – St. Paul and Minneapolis, MN**

In the past six years, Pangea World Theater and Teatro Del Pueblo have articulated a strong foundation for the vision of our collaboration and its sustainability. Organizational, development and artistic structures have been put in place to ensure equity and sustainability. Our boards have been energized through this collaborative process of sharing ideas, recognizing strengths and areas that need support, bringing their skills and resources to the collaboration and developing a framework to make the collaboration between the boards operational. During their joint board retreats, the boards articulated the following vision for the collaboration: Sharing of knowledge, resources and creative energies to advance both organizations artistically and financially. In doing so, we hope to create an inspirational model for equitable collaborations among artistic nonprofit organizations. In working together to create dynamic, thoughtful theater productions and other events, we hope to engage and foster civic engagement and dialogue within diverse communities to help address common concerns and constraints. Our Challenge: Even though we have managed to create a culture of ownership and a collaborative spirit at joint board retreats with the expert facilitation of consultant Linda Alton, board members of each organization work to optimize the organization they belong to but not at the level of the collaboration. Our challenge is to activate the two boards as an



ensemble and enhance the sense of the board's ownership of the collaboration as a whole so that our results can be powerful at all levels. Board members in general are used to a certain model of governance. In fact, even within each organization, the structures and form of board governance is at odds with the ensemble nature of how staff and artists operate, especially Pangea because it defines itself as an ensemble theater. However, non-profit organizations and most theaters in this country mirror for-profit corporations. This is a complex challenge for us since we are asking the board to be so much more than defined by the field.

### **Theatre Bay Area – San Francisco, CA**

We at Theatre Bay Area deeply believe that theatre has a powerful capacity to inspire empathy and understanding, to transform individual lives, and to enrich communities. Despite the hundreds of theatre companies, thousands of theatre artists, and millions of residents in our region, the impact of our art form is not being felt by most of our neighbors. Why? Our challenge is to help Bay Area residents – and theatre makers – fully tap the potential of theatre to better individual lives and whole communities. On the surface, the problem might be framed as one of supply and demand. But with so much theater being made here and with a population of 7 million it's clear that it's not a simple equation. We could hire marketing experts to help, but that would ignore half of the equation, that theatre makers here feel thwarted in their desire to create deeply impactful work. And focusing only on theatre makers ignores the other side of the equation – the audience. What is holding back theater makers in our region from achieving their artistic potential? What cause people to choose not to access this powerful (and entertaining) cultural resource? There is a myriad of potentially contradictory responses. Which reinforces our conviction that ours is a truly complex challenge. This challenge sits at the core of our purpose: to make it possible for theatre to better the lives of the people of the Bay Area. By addressing it, we will reinvigorate ourselves, our stakeholders, and the field.

### **Theatre of the Oppressed NYC – Brooklyn, NY**

Theatre of the Oppressed NYC has a vision to create a horizontal leadership collective that is responsible for the short and long term health, growth, and integrity of the organization. Our goal is to function as a team of hybrid Artist-Managers who are valued for both their Artistic and Managerial capabilities, creating an organization where the Artistic + Operational practices are integrated ensuring that the ethics and values of the organizations creative work is translated throughout a highly-effective, innovative business model. The challenges of this goal are: to circumvent what can be time-consuming and sluggish about collective decision-making processes;; to resist the temptation to slide into compartmentalized, hierarchical patterns;; to rigorously understand the ways that a traditional, top-down business model is embedded into many systems that we will have to interact with;; to deeply understand the assumptions and values we have within ourselves about how power, leadership, innovation, and pragmatism intersect.

### **TheatreSquared – Fayetteville, AK**

TheatreSquared seeks the support of the EmcArts Innovation Lab to address a persistent challenge: that the potential audience for our organization, and for any arts organization, seems to be limited to those people who define themselves as “arts people.” We hope to redefine what it means for non-traditional audience members to consider going to the theatre — for those people who may not have considered theatre to be something that is “for them,” but who may, if reached at a crucial transitional point in their lives, consider changing their habits. In Northwest Arkansas, where the population has more than doubled in the past 20 years, it seems possible that we might help to define for this still unsettled population what their still-unsettled lifestyle habits might be on an ongoing basis. If we can convince busy parents and college sports fans that theatre should be a part of their lives, for example, then our potential addressable audience seems boundless. As for-

profit businesses are doing more and more, we hope to use new and old media to reach people at turning points — after moving to town, getting married, moving into a new house, graduating college, getting a new job, getting a divorce, or sending a child off to college. At these crucial moments, we may just be able to change the way someone in our region describes themselves, so that going to the theatre, or symphony, or any other arts outlet is no longer a foreign choice but a central self-identifier.

### **Valley Performing Arts Center – Northridge, CA**

Performing arts centers have attempted to supplement languishing school arts programs suffering from severe budget cuts. With a 76% drop in arts funding for Los Angeles schools, these centers often provide the only arts experiences that students receive all year. As valuable as these few experiences may be, they do not provide a sustained and comprehensive arts education necessary for curricular mastery and essential creative expression. The Valley Performing Arts Center (VPAC) proposes to address this complex challenge by initiating an in-school project that is more expansive, innovative and radical than any of our previous student engagement endeavors. The project will be multi-week, replicable and delivered collaboratively between the VPAC arts education department and various teachers at local campuses. The programmatic inspirations will be from the likes of Brazilian director Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, Tectonic Theatre Project's "Moment Work" and other theatrical methodologies steeped in social justice and community engagement. Utilizing Boal and Tectonic's theatrical methods radically deepens the level of student and community engagement beyond the student matinees and "one-off" master classes. The focus on social justice, personal transformation, and cultural activism can create arts experiences that intensify the impact and investment the VPAC has with its community partners. This unique program looks to dramatically alter assumptions of the vitality and efficacy of an arts organization in the larger community.

### **The Wilma Theater – Philadelphia, PA**

The Wilma Theater is looking for ways to formalize our practices across the organization to support broad changes in our aesthetic and artistic process, especially by creating working conditions that support experiment and continuity. The complex nature of this challenge involves developing a new ways to accomplish the Wilma's mission—practices that represent a clear departure from the current assembly-line model of producing work in regional American theater. The Wilma has already begun to identify areas for change, and to develop potential practices and programs that will create the working conditions that support creativity through continuity and experimentation for theater artists. Through the Innovation Lab the Wilma hopes to develop a model for a Wilma Lab that unites the steps we have taken toward changing our producing model—artist training, full-company project development, and community involvement—into a cohesive strategy for integrating an artistic ensemble throughout the Wilma's activities. The idea of a Wilma Lab is based on our growing commitment to an ensemble model of artistic creation, where artists—and especially actors, who are most often involved in only the final stages of production—participate in all stages of the creation of our text-based theater work.

### **WonderRoot – Atlanta, GA**

WonderRoot's complex challenge is how the organization's values can stay rooted in the community we serve while growing our physical space and programming. Addressing this challenge is essential as WonderRoot launches a capital campaign to repurpose a 54,000 square foot former public school building. The focus of WonderRoot's proposed work with the Lab is around how we can expand our organization's reach to bring about social change through the arts and, as an outcome of our success, not become a participant in the gentrification of the community we serve. WonderRoot seeks guidance on how to address this challenge through community

conversations, outreach, and public forums. Through this work, WonderRoot aims to move forward as an organization while preserving and respecting the values of our community.

**Woodshed Collective – New York, NY**

Woodshed Collective is an immersive theater company leading the way in the craft. Immersive work requires a strong creative core and an adaptive ability. We face the complex problems of consistently producing in new spaces while effectively planning for each novel partnership and production. The challenge is to realize these within the greater holistic vision we have for our organization. This year we launched the development of New Space-New Work-New Revenue: a program that highlights our three main initiatives in physical, invisible, and energy space. Evolution of this scale is complex. Our immediate challenge is that the massively varied needs of our work create the basis for a structure unlike most theater organizations. The unique perspective and space for each of our projects affords us distinctive work, partnerships outside the theater community, and potential revenue for our organization. It's necessary to study these new industries (energy/technology) in the same way we artistically explore new spaces. Driven by the same innate curiosity, we must develop new skills institutionally, while building upon past experiences. Our flexibility brings us the kind of revenue potential sought after by most theater organizations, but building strength in this flexibility is complex. We liken it to entrepreneurship with risk to our investment. We want to balance this entrepreneurial spirit with our goals to build a lasting non-profit. In this ever-changing cultural landscape our flexibility puts theatrical work in unexpected places, but with that comes the challenge of building matched support for our speed of growth and opportunity.