

Network of Ensemble Theatre
Annual Summit
June 2009 at the University of San Francisco

Opening Remarks

Mark Valdez, National Coordinator of the Network of Ensemble Theatres.

Mark: Welcome to the National Summit of Ensemble Theaters. What an amazing group of people! It's really cool to see so many artists in one place. Walking through the hallway in the dorms this morning was like being at the family reunion I always wanted—you get to see your family and the joy that comes with it, without the guilt of missing your cousin's wedding.

Let me start by acknowledging and thanking the folks that helped make this Summit possible. First of all, thanks to the super great folks at the University of San Francisco for opening up their home to us. Peter Novak, Roberto Varea, Gabe Maxson, Ellen Maloney and to the amazing USF students who are helping us out. Thanks to the members of the NET Summit Committee (Stephen Beusher, Sabrina Hamilton, Tad Janes, Brad Krumholtz, Laurie McCants, and Nick Slie) and thanks, too, to the NET Board of Directors. I also want give a heartfelt thank you to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation for their support, as well as special thanks to Ford Foundation—not just for their support for the Summit, but for all their on-going support and belief in NET. Lastly, special thanks to Justin **(do you mean Dustin?)** Brown, the King of production for the Summit and a really, really, really special thank you to Maria Knapp and Ashley Sparks. It's true when I say that this event would have happened without all your work.

To quote Roberta Uno from the Ford Foundation, "It's rare to be at a gathering of artists, made by artists." For me, that's what makes the NET events so special. They are artist-centered and artist focused. As we all know from our own work, wonderful things can happen when you put a bunch of artists in a room. And we're putting over 200 artists together in that room—so really, *anything* can, and probably will, happen so hold on tight.

I want to briefly talk about two things—first to give you an update on NET and second to talk about why we've invited the field to come together for this Summit of Ensemble Theaters. Like I said, we have a little 200 people registered for the Summit. Let me put this number in context, last year at our New Orleans gathering, we had the highest attendance for a gathering—and that was 100-people. So—this is huge! And it's indicative of where the theater field and NET are heading.

Ten years ago, the Network of Ensemble Theaters was merely an ambitious dream of some eight ensembles that hungered for a community of their peers. Over the past decade, ensembles have increased significantly in number and, under NET, have begun to organize. Our membership currently includes 132 companies representing 28 states,

serving an audience that is truly as diverse as our nation itself. You've heard me say this and I will say it again, because I deeply believe it to be true. Not because of my job, but because I'm witnessing it happen and it's made even more clear by feeling the energy in this room. *Ensemble theater-making represents the next generation of theater evolution in this country.*

The evidence is all around us. Increasingly, universities are teaching ensemble practice and theory and training (Virginia Tech, Dell'Arte International, Naropa University, Towson, NYU, and in San Francisco at A.C.T., San Francisco State and here at USF). Ensemble artists are receiving national recognition for their contributions to the field (Bill Rauch, Co-Founder of Cornerstone Theater and John O'Neil, Artistic Director of Junebug Productions, were each recognized with a Leadership for a Changing World award; Rhodessa Jones of Cultural Odyssey, Luis Valdez of Teatro Campesino, Elizabeth LeCompte of the Wooster Group, and Rosalba Rolon of Pregones are all recipients of USA Fellowships; the play, *August: Osage County*, a recipient of Pulitzer and Tony awards, was developed at and by and ensemble theater). Ensembles are increasingly presented and commissioned by regional theaters and presenters (UNIVERSES and SITI company at the Actor's Theater of Louisville, *The Civilians* at the Center Theater Group in Los Angeles, *Culture Clash* at Getty Center, *Sojourn Theater* and *Ping Chong* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival)...and many, many other examples of how ensembles have gone from some weird thing on the fringes to being a creative drive and *force* in U.S. theater.

In the midst of this evolution NET is doing its part. NET is committed to helping ensembles sustain and thrive—to propel ensemble theater practice to the forefront of American culture and society. We're focusing on three areas right now: Advocacy, Knowledge Sharing, and Ensemble Sustainability.

Regarding advocacy, we are working to educate others on “ensemble,” on how our processes define our work and our companies; on why we need more development time; on why we structure laterally and not vertically; on the power of group leadership and diversity. And we're seeing this pay off. Increasingly, funders are coming to NET for input on guidelines and for information in the development of new programs; producers and presenters are calling to get advice on how to commission ensembles or to get information about work that's being done that they don't know of as they curate their festivals and program their seasons. Unions are calling to learn more about creating ensemble categories.

Regarding Knowledge Building and Knowledge Sharing, NET is commissioning and co-commissioning case studies on ensemble work and best practices. There is a lot of outstanding and genuinely innovative work that's being done, but we just don't know about it. We're working to change that by documenting and disseminating this information. The first step was generating this material (and that's an on-going commitment) The next and most recent step was launching a new website where you can go to for this information. There is a resources tab where you can read and download case studies as well as get useful information. Which reminds me—NET members, if

you haven't set up your company's page on our site, please do so. There are computers on campus and you have internet access. Why wait? Once we get the website running on full steam it will serve as a map that will guide you through ensemble practice and companies all over the country.

The last piece is sustainability. With lead support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, NET is creating a new program called *Ensemble ABC* (an acronym for *All-together Building Capacity*). It's designed as a peer-to-peer professional development program consisting of workshops and seminars, consultations and "out-side-in" mentorships where mentors are brought from outside the ensemble to come in and work with the full ensemble instead of taking an individual out while that person is mentored. The aim of this initiative is to build and strengthen ensemble organizational capacity—in other words to support stronger, healthier organizations—with an eye toward sustainability and flourishing health over the long haul. We'll talk more about this and ask for your guidance and input into the design during the course of the Summit.

This is where NET is at right now. We're healthy and growing thanks to you.

The second thing I wanted to talk about is what we're doing over the next few days. I want to be clear about why we've invited you here for a Summit. The initial impetus for a Summit was in response to the economic downturn. We knew ensembles were/are taking a big hit. Not in the way many of our larger colleagues are (the big concern wasn't that our endowments were big losses, but that our artists—many of whom have day jobs while they run their ensembles—would be losing lose jobs). It felt pressing to come together as a family and community—not to commiserate—but to support one another and map out a path for us to collectively get through this time. That's still there. But there is a second part that's connected to this.

We are waking up to a new day in this country. Partly because of the change in the presidential administration and the new priorities that are being set for the nation, and partly because of this economic catastrophe fueled by a culture that valued profit and self, we find ourselves in a moment of transition that can benefit and truly propel ensembles to the forefront of American culture. We have opportunities before us.

The world is just now discovering things that we not only already know, but that we already excel at: collaboration, community building, partnerships, group leadership. Hell, we know how to turn fifteen cents into a dollar. And in this economy—if you can't do that, you're not gonna make it. Through our work, we don't build an audience, we build a community. There is a strong hunger for community right now.

The sessions and discussions have been planned to address these challenges and opportunities. Arlene Goldbard will share her thoughts on how we communicate our value and place in this world. We'll have an ensemble jam on successful ways we're dealing with economic hardship. Rhodessa Jones and Steve? and Dominique Serrand will talk with us about leadership and the hard questions ensembles must ask of ourselves. We have some guests from abroad to talk with us about cultural exchange—

the world is changing, we are less isolated. Ensembles already enjoy a strong international presence and there is a clear opportunity for our place as leaders in this work and field discussion. And while we all are ensembles and share many core values, we want to find a way to discuss how we are different to better understand each other to ensure a healthy field.

There will be instances where clear conclusions are reached and we can have consensus. I also hope there will be moments where we diverge and disagree—that's what will make the conversation rich. Either way, our meeting here is a step in a longer journey and we will leave here with work to be done.

Many of you know about my deep fondness for musicals. But what you don't know is that I am also very superstitious. So, when I was flying up to San Francisco, I read my horoscope, which read:

You'll be gathering information. Observe what others need and want. When you can figure out how to make everyone else's life better, yours will improve.

Even if you are not an Aries, I invite you to find a way to make each other's lives better, because we are connected. Let's be leaders—just because you're small and scrappy, doesn't mean you can't do that. We no longer live in a world where that is the case. Just look at NET. We're small, but we're making an impact and we'll keep working to make our lives and our art, better.

Case Studies and Conversations: Our Field Now and in the Future

Group 8: Artists Working with Partners Outside of the Arts

- To be relevant we need relationships and a way to stay sustainable
- Pangea World Theater: In 2005 created a show on the status of refugee battered women for the purpose of advocacy. Because of this show more and more conferences arose addressing this topic. Now it is going to communities to bring awareness to the topic. This has helped with grants from organizations that promote systems of change.
- I am working with the University Cal-State and in L.A. because they needed artists to be a part of a proposal they were creating on oral history. We were able to put together a piece that worked as a document. Professors are looking for things to write about or want to write about you. These relationships are very helpful for receiving grants.
- Alternative Roots: They have a program called Community Artist Project program. Artists pair with communities.
- Performing Arts and Community Exchange at the University of San Francisco taught by Amie Dowling, which pairs undergraduate students with men in the San Bruno Jail #5 to work together as artist. Here the program is working within an already established program in an institution. This assists in longevity and grant support.

- Heartbeat: A project around Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut. Here theater was used with policy around the Universal Healthcare Bill. This led to another opportunity working with legislature around Drugs & Policy. Working with policy also puts some constraints on the art. It is a great source of income, however it is hard to stay true to your practice.
- Dealing with fear when you are bringing art into legislation, no one wants to offend anyone.
- With the Healthcare situation it would be ideal if they were not as fearful of offending. The plays are about discussing hard topics without alienating.
- When developing partnerships it is helpful to be very clear about the intentions at the beginning. Everyone has something to gain by being transparent before any work happens.
- How do you engage and create partnerships?
- We need written documents to help with this process.
- Who owns the work after it is created? Be clear about this before you start.
- Bob Leonard: document is a great resource for hard questions to ask when you are building a partnership.
- Asking questions and thinking about power dynamics.
- Free Style Arts in New York (Queens). Artists working with business people to attract those passing by. This also gives exposure for artists.
- Chocolate and Chalk Art
- Heartbeat: Drug Policy led to Law Enforcement (credibility they bring to the argument)
- What is correct politically in communities? How do you not offend and lose respect while being artistically free? How much do you compromise?
- Is the money behind the first impulse or is it the artwork?
- Having a mediator, someone working between the community organization and/or institutions and the artists. This is part of the growth of this field.
- How do you keep those partnerships ongoing?
- Working with already established programs.
- Clarity!!

Economic Crisis

- First to get out of it we are going to really have to align ourselves with the mission of the organization
- People are looking for creative ways to get out of a crisis
- How can we be more proactive?
- A funding source Nathan Cummings
- Support other organizations; go to their stuff!

Group 10: Big Picture of a Sustainable System (moderated by Sandra Gibson, APAP)

This session to generate big ideas, examples going beyond allotting resources. Recommendations in a coherent, sustainable system. Figuring out how these elements fit together – arts and culture balance within the community. Everything from creative impulse, to healthcare, housing. Consideration of the current political moment we are in

– a new administration, which values arts and culture. Think about a large, sustainable system – what would it look like?

- Denis Griesmer, Public Theatre: Cleveland: Significant issue: Getting people in the door and bringing them back. It's challenging to have short runs, getting folks in for the limited opportunity of seeing a short run and educating audiences in letting them know what "the work" is. Experiencing the live work. Question of bringing folks back.
- Rebecca Blunt, NEFA: Do you mean an ideal toward longer runs?
- DG: Easier for them to offer as a producer – might be challenging to bring in unknown artists – traveling, touring artists for a limited time and expanding the run. A need for greater media support, critics, reports to educate audiences.
- Susan Thompson, Pilgrim Theatre: Suggestion for peer reviews (maybe asking NET members to write reviews) to help contextualize work. Informed writing about the work. Seeing the work as a collection of people creating a body of work. In order to build an audience base. So we are not relying on the one critic for the local paper, who is also facing dwindling resources.
- Martha Richards (The Fund for Women Artists) – She is very focused on women artists' issues (coverage and support) problem of representation of media voice, not very diverse.
- Janna Goodwin, Denver, previously with Ko Festival: In terms of audiences and critics – educating audiences, she sees an opportunity with Obama and arts education. A need for teaching students before and during college. Children (currently) are not taught to think critically. They are not taught how to speak the language of the evolving practices and work of ensembles – or theatre in general.
- Marguirita, Graduate of Performing Arts program at USF: She attended a conference with the National Center for Creative Aging. Learned of opportunities for older artists able to get grant awards (like a residency) where they partner with area youth/at risk orgs. When art/culture is part of the community – it's valued. It needs to be part of everyone's everyday life.
- Erika Latta, Wax Factory: International work, based in NY, General operating support is necessary. Organizations don't have time to be bogged down in the administration; they need to focus on their creative work. In France, "intermittence" government subsidy/grant to allow artists to make their work – subsidy, health insurance and are able to focus on their work.
- Eric Bass, Sandglass: Living in a rural community within a village of 2,000 people who are considering whether or not the village should have a cultural identity – and if so with whom are they engaging? A member in his community is willing to share/donate space for arts community use. If they move forward in using this space: what is the mission? What audience? Brings up relationship between community & community space; between management & community. Reaching into the community and working to bring in "non-arts" audiences. Considerations of what spaces have to do with this BIG idea conversation. Not just about keeping audiences – but *getting* audiences, without being deceptive about the programming.
- Kirby (Fairfax, VA): Raising issue of current enthusiasm for volunteer labor. Raising what happened with WPA – what to learn from it (what wasn't great

- about it: George Mason University has a great archive – but it included Living Newspaper, Puppetry, Macbeth w. Orson Wells – This initiative mixed up commercial theatre with community-based theatre, just as it was starting to survive its growing pains, it was cancelled). Tickets too expensive – trying to organize new Federal Theatre Program. Suggestion to encourage exchanges between communities. Recommendation: Make it PAID work, lower ticket prices.
- Ashley Sparks (New Orleans): Regarding “how do we get/keep audience?” There seems to be a preciousness to keeping doors shut during rehearsal. Opening our doors to community, peers and critics to let them know how/what we’re creating. Outside in, opening the space up. She believes that within the field there is a discrepancy about the value of community-based works. A need to acknowledge the difference and process of craft. Consider the day worker performing on stage vs. trained actor: both should be considered of equal generosity and value.
 - Caron Atlas (APAP) – WPA pushed the bar on a lot of things. Q; How do we build the alliance, political and otherwise to get what we need? For example, HEALTH INSURANCE – how can we participate in that larger dialog as well? Who are our allies who are we fighting for the characters of our neighborhoods with?
 - Augusten, Flux Theatre Ensemble: Change social networking platform specifically created for artists and audiences (AEP – i.e. facebook for the arts, audiences can track artists). Relationship of social networking – not just slapping up content and expecting folks to come. Fully engaging: give and take, with active participation. An aggregator – allowing audience to take on role of producer (potentially). In one way, it may be able to help bring more theatre to rural communities. Maintaining the belief that Every American has a right to theatre – therefore individuals within an underserved community can have a voice and can express an interest in bringing an artist/organization into your community.
 - Viktor Grimes, Carpetbag Brigade, (he’s from Canada): Dynamic balance between accessibility and aesthetic (artistic integrity). Through festival/initiative in British Columbia, engaged the audience in a way that they believed it felt “more like sports” to the audience. Working as a team to create something (professional and non-professional collaboration). Thinking of theatre in the same way as community engagement and entertainment, but still honoring/acknowledging the craft.
 - Erika Latta, Wax Factory: A concern for “boxing” the terms. It is more interesting to her to have companies listening. When we enter into new communities – it’s important to know how to listen. Festivals are a great opportunity for amateurs and professionals. US Embassy rarely supports artists working abroad. As cultural ambassador, you have to make a cultural statement in a town where you don’t know the culture. Need for additional support.
 - SG: What would help? What can the embassy do?
 - ELatta: Sharing of information – website to share what is taking place in the area, across the world. A need for awareness and cultural exchange.
 - Denis Griesmer, Cleveland Public Theatre: Need a space for work. Proposing a greater commitment to this kind of grantmaking, which would include space in

- which to work. TCG has a great artist in residency program, which allows a one year process to create a show.
- Tad, Maryland Ensemble Theatre: Starting with “how do we sustain?” Equity actors looking for work – with ensembles we’re working all the time, and not making money. We need: healthcare, housing, and a sustainable wage. How do we accomplish that?
 - Susan Thompson, Pilgrim Theatre: Touring program (Federal program within Mexico) in Mexico, between two Mexican agencies. Artists applied to get in, and it was very competitive, but then they would go on tour and *work*. Constant work across the country – and they were supported and able to perform for 400-2,000 people in the audience. They didn’t have to worry about marketing, promoting, venues – the governor who would receive the group had to bring in a full audience in order to show respect when the community “received” you.
 - Martha Richards (The Fund for Women Artists) – We don’t respect the division of labor in the arts. You need grant-making skills, in order to play that game. An idea for a free arts-management core. Artists need to be freed and unburdened from having to write grants. Need to get the message across that the arts are worth funding (encouraging women to give more gifts to support women artists: \$1M, each – untapped philanthropists, educating a new generation of donors).
 - Kirby (Fairfax, VA) – Living in a strange time because we’ve all experienced the situation where our previous funders had \$ and now don’t. Foundations and individuals who have been wiped out. Government may now have an opportunity to give money where it hasn’t previously been given. There needs to be an education of government, donors and audiences.
 - If you only do one show a year – you’ll be forgotten. Need larger cultural centers (variety of disciplines) so we have a greater chance to raise funds for smaller groups who can leverage a larger relationship to a community center of greater recognition.
 - Regionally producing 6 shows/year – maybe they’ll get in the door; we need community center – getting small groups together. Artists (and audiences) going “there” first and repeatedly.
 - Eric Bass, Sandglass: He raised concern for general operating grants and project-based grants. He feels the divide problematic. Also has a question of venues – need places to present. We don’t have any venues with money to pay artists to support their work.
 - Ashley Sparks – National movement we need to be cross-issues, us advocates for health and education and they need to be our advocates as well. We (artists) help propel culture forward – NEA pushing that conversation forward with other sectors. Artists have to be organized and prepared. Need to be ready for significant cultural shifts – and to be able to respond to major cultural events. We are part of a larger system – and we may need to let go of whatever it is that we are holding tight to ourselves, in order to work together.
 - Eric Bass – A need for non-artists to speak up on behalf of artists.

Reporting back to larger group:

- It’s good/okay to encourage sharing before being “performance ready.”

- Going green can actually save money.
- You (ensemble/artists) can shed your skin (snake analogy) but still keep your spine.
- Doing an original crowd-pleasing play is not necessarily a bad thing.
- Gaining audiences via internet marketing.
- Letting artists be the administrators can also improve the art.
- Foundations should increasingly support long-term projects.

These various conversations will be reflected in a larger study conducted by APAP, which should be made public at the end of June.

Catalyst Conversations: Arlene Goldbard

Arlene: For the past 15 years, whenever she comes into California, she gathers with a group of friends. On this visit, one of her friends was preparing for a funeral for a meeting to plan for a memorial of a friend who had died in an accident. She asked “How can they still have war?” Arlene had to move from beyond this individual loss to the eternal conundrum and she said, “They couldn’t... Not if they felt the loss of each life, as you do.”

How could this happen? How can one force reflection?

Creating imaginative empathy. Scientists have discovered that when we imagine/pretend we light up same neuro-pathways as when it actually occurs. Athletes training via imaginative activity – making the jump, etc. How to transfer this information to benefit our recovery? For survival and sustainability.

“Support the Arts” Conventional arts advocates tend to think small. Focusing on “now” or the economic multiplier effect (silly because it applies to nearly any entertainment event). But “who cares?” This isn’t the most effective argument.

You don’t need for me to tell you what’s going on in your communities.

Art can save us. (Does the grandiosity of that assertion make you uneasy? Give me another ten minutes before you decide...)

Rationale: imagining oneself in another’s situation. When the art is grounded in community, collaborative and connected in other’s lives it also encourages bringing one’s actions in line with this awareness. None of these things come naturally – humans either learn empathy or they don’t. It must be learned through interactions, which engage us. It cannot be acquired through cognitive processing alone. “If we are to create balanced human beings... the supreme task of our generation and the foundation of all other potential achievement, we must give as much weight to the arousal of the emotions and to the expression of moral and aesthetic values as we now give to science, to invention, to practical organization.” Our failure to comprehend this basic truth has put us in a peril I shudder to contemplate.

Comparable emphasis on empathetic processing. We are paying dearly for our lack of balance.

Our economic situation evolved from folks playing with/on computers – with the “idea” of the thing – without imaginative empathy. We lack a moral compass. We lack the inner voice to think “wait, what are the implications for others?”

Art holds secrets of survival.

The businesses today that are still vital: imaginative & creative (i.e. Apple, google) creative leaps which led to their success would not have come with rational thought alone. How do you cultivate creativity? Art.

Range of “creative” expressions: Grand Theft Auto, ad agencies, elevator music, choreographed sales convention – none of them offer a true empathetic understanding to engage in the creativity of others. Exist solely for commercial result.

Imaginative empathy needed which is now rooted in social justice.

Sustainable National recovery requires cultural recovery.

Far worse than the crisis of auto industry, financial crisis – is the cultural vacuum.

Arlene’s vision: As Obama has encouraged transparency and open government (more transparent and collaborative); she seeks a 5-point Presidential Directive:

- *Every public sector agency to accept the work of artists and cultural activists as legitimate instruments in accomplishing public goals. Artist Roles recognized and supported across the board.*
- *Mandate cultural equity, which is essential to democratic cultural development. Equitable distribution of resources – privilege red carpet arts at others expense.*
- *How would our cities be different today if we assessed cultural impact and the well being of communities before approving plans for development (sports stadiums, freeways, downtown ghost towns, etc.)? Make certain decision-makers consider the wellbeing of their community before approving plans.*
- *WPA for the arts- artists working for the common good (schools, hospitals, prisons – rural & urban environments). See her proposal: www.CommunityArts.net (search “New Deal” or her name).*
- *Media democracy. De-monopolize and re-regulate the cultural industries correcting for massive corporate media consolidation that threatens localism. Multi-directional media democracy to greatly multiply creative opportunity for artists who care about democracy.*

In the old reality – only that, which can be weighed, counted, measured is valued; in new emerging reality pushing toward demonstrations that we perceive our work (as art) as equally valid, and as spiritual practice simultaneously.

Follow up Questions:

Q Imaginative empathy promoted/encouraged outside home?

Spiritual practice consideration – the vast majority of folks are influenced by spiritual traditions. Core spiritual teaching in all traditions is *toward equality between you and the other*. The loss of one person diminishes us all.

Q Can there be a framework, foundation on which to build these values – and to weave it into civic life?

Q Kirby: How can we take WPA model and really make that work? Finding ways to put artists first, support the artists' plight (health care, salary).

AG: Put artists first: not so sure about. Keep trying to make true point, artists always prepped to offer their gifts and assist in cultural recovery, in any situation. Artists Service Corp for mostly those who are younger or retired. Volunteers being encouraged – good, AND we need to push it further to include trained artist, and make their work supported and sustained. Graduating the Corps notion.

Call to action: Create your own video about how and why we need a cultural recovery. If we can get 1,000 videos out, it would be a significant viral effort.

Creating in a Challenging Economic Climate

Moderator: Lisa Mount

Lisa Mount: *Creating in a Challenging Economy (when have we NOT been doing this?!)*

Premise – in order to be effective as a field, we need to know one another. Introduce ourselves. Know ourselves as a field. [Everyone in the room introduces themselves to the group] And now, we're gonna do some mapping.

Observations from Geographical organization:

- Hole in the middle – divide between DC/Virginia
- Need representation from Philadelphia & Chicago.
- Lots of women represented
- Lots of blue states represented

Observations from Budgetary/size organization:

- Financial divide: Irondale \$1M; No ensemble theatres above the \$1M; at end of line \$0 – most unaffiliated artists.
- Interesting jump between \$10-30K big jump (not much in between) Big jump up \$50-\$100K
- Jumping to \$100 to achieve grants
- Higher budgets (nearly all performing arts support organizations; TCG, APAP, etc.) of ensembles, control their own spaces. The act of owning/running their own space has pushed budgets UP.

Observations from perceived level of economic distress: *Concerned about viability of organization living.*

- Most participants surprised to see that there is an even distribution across levels of distress.

- Middle Level: okay at the moment, but seriously concerned (controlling spaces – some).
- Highly concerned – However, need to consider that the level of distress may effect who can come to the NET conference; Income decreasing space is a large cause of worry; less productions (had to cut down); using own personal credit to support company/ensemble/art-making practice.
- Low level of concern: Have lesser/smaller budgets (Expenses decreasing – controlling spaces) On the whole, paying full salaries for 3+ people with health benefits.
- Not paying salaries: many HIGH & some LOW
- Most folks making living in other way (than the ensemble/art-making)
- Smattering of cuts in day jobs - support systems, recognizing that we are our own charitable engines, level of economic distress outside and within the arts community.
- Linda Parris Bailey: Artists looking at themselves as the "other" not as part of the larger group, however our well being is tied to everyone else's and to the country as a whole. In many ways we can fail to see that connection.
- Who's got children? All across the board – even spread.
- Observation that no one new is growing.
- We've (ARTS) been classified as non-essential.
- Huge asset for ensembles (and most artists) ability to do something with nothing, this realization can make us less insecure. Artists are very resourceful – but to play devil's advocate it's a notion that's widely accepted and perpetuated. Institutions assume that we can do lots with little. And therefore undercut proposals/asks, and expect artists will still be able to carry on with less support than requested.

Positive examples/success stories amid current economic climate:

- Madge Darlington (RudeMechs) – Partnership with “Edible” in creating a membership for arts/rebel events. Allowed RudeMechs access to previously non-theatre goers.
- Paired with Humanities & Arts division with local college/universities donate space, which is useful. Doing “friend-raisers” as community developments. Raising money to perform Shakespeare (\$1/line, to perform). Hosting community dinners, bringing in \$ and cultivating audiences.
- Martha Richards: Creating a national holiday for women's artists – coordinating a national movement. Raising more money as part of a national effort, leveraging the artists/co position.
- Conrad Bishop: Doing only collaborative projects with other companies - rarely pass on much \$ to Independent Eye, but allows for greater fundraising efforts.
- Greg Allen: Neo-Futurists “nickel and diming” kids... Raising an extra dollar etc. with audiences (25 year old demographic) Positioned as charitable cause.
- Partnering in different ways so the cost of production goes down.

- Ryan Hill: Partnering with non-arts groups, accumulating non-performing artists as new audiences.
- Eric Bass: Giving space for free – and leveraging marketing position which ultimately has led to organizations supporting as new audiences.
- A lot of social organizing making it fun for a lot of folks.
- Ben Yalom: Doing less full productions, spending more time developing works and bringing audiences in to experience/see the productions that are not fully produced. Economic climate forces them to share their “dirty laundry” which actually forces FoolsFURY to do the kind of work they really want to be doing.
- 20/20: New initiative – asking \$20 from folks – and it generated a lot of *new* donors. (Positioned as “it’s one trip to the ATM.”)
- NY Neo-Futurists: Saved \$100,000 in administrative costs in creating a wiki office. Full canon of work, voting decisions, major company decisions, 501 c 3 by-laws, etc. all shared online (many via google docs).
- Opportunity for additional income for actors working as standardized patients for medical school training purposes.
- Michael Rhodes (Portland, Ore.): GO big, or go home!; taking on the most ambitious projects now. Take on an even bigger challenge and demand help with that.
- Lisa Mount: This is a time of economic momentum. We’re in a time of fundamental shift (read Daniel Pink’s book – *A Whole New Mind*).
- We (artists) and people, are fundamentally narrative, ensemble’s ability to capture and tell stories is an asset.
- Ensembles are a 21st century model. Collaborative. Dependent on social networks, and on our relations with and to one another.

Models for University Partnerships

Moderator: Bob Leonard

Panelists: Megan Wanlass Szalla (SITI Company), Kiyoko McCrae (Junebug Theater)

Bob: *Discussing the value of partnerships and value of having as many of the sides present in the conversation. In discussing these partnerships there exists a large disparity of budgets, size (connection to mission/budget) between mission-based non-profit theatre ensembles, and university partners. Question: how to start the partnership.*

Considering what’s in it for the partners on all sides.

Megan: *SITI Company, now 17 years old, is based in NYC. There are 18 ensemble members (playwrights, actors, designers, administrators). Lean, mean touring model served them well for 15 years.*

Company faced a spiritual dilemma, what to do now: aging ensemble, checking in. Staff salaried, and ensemble working project-to-project. Company was in crisis, without realizing it. Initially they believed it was attributable to Anne’s two lives: divided between director (AD SITI Company) and educator (professor at Columbia University) and if only it could be all director all the time. However, Anne’s naturally a teacher – and it was not one or the other, but how to sensibly accommodate both and make the company thrive, not suffer as a result. Over time, it became clear that the company had become reactive

(realization, when a third party wanted the company to do something, everything was re-jiggered to accommodate). But the reality is that they want all of the artists in the room. Doris Duke Charitable Foundation has generously supported new initiative/inquiry.

Strategic Plan:

Centralizing in NYC. Have a season in NY, in a single location. Focusing on performance in first year.

Education: SITI company training, Viewpoints (looking for an education partner, multi-disciplinary institute). Narrowed to Columbia... lots of red tape and obstacles.

Thought center – hosting larger conversations about what’s happening in art, cultural exchange, etc.

While managing day-to-day, the need to check in and plan ahead. Getting buy-in from members. Working to change the lives of the people in the company. Improving communications lines.

Consideration/Concern – Will we just become teachers? Still wanting to tour.

Surgery reference: Surgeon spends their time in the following way: 1/3 practice; 1/3 teaching; 1/3 research/inquiry/learning. This correlation clicked for Anne and rang true for performing arts in general.

Needing a performance partner AND an Education partner.

Conscious flip in model after 17 years. A desire to create/train “20th century Theatre warriors” who could/can do it all.

Follow up Questions:

- Q/Erica, NY Neo-Futurists: Health of cobbling together a life style for members. And still maintaining the legacy.
- MWS: This is the priority – the lives/health of the company and the perpetuation of the SITI legacy.
- Q/Julia Rosenblatt (HartBeat Ensemble) – Was the University paying individual members vs. company?
- MWS: Paid as a company. Autonomy – maintaining SITI company.
- Q/Brian Livingston (foolsFURY): How can poor artists, young artists afford to pay for a degree? Especially at Columbia?
- MWS: They are still working out the payment structure – but expressing a desire to offer scholarships. SITI Company wouldn’t want someone not to attend their Institute because of tuition costs.

Kiyoko: Working to create the Free Southern Theatre Institute with Junebug Productions in New Orleans. Supported via Ford Foundation funding. Considering our federal spending on war efforts and larger federal spending, ART to help US determine our priorities.

I entered Junebug 2 ½ years ago, as they were thinking about institutionalizing. As a company, we faced the question: how/will the work of the company continue once the Founding Director is gone?

Devising a program From Community to Stage: Dillard, Xavier, and Tulane institution – range of diversity across make up of student body and available resources in each institution. The Institute would be rooted in community, so that the work coming from it would be based on the community (rooted in the neighborhood in New Orleans). Still looking for a building. Looking to build a capital campaign to raise fund to do that. Aspire to being a laboratory and a training institute. For people interested in creating community-based work. For actors, directors, choreographers, arts administrators – and open as a multi-disciplinary opportunity (though the focus is on theatre).

Intro class – half of student body is community: ranging in age from high school – 64 year old; other half are university students. University students take the class for credit.. Operating as an ensemble for the 14 weeks of the institute. Many of the students don't consider themselves artists. After 14 weeks, students have the option to intern with the company in go into the community to do work on behalf of the organization. One of the goals of this class considering what are the responsibilities of entering a community? What are your assumptions? Not entering a community thinking you have all the answers. Allowing participants/students to consider how am I contributing to the problem, or helping to be part of the solution? Looking at issues of race and class – very honestly.

Q/Madge Darlington: How does partnership work – how do students pay?

Kiyoko: It's separate, students pay the university and institute serves as an adjunct position. It's not currently sustainable, but these are the early stages. These two years are being treated as a pilot program.

*Bob Leonard: Department handles adjunct situation (partnership only within dept. and the individuals who you are in connection); University/Dean's office handles larger, company stuff (SITI) (which could be more of a partnership)
Junebug presenters as well, which is tied into the Institute. Visitors show up and also have to offer a class/workshop to course participants.*

Madge: Working with an individual Professor at UT. That person left and so did the university partnership with RudeMechs, unfortunately. What is the best point of entry?

Megan: For Anne, Columbia made sense – as she's a tenured professor there. SITI Company is looking for another institution to administer the degree. They teach and oversee the content. Find university partners across the US, incorporating music, theatre, art departments together to create a multi-disciplinary work.

Q/Ben Yalom: How to deepen the relationship beyond the dean's office, or any single person?

Bob: Consider what it is that you've got. What do you have to offer? Who's learning from you? Find out whom the partnership would benefit – who's your

audience/participant? Considering who's learning? Example of Community Arts Network. Started at VTech, but was clear it couldn't stay there and so it had to move.

Consider the needs on behalf of schools: need content, expertise, IP rights, tremendous amounts of information. Find out what's happening in their institution and how you can latch onto that.

Tad: Went in to ask universities/colleges what they might need from Maryland Ensemble? Ticketing, classes (building them into student's curriculum). Find the niches that universities need and offering those connections/content up for their (university) benefit.

Marcella: What are the internships? For credit? Artistic/administrative? Who are you navigating that with?

Kiyoko: For credit, yes. A combination of both administrative and artistic – it's negotiated between the Dean of Faculty.

Megan: A lot of Arts Administration programs require internships of their students also.

Kiyoko: Recommendation for Imagining America, a coalition of universities and colleges, interested in partnering with the community – doing cross-disciplinary work.

Bob: Jan Cohen Cruz has a lot of experience doing community-based work, moved to Syracuse, NY to head up the organizational leadership. If you find an educator in a local college/university involved with Imagining America – you should pursue them.

Erica (NY Neo-Futurists): Student funds, and resources, organizations, etc. have funds that they don't know how to tap, which can be used for workshops and direct work with the students.

Talk-back response: Fuku Americanus/Campo Santos)

Moderator: Janna Goodwin (Ko Festival/ now in Denver);

Respondents: Conrad Bishop (Independent Eye); Alison De La Cruz (About Productions, Los Angeles)

Alison:

- Home land vs. land at home/ rhythm of piece. Loud intimacy of space with the balance of families loud with family distressed. (reminded Of Dogeater)
- Considering faux-colonization
- Trend from transition of spoken work (direct address) vs. engaging directly with dramatic conflict on stage. Perhaps the evolution of the form – or a hybrid of the two. This piece as part of the new canon for this kind of work (hip hop theatre). The comparison and use of space to rep. the two locations.

- Question for the artists/creative team about the adaptation and the process, where they are/are headed?
- Historical explanation vs. letting actions speak.
- Making the work accessible to those outside of the immediate history/experience vs. those who are more familiar with the culture.
- Located in NJ, interested in knowing what it came across like to someone from the east coast.

Conrad:

- Read the book, which cannot be separated from the performance. Before the performance, wondering *how to adapt such an expansive novel?*
- Felt far from “hit and run” scenes. Same energy throughout 2+ hours, musically. Emotional and physical volume up throughout.
- Extremely explicit cartooning of the characters to capture something essential. Broad characters, but who are grounded.
- Major choice in adaptation (taking out back stories). Excising the ending (Oscar dies!).
- Interest in the artists’ development of physical action/language devised to connect those explosive moments. The language in the novel is already very easy to adapt.

Other Comments:

- If the actors are consistently operating at an intensity level up to “11” and pushing consistently – a desire to pare it down to 75 min. intermission-less piece, that doesn’t stop.
- Small breaks throughout that didn’t give the audience enough time or full pay off to “ramp” up again.
- Elizabeth Fuller (Independent Eye): Noticing a generational (potentially) thing that puts up a wall and won’t allow vulnerability. US eco-system invading other cultures...
- Generationally or perhaps culturally (with hip hop performance, spoken word) if you allow silence, vulnerability, it means you may lose your turn.
- Learning craft and technique – privilege to not back off (for most in this hip hop medium – you don’t have the permission to be vulnerable).
- If two acts, should it go somewhere else? Do characters change? Do we feel cheated when they don’t change? Is this an absence? Is this an evolution?
- *Strong desire to have creative team for this production present in order to deepen the conversation and to gain additional insight into their process and intentions.*

Catalyst Conversations: Rhodessa Jones

Rhodessa: Performed **Forest in the Ghetto**

- There is something about working as a group. “Conquering as a group” – Lionel Ritchie.
- On her first European tour: jazz, dance, and “Announcement art” an Austrian form. Speaking/performing observations of the day, culture, politics.
- I taught classes, movement/acting, students wanting them to teach music/movement combination. With an ensemble of young people in Vienna. Mix of dancing, young wanna-be hip hoppers, budding opera singer, human statue (working in the city). Created a piece about history of jazz music in America. Building a story while knowing and honoring diversity in our own backyards.
- In 2009: teasing the question – what will sustain us in this age of uncertainty?
- WE are the essential ensemble – I teach this around the world: *HOW DO WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER?* Teaching communication by exploring stories. Where do we enter into the dialog – how do we find common ground?
- She’s not into art for art’s sake – she waits for the truth.
- In working with a group of prisoners I asked: “What can we tell the group that we’ve never told anybody?”
- Took a course in authentic happiness. Countering the negativity. Using “Me at my best...” as a foundation.
- I build ensembles in various communities.
- Read **Nancy Johnson’s “Nigger.”** Using jail as a social laboratory to explore.
- Pigeons – “We will eat you...” **“We are scavengers the eaters of pigeons” by Jason Albertson.**

Ensembles in Transition: Juene Lune in conversation

Moderator: Steven Buescher

Panelists: Dominique Serrand and Steve Epp

Dominique and Steven created the company, they were students of Le Coq (met there). Influenced by Complicite, Theatre du Soleil

Early days: local US and international members and productions; focus on creating from scratch. Beginning with image/physical. Moving into more text-based works. Work evolved over time – following the trajectory/evolution/inquiry of the artists/actors, and the company brought those inquiries into the fold.

Existed as long as they did because they allowed the evolution to happen. The need and ability to change.

Refused to do anything but the art. The day we had to work outside of the art, they shut their doors. After 30 years, a mounting unavoidable deficit caused their closure.

Budget began at <\$5K which was easy enough; but when the budget progresses, you have to abide by certain rules, established by politics of the city you live in and the

foundations. Once you pass a certain threshold, the art becomes secondary. Relationships to boards extremely complex.

I recommend you only have friends (of yours) on the board – and that you/ensembles maintain smaller budgets. When you have to maneuver within the foundational/political rules – navigating administrative labyrinth.

When budgets reduced – artists effected first. 95% continues to be given to buildings, and staff supporting it (doesn't go away); 5% goes to artists. HUGE problem, ensembles can somehow reduce that discrepancy.

Always be more ambitious than the project will allow.

In maintaining work, they were conservative – (however continually going over budget, incrementally). Worked with 2,000 artists over the years.

Juene Lune began with collaborative leadership style – then shifted to single leadership model (forced/encouraged to do so by forces outside the ensemble)

Earlier years everyone did everything (20s-30s year olds which was fine) evolved new management structure – each individual paired into a management position. An integration of artists running the company. Bridged a productive time for the company. Resulted in getting their own space. Treading water because they were constantly moving. Wanted a space to let them do intimate and huge work.

Space sustained them for next 14 years. But space demanded a different management structure – it went through a different evolution. Coincided with evolving artistic interests. Increasingly delegated administrative work to those who were better suited to do it, allowing artists greater time to focus on their work/art.

Allowing for a healthy evolution of a company. Knowing limitations and being honest about what you do/can do/are suited to do – is very significant. It was challenging for them to admit to what they were each “best” at.

Relationship with board heavily problematic as the board imposed a single-person leadership structure – which they (ensemble members) were not happy about.

Q: Nurtured each other over time and within the development of work:

Hard to assess one another within the group. There are talents within the group (easy to see to outside)

Most companies close within 5 years, because it's difficult to assess talents and potential within the group. It's not often about disagreement – but about difficulty assessing individual ability. Very challenging, but essential to do - or else you die. Many SAY they close because of disagreement –but the core is self-assessment measures.

Developed second generation training (not formal, but a small scale operation to bring new folks in). Many people leaving to get the Le Coq training, etc. to get the similar pedagogy from which the company members came from.

Honesty with funders hurt them – not willing to play by the same rules.

It's hard to tell friends "I look at your performance and it's not that great" but if they/you don't do it – how do you move forward?!

Q: Navigate our various roles, while keeping the level of craft:

Never separated – everyone in everything. Ask actors to change parts; ask designers to step on stage, etc. Everyone first and foremost an actor – infuse sense of responsibility in everyone. Leveling of playing field as each is responsible for their own work, have opportunities to feed that, and therefore fully invested.

*Q: After making a life investment and the organization and it folded – what's next?
GREAT VOID... we're still together, just in different cities. Somehow now it's as though they have to rely on the larger community to pull them together.*

Q/Martha Richards: How hard to find Arts managers?

Found sharp, dynamic, open-thinking young people. Learning with them. Using a grassroots political activist in as a marketing director. Proved very successful!

Having to ask the hard questions. Is it the ensemble's responsibility to evolve/nurture people's/members abilities? Keeping it fresh after 25-30 years – it's the discipline that keeps it together, and propels them forward. Once in the room you have specific goals – which frame the devising process. Began working with opera- and the discipline there is so exact. You have to match the specificity and discipline. Provoke ourselves to bring in people whom we can learn from into the room.

There's not a very much great theatre – and it's very difficult to do, based on funding structures here in US. Very hard to do. Those who can rehearse 3-4 weeks, win. Our expectations are much lower – because there are few opportunities to see the work at the "top level." Asking on a daily basis: What can I learn today to get much better than I am? To be reasonable and look, and establish something realistic that you can learn. Theatre du Soliel in NYC in July 2009 (part of Lincoln Center Festival). Artists are the ones to guarantee that the work must be what it needs to be. Board won't/can't do that for you.

We are in constant economic crisis. An artist will never have enough to do what you need to do. Even so – you may as well continue to press on. At times you'll be poor, but at least the art will remain.

Emilya (TCG): She believes that funders are currently supporting more project-based work and less general operating support. And that general operating support is usually a greater challenge to find.

Q: What happened to audiences over the arc?

Constant connection of folks coming in for the first time – but also a very dedicated MN audience. Healthy evolving local audience. Final year of operations was hugely successful for bringing in new audiences. They were able to offer lower ticket prices. Grassroots, growing audience with and for the art – they can evolve with you. That is the ultimate relationship.

They had NO subscription – but it allowed them to be more free with programming and scheduling, despite the fact that it was dangerous and fragile.

Bridging Ensembles: Politics and Aesthetics
Instigators: Michael Rohd, Carlton Turner
Moderator: Mark Valdez

Mark: We are trying to be an organization that represents ensembles. We have a lot in common but we also have a lot that is different. One thing we are thinking about in terms of NET if we are going to have a healthy field, we need to start developing tools to do that. The nation is traveling rapidly and theater falls behind so we need to catch up. This is a first step to build and foster a conversation; NET is a service organization but it also wants to lead the ensemble field.

Carlton: We want deep conversations that allow people to be heard. As an organization it is hard to have conversations that hit us in special places some like diversity, inclusion, etc. Yesterday we had an opportunity to talk about what we saw in the room and no one said that the majority of the room is white. It is really important for us to listen, part of that is being silent. Most of the time when we are in conversation we spend most of the time waiting to talk, we want to create an environment where we can talk. There is going to be conflict, but this is a space where we can have a really deep conversation. Part of diversity is not about bringing color into the room but about having people present and beginning these conversations.

Michael: We have a rule in our company we tell them please never tell the audience that they are going to have a powerful experience. We have been trying to come up with a way to make a space to spout whatever you are going to spout. Some of the conversation is about diversity, but that is not the whole conversation. We ask you to be generous with us. “If NET represent the field you are a part of, what does it have to represent for you to feel good about. If NET is a big tent organization, what are the differences within it’s membership, NET wants to recruit. How is NET perceived and does that matter to you? What do you wish we were talking about? What is unsettling? Yesterday Arlene talked about imaginative empathy, imagine other perspectives.

The Game Rules

Here is how the game starts: Mark sit! You will have 30 seconds to tell him what is on your mind – your concerns, wishes, needs – to ask a hard question.

The Questions

1: Devised work we love it don't forget about the groups that do plays. Because those ensembles are very vital as well.

2: This group seems to be regressing in racial diversity.

3: I want us to be able to discuss work that is really crucial how do we look to a really high bar.

4: Actors union, and difficulty in actors equity union

5: New website, the Net would be invisible to me

6: In big picture, solving problems with government giving money, what are other ways that government cannot be involved in everything.

7: Intersection in the devised work and the psychology of individuals in groups and how to have support. What are we really doing? The theater environment is not therapy. The dangers of dysfunctional families in ensemble.

8: We have to start, what is the value of net?

9: Pedagogy, education, training for people in ensemble, how is school related, how can be prepare, in higher education and across the board, how do you teach, is there a curriculum?

10. Mentor? Can we pare up companies how to write grants, can net help companies connect with each other.

11. How can net help bridge the divide between funders and artists

12: Ensembles with space and touring ensembles how can you connect these so they have space when traveling.

13: Generational divides, we think in different ways, are we talking across generations? Fostering intergenerational conversation

14: How to we engage conversation with groups that are social justice and with out social justice and how to we talk productively

15: Part of the solution of engaging people of color that are ensembles that are not based in a technique, engage people with work overtime that may use

16: How do we begin to talk honestly about a play when artists are not there (Campos Santos)?

17: Sustainable models for those of us who are getting over. Childcare, how do we create this model?

18: Universities are flooding schools with too many artists without a place to work after school. Outside of 501 (c)(3) model which makes artists as a charity not good.

19 Dance and Theater overlaps

20: When conversation overlaps, we are not divided by gender but we are finding the places where they overlap.

21: I am meeting a number of artists who could be here but are not interested because...? They don't see themselves as ensemble, part of the field, Why are those people who have identified themselves as NPN not here

22: *Ensemble works in the process, how to we make the process profitable? Where are those communities when we are here?*

23: *Who cares and why should they care? (Outside of NET)*

24: *It is expensive, what is this membership made up of?*

25: *Encourage NET to connect with religious organizations. These are communities that have space and resources.*

26: *What is the ecology*

27: *Long history in other countries, we need them.*

28: *How do we find the way to build management skills.*

29: *How and When and do we start talking about quality.*

30: *When are going to start having conversations about how politics and aesthetics cross over racial lines. Talk about white supremacy.*

Break Out Group:

Politics, Aesthetics, & White Supremacy

1st group

- *I am interested in this with Neo-Futurists we have a high turnover rate, and when we have auditions we always end up with white people. We have an issue, I want to learn from NET but it has it's own problems with color. We were embarrassed to say the white people in the "Creating in a Challenging Economic Network" out loud, why couldn't we say that?*
- *-This is where the politics aligns with aesthetic, why aren't people of color drawn to a certain perspective. History and geographic diversity, resources, accesses to education, Bigger than the theater?*
- *When you have a casting pool that does include people of many colors do you know if it is a quality issue?*
- *NET is a lot like the Neo-Futurists, which uses word of mouth, and so that is the way people, are coming to auditions. Everyone is white and we are stuck, the minority people that we do have get all this weight when it comes to casting. There is a pressure on the minority. The aesthetics along with color.*
- *The problem is the way white people with white supremacy are not looking at how we are looking at quality (a white way)*
- *There is a divide, people of color over there and white over here. Trust has to be built. It can't be just from auditions. It takes a long time to build relationships. It is not about sending information but also about receiving information*
- *Sometimes there is too much focus placed on the product and not the process. The need produce something destroys the possibility of change*
- *It is really important to look at the intention, why be racial diverse? We are all coming from different backgrounds why we need to challenge the aesthetics. Do you want someone to embrace your aesthetic, it is not just about race but about aesthetics and cultural and who is defining it.*
- *There are two issues how do you increase diversity in your organization, and also in NET. But what am I going to get from it? We had different groups come in to other groups to experience different techniques*

- *Do we need to solve the integration problems in companies, NO if you choose to be more diverse than NET. The ensembles of color are going to have step up and come to NET.*

2nd group

- *How do we make theater making a more viable career*
- *What do I get from NET? But I don't have time to sit around and talk?*
- *We have been trying to define, we are social justice people and we are aesthetic people the divide. NET doesn't want to assume a purpose and so has not defined that it is moving towards something and cannot say that we have a clear purpose. Alternate Roots is doing it, NPN is not doing it.*
- *What kind of Network are we trying to make*
- *Whether that you are doing SJ or aesthetic ensembles but we are artist empowered. And yes we will have aesthetic differences what binds us is that we are artist empowered*
- *The break out sessions yesterday what would I want it to look like? If it had this diversity, if we had that type of space how would it function? Maybe if it starts functioning that way then it will have this diversity.*
- *Is this the proper demographic being actualized in this room,*
- *How are we defining an ensemble theater?*
- *What is the American demographic of ensemble theaters?*
- *Ensembles as a whole may not be white, but there are groups that are not represented here. This might be because they are not aware of this movement or because they don't know they are an ensemble.*
- *Is it the word ensemble?*
- *How many people in the circle are parents. We live in a culture where art are made by individuals, (some disagree)*
- *If your ensemble pays you then you could do it. This brings up the idea of access and privilege. There are other problems*
- *Are you privileged to be here?*
- *A lot of ensembles begin by groups of color at a university because the lack of opportunity for these groups.*
- *What other training programs are created outside of these privileged places*
- *In a university there is a certain amount of access*
- *These universities need to recognize that alternative training is equal*
- *Training issue of wanting to building, marginalized communities often don't have a voice, then it becomes subject to quality. Creating diversity by looking at within an international exchange program in America. Marginalized communities have made things not made in other groups because they were made in pressure cookers.*

1st group

- *What work do you do? There is aesthetics and also understanding other person's point of view.*
- *An act of invitation to come to NET. If what we are trying to do is, we can't do the work we want to do without the people who aren't here? When we invite people*

- who are not here we have to change to incorporate them. Looking for people who are aligned with my aesthetic and also looking at people with other aesthetics and then having to adapt. We are practicing the problem right now. The question of what do we get from NET, what we get is the opportunity to working with each other and the opportunity to change the world. We need each other. I need to find out from you what you are doing, where is my aesthetic bad? That is what we get. We need to articulate that. What you get is doing hard work to change the world.*
- *If there are only white people then maybe this was made out of a White Aesthetic. Is ensemble theater a white way of thinking?*
 - *This particular way of working came from a particular way of working in Europe. How can we look at the kind of work people are making and including them in ensemble work? What we can learn from opening those ideas more.*
 - *Exploring these other voices and these other experiences, where it doesn't becoming co-opted,*
 - *Rodessa- I don't do art for arts sake I do it for a necessity of the community*
 - *Then someone else said that it is about the aesthetic (the Juene Lune) they very different dynamic about work for social justice and aesthetics*
 - *One more level it would be fine for us to co-exist if there was a level playing field.*
 - *If you look at the funding world but fundamentally it came from people who have money wanting people to create art for them*
 - *We are practicing a problem by having this group separate from the quality and excellence group.*

Break Out Group:
Generational divide

- *Consideration for why we are in the room?*
- *Robin worked with an experimental theatre group in the 70s and wishes to impart information to groups who are doing similar work again today – to propel the work forward; or to agree that the land was poorly tilled initially and to help propel the form forward.*
- *Eric Bass: Recommends that all gatherings (NET Summit, etc.) include free registration for younger members with the full registration of a founding member – this would be of great impact for his theatre company. Bringing all generations to the table.*
- *Lisa Mount: Hoping this isn't just a top-down conversation and that we acknowledge the learning curve in both directions.*
- *Deborah, foolsFURY: Integrating interns who teach them about new technology.*
- *A desire/need to pass on information.*
- *We're talking about the aesthetic conversation between generations (not administrative).*
- *Concern for turning out too many "arts students" – over-saturating the market. What is the responsibility of the ensemble field? How to we impart the work aesthetic to younger artists who aspire to working with ensembles?*
- *Concern for interns/potential artists who volunteer, but fall off the map – need to get paid for their work. Can we support the number of artists in this country?*

- *Integrating new members requires a great deal of time – those interns who have been working with them for a long period of time step in and understudy roles within the ensemble. They're the first folks they go to – in order to build the company.*
- *How do we structure the conversation to invite new members in- speaking with aspiring young members? Foolf FURY has trainings, a bootcamp to introduce company to aspiring artists and vice-versa.*
- *Artists in their 60s feel they are creating their strongest work later in life – when it becomes “out of fashion.” Though perhaps coming full circle?*
- *Erica (Neo Futurists): Perhaps a hopeful time, when younger artists wish to engage in these conversations as the work of the 60s/70s is coming back into fashion.*
- *Integrating younger generations (not just in conversations) in boot camp, and in intensive sessions.*
- *All theatre is exchange in itself. In establishing an “exchange” you facilitate and highlight the difference/barrier to overcome something.*
- *Facilitation to make the conversation (barriers). Question of quality in terms of growth.*
- *Having a voice in the organization – all ages. Most artists aren't getting paid well- there's a need to at least have their voice acknowledged and valued.*
- *The reasons why am I here? Why am I making these sacrifices and what happens when I leave and when I take away my training, my education, 20 years of experience? Because I cannot afford healthcare, etc.*
- *Younger folks without the resources of some folks who've been working for great lengths of time.*
- *Power dynamic – younger folks are auditioning for older generations. How to shift that dynamic?*
- *Multiple generations working side by side.*
- *The aesthetic of that person (in dance). If mission specific, sense of aesthetics. Perhaps ability to hand it down.*
- *Don't want to have to start my own ensemble, because there is so much out there. So much to learn from others.*
- *There are a million barriers in this field. Refusing to take no for an answer.*
- *Collaboration and exchange between companies. Getting to the table is very significant.*
- *"who has... can... be here."*
- *Board and staff leadership shifting younger.*
- *Knowing hearing older voices. Hunger for hearing. Younger companies challenging to “ask” because it seems like begging.*
- *Mentorship: but concern because of time, resources.*
- *Established generation, emerging generation – what do we want from one another? What resources can be shared?*
- *Non-hierarchical power struggles. Knowing the work, knowing one another.*
- *We need to put mechanisms in place to hand down an organization from founding company members to new members – transitioning with companies from older to younger leadership.*

Performance Response: Je Suis Dead

Concerned with how physical relates to story; Static stage – highly interpretable space, it's a puzzle for me to figure out. Storytelling in less conventional ways.

For the play, they were utilizing a small stage, use of stage picture considering spatial challenge commendable. Creating a real dynamic between 3 people.

Hanger women was a striking image. Use of light in the piece, helped clarify. Helped allow stage pictures and deepened the areas. Richly layered sound. Very aware of sound at all times.

Q: Why have we stopped? Train crash sequence, most clear – all design elements working harmoniously with performance and movement. Single place where it was most visceral & clear in terms of story.

Q: Relationship to audience – who are we? (significant because we're brought into it) Dynamic set up pre-show audience felt responsibility without knowing what it is. Wasn't clear on single-central conflict.

Love the characters – clues in the piece, that we were to understand relationship btw characters. Perhaps clarifying within the transition.

Le Coq trained – specificity of body “delicious” is the story as important as the body?

Last line – appreciation for simple things, perhaps if it's embedded earlier it would have deeper resonance. Q: Am I alive or am I dead? Survivors whose lives have ended. Immediate reality and specificity interplaying with metaphor and back without incident.

What are the most significant epiphanies necessary to the arc? And frame them absolutely.

Three layers: actors, train (core), leakages.

- *Beginning with an idea – maybe a structure with the actors in the room and starting from scratch.*

2nd Respondent, Kermit, Pilgrim Theatre: Balance intuition and story in the creation process. How physical calamity effects your being – manifesting itself. (Psychologically, etc.). Having Ben in the audience – initially, looking for connections. He's one of us - seeing ourselves in him.

To clarify the connected stories – suggestion to make interweaving stories too, too clear and then snip away. Consider how to ground the other pieces. Sound score - becoming a true player vs. environment. Ancestor voices filtering through you.

Catalyst Conversations: Mark Russell

Mark Russell: *I run a festival in NYC called “Under the Radar.” I used to run a place called P.S. 122 in NYC, which is sort of like running a festival that never stops... the theater that excites me now acknowledges its place in the world... [On the eight years under Bush]: the most important thing we could be doing was instigating international exchange among arts communities. I think festivals are a fresh answer to promoting the contemporary arts in the theater industry. Real festivals are a relatively new phenomenon in the U.S. In the past was the alternative space movement, many of them now long gone... P.S. 122 was a late arrival to this movement. Now, you may have noticed there’s a serious lack of cheap space. So what is our answer now? Go virtual; go guerilla; make a festival! All you need is an office. A festival can galvanize a city and get it to focus on the arts. You can get peoples’ attention and find avenues for them to participate in the larger discussions the work provokes. I’m specifically looking at festivals that are selective in their programming; that are curated. In the U.S., we call anything a festival – it’s a marketing tool. (Philadelphia, Portland, & Austin festivals are good examples). In the U.S., our culture of going to the theater is very divorced from real life... there’s very little encouragement of audiences and artists to mingle. These smaller festivals are trying to break down those walls.*

These four festivals were started by young programmers (except for one). Most of them constructed their Works on a European model. The Philly Fringe sponsored premiers of many local companies in the festival. Nick Stuccio originally renamed it the Philadelphia Live Arts festival and separated it from the typical “fringe” model set by so many others. Nick has been able to curate work by new artists or bring in exceptionally large artists.

Ron Barry organized the Fusebox festival in Austin, Texas. He has had quick success; it’s certainly a festival to watch.

The Portland Institute for Contemporary Art ran into a budget crisis, and decided to radically readjust the programming. The performing activity was changed from a whole year to a 10-day arts festival. A larger, more diverse audience was garnered, and for ten days, Portland was focused on performance art. PICA started “The Works,” where everyone came to the performances to see local bands and have drinks after shows. The Works finds different locations each year; this year, an abandoned high school... When I came on, we incorporated visual arts into the mix of the festival (despite its name). I also took the festival across the river that divided the city in order to bring people together.

I invited Nature Theatre of Oklahoma, and they came with “Poetics.” In 2005, I also started what was supposed to be a two-year project (called “Under the Radar”). Many of our best contributions to theatre were coming from outside the major regional theaters. There was a whole world of independent theatre artists that were following companies like the Wooster Group and did not have access to the resources of traditional theater companies... Under the Radar was an attempt to make discussions more specific. We are now embarking on our sixth Under the Radar festival. Eventually, we expanded the festival into two weekends and began to attract critical attention. The festival has

expanded to hold events around the city; inviting International companies and developing new work for the festival (Reggie Watts, The Suicide Kings, etc.)

The dialogue between presenters and producers of live theater arts is just beginning. One reason festivals may have taken so long to lift off in the U.S.... it never worked in NY, and like it or not, NY is the center of our theater culture. I believe the true contemporary American theatre is located in small, self-produced companies and individual artists. As a New Yorker, this de-centralization of the field is not a good thing... but it may be a good thing for the U.S., as artists move around the country to make their work. The visceral communication that art requires is not possible over the Internet.

In addition to programming the next Under the Radar 2010, I am also currently working on the Off-Center festival taking place in Los Angeles. It will feature work from Latin America, the Pacific Rim, Western artists, and Los Angeles. Festivals can be a chance for a local culture to interact with the International/global culture. We can tell by the fiscal crisis how linked we are all around the world. Theater is a great tool to make new cultural bridges. Theater gets to the stories of culture; the stories a culture tells itself. And theater tells those stories in intimate rooms, where everyone is implicated in the act of watching theater. The best examples – the good stories – are totally universal.

Many times, an artist will tip me off to something they saw overseas that moved them, and that they think is relevant to our city... We are in a new time. We find ourselves shouldered with great responsibilities as a nation.

International Companies – Cultural Exchange and Connections

Panelists: Claudio Valdés Kuri, Mary Pearson, Joanna Sherman, Ivan Talijancic

Moderated by: MK Wegmann

MK Wegmann: We're going to try to make this as much of a discussion as possible. I've asked each of the panelists to make brief presentations of some of the work they're doing as artists in the international arena.

Questions:

- 1. How do we know one another and how do we meet other artists?*
- 2. What are the resources available and needed for this work to happen?*

In the United States, in earlier times in different administrations, the federal government recognized that sending US artists into international places was an opportunity to build goodwill in the United States. Cultural diplomacy – and cultural exchange – was a strong tool in the Cold War. I think the signal from the Obama administration that cultural exchange is an important tool for us is going to open doors. Three things (“value issues”) that I want to talk about: Whether we look at it as a global arena or an international arena; Reciprocity (there's a great desire on many peoples' part to just export US artists); and opening arena at the government level- the difference between

cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy. I want each of the panelists to introduce themselves...

Ivan Talijancic (WaxFactory): The company has had a strong international focus ever since its inception about 10 years ago. For us, it has never been a sort of political agenda to engage in this kind of work... I would say that every project we worked on had an international component to it, and I think the issue of reciprocity... we have developed collaborative, long-term relationships with artists in other countries, and we have been continuing that kind of work. This does not always mean creating this work in the United States and touring, though that may be the simplest; but I would say that more importantly are the collaborations that have taken us to other countries where we create the work there, in collaboration with the other artists.

Mary Pearson (Fools Proof, Liverpool): I guess I ended up in this chair because I went traveling, and after that everything kind of opened up and life choices seemed wider than before... Like Ivan said, it's not with the intention of being political, but the politics can come into the studio by the nature of the thing. By the characters we represent onstage, we confront "What is American?" "What is British?" etc. We're performing tonight with our second piece; we've been performing mostly in the U.K. but have just recently been coming to the States. It's very different how people react to the stories we're telling and the characters we're presenting.

Joanna Sherman (Bond Street Theater) Bond Street has a long history of doing this kind of international exchange... by working in refugee camps, it introduced us to another angle, which was the presence of NGOs. Through working there, we met artists. We then started working collaboratively with artists from Kosovo, Bosnia, etc., and this organization still exists in order to bring artists together, and to collaborate and share ideas. After 9/11, we partnered with a small NGO to work with children in refugee camps, and, keeping our eye out for artists, we met Exile Theatre of Afghanistan. We wanted to work from the point of view of the citizens, from the stories that were told to us (not just to be political). Now we're caught: this combination of doing artistic work and the humanitarian work we do with children/women/refugees.

Claudio Valdés Kuri (Teatre de Ciertos Habitantes, Mexico City) I have a company, and it's with people from all around the world, but I didn't even think about that before. I am sort of an old-fashioned theater maker in that I think the message is the most important thing. In my company, we are based in doing this theater of content and form. If there's not something to say, we are not going to do theatre. Also, we are always looking for change: we found a group formula. I am not against technology, but I am not using it. We have done six plays in these past twelve years, and we have been all around the world and in many festivals.

Answers to Questions:

- *We use a medium that isn't involved in language (movement): we can teach a vocabulary that is specific to people. By creating an artistic vocabulary that different people can share, we can go from something that is international to global. Having a vocabulary*

- through your craft really allows you to engage...*
- *Most of the places where we toured where English was not used on a daily basis, the presenters actually insisted that any form of subtitles be used because they wanted people to experience our work as created.*
 - *It's incredibly complex [in regards to resources for this type of international work]. We toured in so many different regions, but we have not used the same formula everywhere.*
 - *We operate with relatively small travel grants, and that is geographically specific. We do have a grant that is not geographically specific, and those are small grants to buy travel. Artists website (more info about visas for artists): Artists from Abroad*
 - *You need to understand the kind of work people are looking at and develop that vocabulary. There is support for travels to workshops/festivals/collaborations. Both American organizations and foreign governments can come to your aid for certain things; residencies can also be good.*
 - *It can be difficult to get funding from the state department because of the nature of the work [in specific regions: i.e. Cambodia]. The history with the government's interactions has made things difficult. There's a historical context and certain responsibility for artists to speak to.*
 - *Cultural Envoys [through state department]: US Embassy has to apply for. It is not for performances, but it IS for workshops and training.*
 - *National Endowment for the Arts grants are eligible for working internationally. They no longer have a separate international program, but they have project grants.*
 - *Association of Performing Arts Presenters (artspresenters.org) for artists or presenters – available funds (travel grants) have quadrupled.*
 - *The balance of power that comes along with money (and lack of): many other countries look to the U.S. as being a very wealthy country. What a lot of people don't understand is that the arts is so under-funded. It's very difficult to go to a country in the Middle East or elsewhere to bring artists but not have resources to bring financial aid.*
 - *When we go to a conflict zone, we have the ability to go and leave; we have a responsibility to think about how we impact those countries & cultures... what is your commitment, what is the relationship you build?*
 - *It's so much more difficult for artists in very poor areas to do this kind of collaboration; they have to leave their jobs and families. Sometimes we have to pay those artists.*
 - *Question: Is there an advocacy organization I can talk to right now about getting the Embassy to fund our international travels? Answer: Performing Arts Alliance (advocacy organization)*

ABC Breakout Groups: Group #3
Lone Mountain 355

Facilitator: Katie DeNobriga

Katie: The purpose of this session is to give input to NET for the shape/form/content for "All-together Building Capacity" (ABC). They hope to pilot this program in January 2010. We want to talk today about the "what" (content) and the "how" (delivery system).

Please take the time now to fill out the Professional Development Topics sheet. They are completely anonymous, so be as frank as possible.

Discussion: Now, let's look at the last thing on that page: "other." What was missing from that list?

What's Missing?

- Board Development (**everyone agrees**)
- Raising money outside the non-profit model (* **most of the room thinks this is extremely important**)
- Adoption of new business models
- Compliance issues: legal/risk/insurance/etc. (**nearly all agree**)
- Continuing the artistic critical exchange; seeing work and critiquing it (**strong agreement around the room**)
- Grant requests: a unified grant application process (write a grant once, and it gets sent out all over)
- Grant writing strategies and resources (**approx. 20% of others agree**)
- Audience development (**75% of room agrees**) and community engagement (**50% of room**)
- Resource exchange (**several others would include it on their list of priorities**)
- • Suggestion (Ivan): Arts & Business Council of America
- Teaching/training resource for new artists
- Advocacy training and sharing
- Equipment bank (shared with other companies)

Other Strongly Emphasized Suggestions for NET

- Active list of resources/links (that everyone can contribute to) available on NET website
- Collective "bulletin board" space to contact each other and provide successful examples, sample documents, etc.
- NET could be of service by being an umbrella/fiscal sponsor using 501c3 status
- Example templates/contracts/etc, especially for grant writing.
- • IDEA: Something similar to the wiki page set up by Neo-Futurists?
- Splitting the conference in some way so the focus can get more distilled: maybe some days would focus on business and some on artistic? (**not everyone agrees**)
- Idea for the next conference: provide more opportunities to see each other's work (visually, as in slideshows, videos, and etc.) Maybe have a sharing space or "video salon."
- IDEA: Hire 20 or so managing directors for 100 or so companies: shared management. Many of those things can be done virtually, and this would make it easier for everyone: every second spent on management is time lost on *creating art*. (* **everyone likes this; very intriguing**)

Delivery Systems

(Regional meetings, longer seminars, cluster consultation, local meetings, evening meetings, one-on-one, mentorships [1 artist comes in to work with whole company],

peer-to-peer sharing in various formats, specific artists sent out to certain areas for period of time)

- There should be a really functional listserv for NET members (a technologically-advanced form of Peer-to-Peer?)
- One-on-One is preferred by Theatre Grottesco, because they reside in Santa Fe, which is more isolated.
- If there is a large group endeavor, it might be good to keep in mind that it will be more helpful if companies are closer to the same level (as with Mentorship)
- A hybrid of Clusters, followed by One-on-One: some things would be better served to be really specific
- Mentorships might not succeed as well because they're often a one-off thing, whereas maybe a Peer-to-Peer exchange over time could be more helpful
- • Continuity in general is good!
- In this type of group setting (during the conference), NET should hire 2-3 professional consultants available for people/companies to make appointments with.
- One-on-One or multiple-company consultation (like a learning circle): four or five somewhat similar ensembles (in terms of budget, status, etc.) would work together over time, maybe with a variety of consultants. "Cohort learning." (* **ALL agree!**)
- • IDEA: Maybe companies have two separate cohorts at the same time: one with companies similar to them; the other with companies that have different types of expertise and can share knowledge.
- Take the cohort idea but reduce it to the bare minimum: an exchange over time (two companies, different strengths)
- "Creative Mentoring:" NET sets up networks for companies that are interested in a partnership/exchange of particular skills and other items
- Extension of "collision" idea: provide a way for groups to come together (similar to that) outside of conference setting
- "Craigslist for ensembles"

Group #9

Question: How can NET's Professional Development help you?

“Other” items missing from the list:

- Where union membership fits – contract for ensembles with equity. Equity issues (AEA)
- Documentation: Archiving work and process, techniques.
- “National” significance, work. How do we define that and what are the “actions” to achieving national significance?
- Group leadership (some admin, some how to make work, artistic significance, who’s going to take ultimate responsibility). A sub-category becomes training and rehearsal process. Perhaps introducing an artistic mentor, to help progress work (whole company) forward.
- Group dynamics, leadership (consensus, facilitation and inter-personal dynamics): Falls within Group Leadership
- Sabbaticals, crafted in the way the artists wants.
- Diversity, outreach. (race, class, gender, sexual preference, etc. – for members of ensemble, administrative staff, audience, support systems).
- Institutionalizing methodology: figuring out how to teach, how to train. How to crystallize your methodology (clarify artistic process). Someone to help you articulate it and to figure out your unique methodology. Partner with universities, workshops.
- Moving festivals – a festival circuit.
- Business for ensembles. “Best practices for non-profit management.”
- Develop relationship with academic world. So they actually write about their work. Especially little writing about diverse groups. Traveling academics.
- Use of good feedback. Interactive feedback of some kind.
- NET bringing company background, skills, interest, and expertise to the table to help groups find successful mentorships. Inventory of NET membership and develop peer-to-peer sharing.
- Having instant access to NET for quick questions, etc.
- Internet resource to create forum group – email blasts/listservs. Like to be able to email out. Smaller groups online to coordinate.

Group went through the listed items and ranked them according to individual priority.

- Additional concerns:
MFA - ensembles members working all of the time, no time to get the accreditation, though they have the expertise. However, some students with MFA, with less experience are able to get teaching jobs over ensemble members who’ve been working for years.

- Wanting credit for life experience.
- Financial disparity: one with space, one with content called "partnership" but not in parity.
- Power dynamics - giving ensembles the funds to facilitate a partnership, not the regional theatre to select their ensemble/partnership.
- Diversity - more engrained, not about a checklist line item. The core of what is not discussed. Structural conversation how to push that forward?
- However, for the moment "diversity" must be an item, (at least temporarily) so it doesn't disappear. Something to mark that this is at the table, so it doesn't go away.
- It may be discussed in NET and wrestled with. Need to get on the same page in how we define "diversity."

CLOSING CEREMONY

Fractured Atlas: "Open arts network" via NET, allows free Associate Memberships with Fractured Atlas. Offering Health insurance, Liability Insurance, Workers comp, etc. Sponsorship portion of partnership, ability to make donations to your arts organization, via Fractured Atlas – and it is tax deductible for the donors (only to full memberships). They offer professional development opportunities including "micro grants" for organizational or creative development. Give 4-8 per year. Fractured Atlas also provides online courses about board development, fundraising letters, and "getting yer shit together". Contact them if you are interested in writing/developing a course for/with them. They invite and solicit participants to suggest their own offerings.

*Carlton Turner: Speaking on behalf of Voices from the Battlefield, which has done work across the country devoted to cultural equity. Traveling in groups, previously hosted meetings at NPN, AlternateROOTS, Intersection for the Arts, etc. Premise: when any country puts the economy in front of people – it requires attention and action. Next round of meetings about devising steps for creating actionable plans to push the initiative forward. Preparing them for one of two meetings with Obama's administration. The second meeting is being organized by Caron Atlas, Arlene Goldbard... If you are interested and wish to receive the reports from these meetings, please email or contact Carlton, he will be more than happy to share that material.
Nest convening at AlternateROOTS: August 11-16, 2009 in Arden, NC*

Eric Ehn (Playwright): Noting the lifecycle of conferences. Cross-generational community formulating here. And we need BOTH – long-term, and short-term memory. Missed the initial events of the summit. I was in Belarus... Many of us are too busy doing work that we can't actually see much work. However, there is a value of seeing less, and engaging our lives in less activity, in order to experience it more fully. Much more is available to our senses. We become over-stimulated, flat-minded. Your thirst will be satisfied when you know that for which you thirst. Do Less! Hyper extension technology... but because we can do too much – we can expect too little.

Theatrical practice, so every day.

When we actually experience theatrical delight it is like a snow day! The rarity of theatre. Not trying to inundate the world with it. But how can we allow ourselves to be a child of meteorology – delighting in falling from the sky?

Broad choice in option, narrow choice in action. How can we make our choices more narrow?

Creating theatre on the scale of myth involves a transformation of behaviors. As rare as a snow day. Let money take care of money and get paid when you can, but in theatre it is an exchange of human values. As much as possible make it an exchange of values – an exchange goods and services. Live within other budgets, institutions. Make your work from within the established support system.

Members of their Free Theatre (Belarus) company have been fired from the national theatre and they now perform at home. There is a hole in the wall. Audience sits on one side, performers on another. Forbidden to drive there. You have to walk to it so as not to draw attention - and audiences have to clean your own coffee cups.

We neither want to be or receive charity. We provide listening for testimony – not therapy t throw back, but we bring the humanness of the testimony. Our gift can be our ignorance of their testimony. We should allow ourselves to be taught. The space that we provide for the telling of their stories is a gift.

I respect the martyrdom of institutions; I need institutions so that I may exploit them. I would like for them to die on my behalf, their shit allows me access to their systems, which I may inhabit until the whole thing collapses. Christ died at the moment of his life when he was becoming the church. A crypto-political amalgam... Not to become the institution.

The destruction of institutions can be a positive goal for ensembles. Previously, calling for the death of the academy: but beware the attentions of hegemony. “When they want to censor you, first they buy you lunch.” There are some grants worth applying for. Schools/institutions can be beneficial – providing livelihood.

“We need to form islands in the net.” We believe that we have a world wide web, but this is only a myth. There are giant holes in the web. Ensemble theatres are a knot in the web. We have a lot more knot-tying to do... The work of the FURY factory this week is not an accident – sharing the work is indispensable. I hope this will remain a focus for NET.

Considering the lifecycles of organizations: I previously attended RAT Conference (Regional Alternate Theatre Conference)... we were anarchic... NET allows the intentional construction of relationships and sharing of knowledge and practices. NET is much better organized than the organizations he has previously worked with, and exudes a great energy.

NET finding its meter as well as the object of its love. NET organization to grow – but need clear and active mission. NET at an acute sensitivity moment... It's at the edge of its ministry. Needs to articulate a mission that is rooted in action. Requires material circumstance. Mission needs metaphor, poetry (not only outcome-oriented). If not, it will die a particular death – it will die trying to eat itself... Perhaps there should be a mortality of institutions.

Eric recommends that ensembles/artists kill institutions and live parasitically within them. Partner with institutions but be cunning...

Do Less. Make spaces personal, provide a clean and loving house in which to receive visitors and be received. Be hungry students – as opposed to hungry artists. \$ is not substitute for art. We can use problem of money. Don't let the obstacle of money be your defining obstacle.

Giving more weight to social purpose of art (not just art for art's sake). Create a new way of using the street, bar, court – theatre is real and effective when we advocate/include new social purpose.

If diversity is a priority: it should not be an agenda item, it should be the structure, the action. We should create diversity. Bring work together, pass beyond themes in order to share the work.

This should be a festival that assesses itself within the time of the festival.

Quoting from a note/message from Michael Rohd: 5am at airport thinking about yesterday's conversation and the whole convening, trying to reconcile a few things: What does NET offer? How do we talk about quality and how does a meaningful conversation about diversity or privilege apply to our membership?

What if NET was actually charged with being the place where upfront, number one, artists and ensembles come to have the hard conversations about quality and privilege and diversity? What if the reason for being is not only to provide a space for gathering, for community building, not only to help us tour and or advocate as a field, but as a way of Making tools and demanding attention to consciously integrate real tools into human practice. What if NET was about real human exchange?

Stand up. In your mind – ask for something on behalf of your practice. What would you like to come into your personal strength on behalf of your craft in the future to come? I would like you to take a moment, while you breathe, to allow the sensation of an answer, because somehow, somewhere, someway this request will be answered. Right now we may not know its form. If you've asked for something – allow the space for the answer to open up inside of you. Be thankful for the question. Be thankful for the answer.

Conference is over.