

The Artist Chronicles

The Performing and Teaching Artists of the Music Center - Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County

Issue 6 Winter 2011

Cultural Events

Workshops

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Research

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Partnerships

Arts Advocacy



Happy New Year!

In this issue, the first of 2011, each of our writers have given their focus to examining how we can be more effective in advocating for arts education, beyond and outside the immediate school environment and culture.

As California ebbs and flows it's way through budget crisis after budget crisis, arts organizations and Teaching/Performing Artists across our State are now seeking ways to form different kinds of alliances and partnerships.

In our current climate, being a true advocate for meaningful, integrated and accountable arts education now also means getting creative, being uncomfortable, being upside down and thinking way outside the box!

We need to move in broader circles. Reach out to local community and spiritual centers; form partnerships with colleges and universities. Rally civic leaders and local business, court politicians, and let's not forget to mobilize the oh so powerful and effective *Parent Teacher Associations*.

I hope each of these articles inspire and open up avenues for thoughtful discussion. Keep your head above water. The tidal wave has to end eventually. When it does, we will still be standing, creating, dancing, singing, composing and changing the lives of young people wherever we can!

Madeleine Dahm
Designing Editor/MC Artist



**Mark Slavkin -
Vice President for Education
The Music Center**

The Music Center - Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County provides the finest in arts education to more than 250,000 students and teachers annually.

As a premier performing arts center, the Music Center has built its educational programs around the unique role and expertise of the professional artist. The power and impact of our work comes from the interaction of outstanding artists with students, teachers, and family audiences. Accordingly, the Music Center invests substantial resources in the identification, training and ongoing support of these performers and teaching artists. The artists selected for the Music Center roster are widely recognized as leaders in the field and are sought out by other arts presenters and arts education organizations around the United States.

The Music Center is proud to present more than 100 world-class performing and teaching artists from around the globe to share their knowledge, skill and artistry.



The Artist Chronicles - Winter 2011

In this issue you will find articles on: The impact of the global Hip Hop Nation • One artists spiritual journey with dance • A reflection on the power of parents • Thoughts on witty and creative reinvention • Artists in Focus • Plus our regular commentary page by featured writer Peter Kors



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2011 National Arts Action Summit.

Monday April 4th -Tuesday April 5th Washington DC.

The 24th annual *Arts Advocacy Day* is the only national event that brings together a broad cross section of America's cultural and civic organizations, along with hundreds of grassroots advocates from across the country, to underscore the importance of developing strong public policies and appropriating increased public funding for the arts.

- * **LEARN** new ways to make the best case for the arts to decision-makers.
- * **NETWORK** with other attendees from your state and across the country.
- * **BE HEARD** by your members of Congress when you visit them to make the case for the arts and arts education.

For more information go to:

www.artsusa.org

The Artist Chronicles are written by artists of the Music Center and published by the Music Center for artists and others who may be interested. So that the Artist Chronicles may reflect and serve as a forum for the artists' voice, the Music Center does not edit or otherwise direct the content. As such, any opinions expressed in the Artist Chronicles are those of the individual author and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Music Center.



THE ADVOCATE

The date is November 19, 2010.

We HEAR MUSIC: Something stirring and patriotic.

FADE IN:

EXT. DAY: Washington, DC. A wide angle on the Capitol DOME with the United States FLAG waving in the wind.

INT. DAY: Close on a beautiful dark oak DOOR with a gleaming brass sign that reads: ED SINGER, UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

INT. DAY: Inside Congressman Singer's OFFICE. Dark paneling, bookshelves with law books bound in leather, the whole bit. Representative Singer is dictating a press release to his ASSISTANT, a fresh recruit from the Junior Republicans.

SINGER

Read that back to me.

ASSISTANT (Reading from paper)

"This is an obvious attempt to offend . . ."

SINGER

Right. OK. Now, who would be offended by this offensive video of bugs crawling on a picture of . . of . . of . .

ASSISTANT

A picture of Jesus, sir. Well, sir, there's always the Christians.

SINGER

That's right! Write this: "This is an obvious attempt to offend the Christians during the Christmas season." Brilliant! Now what were the talking points we were talking about?

His BLACKBERRY rings. He looks at the screen and presses the ANSWER button.

SINGER

Hey honey.

We hear the voice of a very smart tenth grade girl.

GIRL

Hey Dad, I know what I want to do next summer.

SINGER

What's that, honey?

GIRL

I wanna be an intern at NPR.

Singer BLANCHES

SINGER

What's that now, honey?

GIRL

That's where we went on the field trip today. It was cool! We saw them recording these little pieces of songs, they're called 'buttons,' and they use them to. . .

SINGER

Honey . . .

GIRL

Anyway, I was especially proud when they said they don't have commercials and they get ten percent of their budget from CPB grants and some of that money comes from our very own government! I gotta go, Dad. I'll text you. Are you coming home for Christmas? Love you, bye.

SINGER

Bye honey, love you too. (He hangs up)

ASSISTANT

Sir, I looked at the talking points and I kind of finished the press release. Would you like to hear it?

SINGER

(Not listening) Sure.

ASSISTANT (reads from paper)

“The museum should pull the exhibit and be prepared for serious questions come budget time.” (Sees Singer not listening) Sir?

SINGER

NPR.

ASSISTANT

The liberals scuttled the “Defund” bill yesterday, sir. Next year, though. When we’re in charge.

SINGER

(To an invisible wall in front of him) Next year.

END





“Hip Hop is the voice of this generation. Even if you didn’t grow up in the Bronx in the ’70s, Hip Hop is there for you. It has become a powerful force. Hip Hop binds all of these people, all of these nationalities, all over the world together.”

Kool Herc (Father of Hip Hop)

“Can’t Stop. Won’t Stop”

RIPPLES of CHANGE, CHARACTER, and COMMUNITY

By Tiffany Bong

Hip Hop is a fresh, dynamic art form that continues to evolve, expand, and define itself in our time. The roots of Hip Hop were created from oppression and struggle in the 1970’s in New York City. The disadvantaged youth created an astounding artistic expression to overcome hardship, find acceptance, and kindle their emerging spirits. Born from the burning ashes of the Bronx, Hip Hop rose like a phoenix to soar across the world as a universal voice for our current generation. Through the elements of music, dance, graffiti art, and/or mc-ing, Hip Hop today is a cross-cultural vehicle that drives through all avenues of society from politics to spirituality, and now into our education system.

I have a DREAM JOB- being a Hip Hop teaching artist for the Music Center. In fact, most of the time it’s more of a DREAM LIFE than a job. With this identity, I am able to combine two of my dearest passions: Dance and teaching, where I can authentically practice my craft as an artist while sharing it with our youth. When I teach, I see myself in ALL of my students’ eyes. As the students experience the Hip Hop dance residency, they are able to develop and apply the very same life lessons that I gained myself: Courage, self-identity, teamwork, goal setting, time management, diversity appreciation, perseverance, compromise, creativity, and confidence.

The magic of arts education magnifies beyond the individual and student. The programs also create a valuable social, cultural, and historical impact that benefit our whole community. On a social level, relationships begin to blossom. Hip Hop and the arts have a great ability to put all participants on an equal plane. Pre-determined titles, skills, and backgrounds are erased as all participants experience the same challenges and successes. Classroom teachers humbly get to feel like students and students

often rise above to become the teachers. Mainstream students deemed to have “special-needs” get to feel “normal” and “normal” students get to feel “special.” This beautiful balance creates a healthy space for new relationships to develop in and out of the classroom.

Soon a flourishing community grows with an elevated culture embedded in a zest for learning, creativity, and acceptance. Teachers often remark about how the arts create a shift in energy and brighten the spirit of the entire grade level. One of the most important lessons I aim to instill through Hip Hop dance is to live a passionate “FULL OUT” life! During the lessons, students are challenged to discover and believe in themselves, take meaningful risks to grow, and recognize their special role and contribution to the whole.



Hip Hop artists, including myself, also gain a greater sense of duty and a connection to the community. You can speak with any Hip Hop artist from around the world, and we will always share one common statement: “HIP HOP SAVED ME.” Sharing our passion with the youth creates a deeper purpose and inspiration in our art and lives. A full circle is created where artists give the very same gift of life that was given to them and Hip Hop reaches out to the very same youth population that it was born from.

I often have to take a step back, smile with gratitude, and recognize just how powerful my role can be as a teaching artist. I have a direct channel to a large population and system within our society. Thus, I can be an active, positive contributor to our world and history through each Hip Hop dance residency. The arts are often seen as a pleasant, but disposable accessory to education. Furthermore, Hip Hop often carries stigmas of negativity, violence, and degradation that don't seem appropriate for the school system. Being a Hip Hop teaching artist means to accept with great pleasure and perseverance my co-role in being an advocate and specialist for both arts education and Hip Hop. I know that they are both valuable tools for empowerment, education, and enlightenment from experience. The challenge now is to find effective ways to share this viewpoint with others to generate greater ripples that can reach a larger community.

This is a multifaceted issue that requires multiple and simultaneous effort from all parties: teaching artists, schools, administrators, government, students, and organizations. From a teaching artist perspective, the first approach I usually take is to build a strong and sustaining relationship with the teachers and staff. Often times, we forget that classrooms teachers, although heroes and heroines, are humans that need support as well, especially in an exhausted system. I try to make a point to get to know EACH classroom teacher first and create a strong partnership based on respect, openness, encouragement, and gratitude. I also try to be flexible and adapt to each school's needs and culture. I

want to come in with an intention to enhance and support their curriculum rather than invade their time and space.

I have found that once the teachers and school are enthusiastic about an arts residency, their students will be too. The first year working with a school is crucial. If the teachers experience and receive positive benefits from the arts residency, they can be your strongest spokespersons and advocates. They provide a unique and valuable dual-perspective on arts education. They experience being an active learner alongside their students. At the same time, they observe the benefits of the program from the sidelines. In time, the teachers begin to embrace the Hip Hop culture, our partnership, and the arts as an effective tool for quality learning. During these hard times, it is the teachers that have fought to sustain the arts programs in the schools that I teach at. They've written letters, attended PTA meetings, and found ways to raise funds to keep the residency at full length. This year, a set of classroom teachers even used their grade's extra funds to extend the residency!

Another important relationship a teaching artist can build is with the parents. Often times, I will encourage my students to go home and teach the dance to another family member as a great way to practice. This way, the parents are included in the experience and share their child's growth and enthusiasm during their artistic journey. It also creates an opportunity to build a special bond that can foster a healthy relationship at home.

Inviting parents, school staff, administrators, and funders to a culmination is also a powerful way to promote arts advocacy and sustenance. It is a moment when all contributing parties of an arts program can be under one roof. Although the primary goal is to celebrate the journey and success of the students, I try to make a culmination interactive. I want to create a united experience that reminds us all of the power and importance of arts education. This can provide a great moment to build bridges and begin exploring solutions to our current problems.

There is a famous Hip Hop saying: "Can't Stop. Won't Stop." – which also happens to be the title of what many consider to be Hip Hop's first official textbook. The story of Hip Hop is to face difficult times with purpose, perseverance, and passion, and most importantly, to rise as one. The same goes for our dearest arts programs. The stronger our stone, the greater the ripples of change, character, and community we will create in our world.



TIFFANY "JIMINI" BONG is a professional Hip Hop/Street dancer and educator that specializes in the dance forms of Lockin', Waacking/Punking, and freestyle. She has a B.A. in Theatre & Dance and a B.S. in Psychology from Santa Clara University as well as a Professional Designation in Arts Education. In 2007, Tiffany was chosen to be one of only 30 dancers world-wide to receive training from the pioneers of Hip Hop/Street Dance through the RED BULL BEAT RIDERS Program. Tiffany is honored to have won several street dance titles such as: Hip Hop International's 2007 "2 on 2" Lockin' world co-champion, Homeland's 2008 Lockin' champion, Funk Session's 2008 Waacking champion, Undadog's 2009 Poppin'/Lockin' co-champion, and H4's 2010 All Styles co-champion.

Tiffany is a choreographer, dancer, programs manager, and teacher for CULTURE SHOCK LA - an international, non-profit, Hip Hop organization, as well as a teacher and dancer for HOMELAND - a globally recognized Hip Hop community center. She is also a founding member of LA's all female street dance crew, THE SYRENZ, and a dancer in Anthony "Bam Bam" Thomas' WORLD DANCE CREW. Tiffany's primary focus is youth outreach and she serves as a professional teaching artist for the Music Center: Performing Arts Center of LA County, Culture Shock LA, and DARE Dance America





Community Outreach

Ways the Arts can Impact the Broader Community

By Jane Glaser

As Teaching Artists, we do our best to educate students and teachers about how the arts can connect to all academic subjects. But, if we also think outside the “teaching in the schools” box, we can come up with ways to enrich the broader community, or even the world!

The *AMAN Dance Educators* have created an event called, “Family Dance Night.” This involves not only weeks of teaching *International Dance* workshops to both students and teachers, but also an evening that involves the students learning and dancing with their families. This evening includes the fantastic live music of ‘The Goin’ South Band’. Many of the children have never heard or seen a live band before this experience. Having the students and families participate in dance together is unlike anything else I’ve experienced and adding live music is the icing on the cake! Participants find that it is easy and fun, even if they “think” they cannot dance. Bringing families together through learning, laughing and doing something new is exciting, bonding and enriching for everyone.

I found a similar enriching experience involving dance in October of 2009, when my husband Barry and I were fortunate to be part of a church team on a mission trip to India. Along with some site seeing, we were to be connected with a wonderful group in Bihar, in the Northern part of India, to support and build church partnerships. This group has a school that trains young adults to be pastors.

One of our plans for the trip was for each one of the team members to create and lead a class for the students. Our men would teach their men, and our women would teach their women, for some activities in India require the men and women to be separate. Each of the women on the team prepared and taught a class on a specific woman in the Bible. I was given Miriam, a woman in the Bible who danced. Being a dancer, this was perfect for me as not only did I have important information that I wanted to share, but I had an element to my class that was very different than all the others. I added dance to my lesson and in my opinion, it made the learning experience much more fun, enjoyable and memorable. I wanted to demonstrate to the women that even if they themselves did not

know how to dance, they still could create and share a meaningful experience through the language of dance for and with their future students.

I chose an easy to learn, short praise song. I created simple arm movements to emphasize the meaning of the words. I had a male translator next to me translating and doing the movements too. He was so fun and he had never danced before! All the women participated and loved the experience. After my class, they put on music and shared some Indian dance for us and we had the opportunity to learn from them. I think that offering dance in my lesson gave them the opportunity to show and share their culture with us. I am sure that it made it more meaningful and I believe that they came away from the experience with the confidence and ability to add some level of dance to their teaching.

Teaching and dancing with these women was one of the most fulfilling events of the trip for me. It is a beautiful thing to integrate the arts into whatever subject you might be dealing with. As creative artists, let's see what else we can do to share the arts in ways we may not have thought of before, here and around the world!

Never stop dancing!

Jane is a dancer, Teaching Artist and member of the *Aman Dance Educators*.



ARTISTS IN FOCUS -

KAHURANGI MAORI DANCE THEATRE OF NEW ZEALAND AND DAVID PRATHER



Kahurangi Maori Dance Theatre of New Zealand

Both audience interaction and a touch of humor highlight this enthralling introduction to an ancient South Pacific culture. The Kahurangi Maori Dance Theatre of New Zealand brings to life the heritage of the Maori people through its vivid performance featuring tribal music, dance and hand-crafted, traditional costumes. A native Polynesian culture with ancestral ties to Hawaii, Samoa, Tahiti and the Cook Islands, the Maori have a rich history to share. The performance provides cultural, geographic and social information about the dances and music styles, and also features dances and songs of other Polynesian islands.

David Prather - Storytelling and Poetry

Actor-storyteller David Prather has performed his unique brand of theatre and storytelling for over fifteen years. A graduate of Princeton University and of the American Conservatory Theatre, and an experienced performer in both theatre and television, he examines the power of poetry and language in three dynamite performances:

Prather's 'Poetry Jam' is an exciting and fun examination of the joy of poetry. Using verses from Shel Silverstein, Jack Prelutsky, A.A. Milne, Mother Goose and others, Prather scoots (sometimes literally, on his razor scooter) from one hilarious poem to another. Jump rope jingles, poems that sing, hambone poetry and the classic American verse of Carl Sandburg are not forgotten, as Prather performs "jams" with a score of entertaining poems using accents, audience participation, pratfalls and physical comedy to investigate rhyme, rhythm, metaphor and the origins of poetry.



In 'The World of Myths', David approaches the mythology of various cultures with humor and an improvisatory style that entertains and actively engages the audience. Whether relating classic Greek myths about Titans and gods, Native American myths about the moon and stars, or Chinese, Hindu, Central American and other myths of creation, Prather uses the imagination of humankind to fire that of his audience.

'Star-Spangled Poetry' is a theatrical interpretation of the idea and ideals of America as expressed by our nation's greatest poets. Starting with Francis Scott Key's stirring "Star-Spangled Banner" and the War of 1812, the show sets iconic poems in their historical context and then renders them dramatically.



Focus On Franklin:

The Impact of Meaningful, Integrated Arts Education on One School Community

By Aimee Young Hopkins

Much of my work as a Music Teaching Artist takes place at Franklin Avenue Elementary School in Los Feliz, near Hollywood. Although I am involved in arts education at many schools in the area, I like to call Franklin my “home school.” I am lucky to count myself as one thread in its multicolored, multifaceted tapestry community. I am their after-school Theatre Arts Instructor and have been the Vocal/General Music Teacher with *Friends of Franklin* since 2003. I have the privilege of working with a diverse student body where over 52 languages are spoken at home.

I have had students at Franklin that I first met as babies in my “*Viva la Musica! Parent-and-Me Music*” classes at Mt. Hollywood Congregational Church. I then had them as preschoolers in my Children’s Dance classes in Ballet and Tap at Studio A in Silverlake, and then as Kindergarten students at Franklin, singing and dancing in the International Sing and Dance show. I taught 3rd graders the recorder (thanks to the generosity of the Friends of Franklin PTA); and as 4th graders they participated in *Beauty and the Beast* and other musicals, as part of the Franklin Kids After-school program. Finally, I worked with 5th graders graduating from Franklin in a formal performance for the school community. What a journey to take with a child!

As an arts educator, it is extremely gratifying to see a child progress from birth to 5th grade. I have had the honor of hearing a toddler grow from singing vocables (nonsense syllables) on random pitches to learning complex counterpoint harmonies. I have had the joy of seeing a pre-schooler grow from dancing like a butterfly to executing detailed sequences of choreography, and witnessing simple pantomime evolve into complex line memorization of a full-length musical script.

This position at Franklin has also challenged my teaching practice. There is no way I could continue to teach the same lessons over and over, year after year. Nor would it be fair to my students if I were content holding them to the same standards to which I might hold a 5th grader at another school with no prior arts experience. I have made it my business to participate in Professional Development opportunities, to attend workshops at the local, state and national level in arts education, and to read the latest research in this field. Most recently, I attended the *Arts for All Coaches Training* at the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. I also continue to hone and refine my annual lessons and build my music and movement repertoire by learning new songs, dances and reading new scripts.

Franklin has an exceptional parent-run after-school program called *Franklin Kids*, founded and run by Sandi Picazo, with whom I do a lot of work. I teach the after-school Theatre Arts Program, and collaborate with other teaching artists from my company, *Aimee Art Productions*, to hold Guitar, Marbling, Modigliani's Noses, Creative Storytelling, Recorder, Visual Art, Music and Theatre classes over the year. Students do homework, have a snack and then experience high-quality enrichment in a safe, nurturing setting. Many parents also teach classes and scholarships are available.

This year we held our first annual Talent Show sponsored by *Friends of Franklin*. I assisted and accompanied students of all ages who came out to entertain and share their talents. There was music, magic, gymnastics, martial arts, acting, film-making and animation. What an awesome show! I even got to dance to "Jai Ho" with the Franklin faculty for the finale. "Jai Ho," from the popular movie "Slumdog Millionaire," translated from Hindi means roughly *to claim victory over an obstacle*. I have seen Franklin students and staff do that this year in so many ways. And boy, does Franklin have school spirit while doing it!

Above all, it is the commitment to the arts made by the parents, teachers and the principal at Franklin that make student achievement in the arts possible. We recently became a California Distinguished School, receiving recognition from the State. Our Principal, Mrs. Sasso, went to Anaheim just last week to receive the award. One reason we were nominated was due to the rapid rise in test scores, especially in our English Language Learners. Part of this is because we do so much integrated arts instruction. This includes, Chorus, Orchestra, weekly music instruction in singing, dance, recorders and music theory. Our Visual Arts and ceramics programs bring a specialist in to work with students for 12 weeks at a time, simultaneously training classroom teachers. The arts are a part of every child's daily experience and are connected fluidly to curriculum. We also have been nominated for a Blue Ribbon Award for our student success.

Another main reason for our *Distinguished School Award* has been our targeted intervention and our faculty's outstanding work with English Language Learners, Gifted and Talented students, and students with special needs. It has been fascinating to witness this growth and be a part of it. Sometimes a student is not as successful in the classroom but will shine in music, dance, theatre or visual art and find a new entry point into math, science, reading, or social studies. If nothing else, success in school and self-esteem transfers into all areas of a child's life.

I believe that Franklin Elementary can be a model for us, as parents, administrators and arts educators. Franklin can be an example when setting out to design successful programs, whether they be after-school programs, GATE programs, ELL programs, or integrated arts programs in the disciplines of Theatre, Music, Dance and Visual Art. If your child attends a school where one of these areas is lacking, perhaps it is worth finding out more about how Franklin does it. One example is the creation this year of *Glenfeliz Kids*, a parent-run after-school program modeled somewhat after *Franklin Kids*. *Glenfeliz Kids* has been very successful and we at *Aimee Art Productions* have been fortunate to be able to offer classes during its inaugural year.

I personally have a deep sense of gratitude to the parents at Franklin, without whom I would not have a position, since full-time General Music was cut from the budget many years ago. The onus has been on the PTA (*Friends of Franklin*) to carry this responsibility, and their tireless fundraising every year to keep teaching artists like me at their school. Each child has Music every other week, they can audition for Chorus or Orchestra, sign up for after-school arts classes with *Franklin Kids*, and have access to many arts opportunities within their own classrooms and Arts Specialists coming in for residencies.

On a professional level, I am grateful to Franklin for giving me a place to grow as a Teaching Artist and Educator. Without Franklin as a base, I doubt I would have made my way to the Music Center, 'Arts for All', and all the arts education settings in which I have found myself over the years in this city.

Thank you, *Friends of Franklin*, *Franklin Kids*, Franklin Elementary faculty, staff and families, for giving me the opportunity to learn and grow with the students at Franklin Elementary.

If you want to know more about Franklin, check out their website at: www.friendsoffranklin.com.

Please stop by one of our shows or events soon. In fact, many of you already have.

Thank you all for building self-esteem and literacy through the arts.

To see the fun video of me dancing "Jai Ho" with the *Franklin Educators* (including our principal!) in our first annual Talent Show, click on the 'Youtube' link for "Jai Ho Franklin" and you will find it! Enjoy and Jai Ho!

Nil Desperandum



One day in October my car broke down. While waiting to be rescued by AAA, I checked the home voicemail from my cell phone, only to find that the landline was making fax machine noises. I don't own a fax machine! It was the start of a stressful day: I needed to get back for the refrigerator repair man. During an unseasonably hot spell, my fridge had stopped functioning and rotting food had to be disposed of. 'It will start working again within 8 hours – be patient', said the repair man. Nope, by the next day it was still out of order. I had lost the Electrolux phone number so went online to find it. That is when my laptop died.

If you think all this bad luck is the worst that can happen, you are probably not a Teaching Artist. With no jobs on the horizon, I was facing the unexpected cost of car, fridge, phone and computer repairs *all at once*....now *that's* the nightmare.

Teaching Artists are suffering like never before and it is easy to feel hopeless. Despair, panic and anger simmer beneath the surface. The surface is what we present to the world – where we show how able, dynamic and impressive we are, and people book us! Except they don't. Not in the current climate. Times are hard, they may get harder. I won't put a gloss on it.

BUT neither will I go under. Everyone will be dealing with this downturn their own way. For me it started with cutting Starbucks. I told friends that I wasn't too high-and-mighty to baby-sit or dog walk. I was teetering on a tightrope from one rent payment to the next. When unpaid bills started to mount, I had a reality check (the only kind of check I was getting): it is not just the recession – no schools wanted my programs! It was time for a rethink.

Sandy Seufert, Manager of Curriculum and Teaching Artist Development at the Music Center, is one of the most resolutely cheerful people I know. Determined to keep us faint-hearted artists from self-pity city, she prods us out of inertia and goads us, grumbling and mumbling, into action. Re-launch your work ... promote it! I succumbed.

The soul searching begins with these questions: Do I want to face my inadequacies enough to redo those infernal templates? Is there any point dreaming up lesson plans that nobody will read? Should I teach children to be motivated, creative and disciplined if I am not? Could I invent fresh new blurbs, snappy descriptions and bite-size chunks? Well, when asked how much talent played a role in his success, the writer Alan Bennett said, "*it's really down to grim application, I'm afraid*".

I roll up my sleeves and dig in. Music Center Staff listen to new presentations, but nobody can wave a magic wand. I look further afield. There are other agencies hiring artists for schools and after-school programs. I set about applying, with some success and I am now teaching for different organizations, albeit at lower rates. It is the new reality. Weeks pass. Enter stage left, Patrice Cantarelli, (Regional Programs Manager), waving that magic wand. As we go to print, I await her spell.

Nobody who knows me would describe me as a positive California girl. There's a snarling Londoner lurking under the exterior. Imagine then, my reaction when I am approached to write an article for this publication *for free*. What?? Work for no pay? Write about *what*, exactly? Write about the current situation?!!! Calm down. Allow me to channel my Pollyanna vibe...and at the same time report the hardships. Ommm.

Obviously I do eat. I do not scavenge in garbage cans. So yes, worried Reader, I do have gainful employment. Choreographing, training and adjudicating Irish dance around the U.S. keeps me afloat, just about. I am lucky to have this fall back position, but it's unsettling to spend a third of my life away from LA, where I live and want to work.

Moving beyond taking the cash crisis personally, I take a peek at the so-called *Big Picture*. If we see ourselves as part of an historical pattern rather than as failures, then we recognize the obvious: that California – and the western world in general – places little importance in what we do. Politicians are shortsighted. If only we could prove to them that artistic practice improves young lives, and by extension, society. This is not a selfish protest. Our work is vital; children's futures are crucial. Nevertheless, with champions like Ken Robinson on our side, we can feel more secure in our moral understanding:

'The dominant systems of education are rooted in the values and demands of industrialism. There is a narrow emphasis on certain sorts of academic work... with the exile of arts, humanities and physical education programs from schools. The tragedy is that meeting the many social, economic, spiritual and environmental challenges we now face depends on the very capacities of insight, creativity and innovation that these systems are systematically suppressing'.

There's an Irish saying, '*Swing the bottle and the boat will arrive.*' You have to trust that action A will precipitate action B. Write those damn lessons!

Here are my tips for keeping spirits up when the work slows down:

- Focus on the positive: you are good at what you do / your peers admire you / you are not a lackey of the capitalist system (I say this just for a bit of class war fun) / the rest of society is now struggling as we do, so a helping of schadenfreude is all yours.

- Perspective: don't allow jobs and money to be your sole concerns. Set aside part of the day for work and another part to play.
- Take morning walks, even in the rain (especially in the rain, for the smell of the trees).
- Surround yourself with beauty (e.g. music, free galleries, books, dogs).
- Turn off Facebook. It is draining and demoralizing. You will only compare yourself to all those cheerful folk, *'just had my book published'*, *'new show opening'*, *'view from the Eiffel Tower'* etc.
- Do yoga.
- Re-train as a refrigerator repairer.

Máire Clerkin

Máire is a dancer, choreographer, Irish dance specialist and creator of "WRITE-MOVE," an approach to learning new strategies in how to write, improve literacy skills and express yourself on the page. Using the exhilaration of Irish Dancing as inspiration, students use grammar, structure, imagery, vocabulary and editing as they write about their experiences. This workshop is ideal for 5th graders.



Advocacy Best Practices

Advocacy is an ongoing practice that requires a cohesive, collective and consistent approach.

Building strong relationships with key policymakers (i.e. elected and appointed officials) has proven to be an effective practice in ensuring issues are heard and addressed.

Public policy affects everyone. Therefore, it is crucial to inform elected and appointed officials about the key issues that affect not only the immediate geographical community, but also how those issues affect the health and vitality of our region at large.



Ground Rules:

- Build relationships before you ask for something. Think about what you can offer: Do you have meeting space? A local network of civically engaged citizens?
- Be respectful and professional at all times. You never know when you might have the opportunity to work together.
- When you do have a request, have a clear message that is limited to one page or a two-minute presentation.
- Define your idea, including who it will benefit, how much it will cost, and how it will happen.
- Do your homework: Understand both sides of the argument and be prepared to address both sides. Be aware of other non-arts issues in your district.
- If meeting in person, take no more than three people with you. Don't "storm the castle."
- Stay in touch. Keep elected officials and their staff advised about your progress and ongoing activities.
- Always send a thank-you note.

Five Places to Start

Given the high demands of our field, it's difficult to find the time to become an active arts advocate. Start here:

1. Sign up to receive Arts for LA and Americans for the Arts action alerts (ArtsforLA.org, AmericansfortheArts.org).
2. When prompted, take action.
3. Share information about action alerts via social networking sites, email and word-of-mouth.
4. Register with Dunn and Bradstreet (www.DnB.com) to make sure your arts & culture nonprofit or business is counted within your local economy & cultural ecology.
5. Consider becoming an organizational or individual member of Arts for LA to invest directly in local advocacy.

Remember :

Individuals make powerful advocates.

Advocacy is a continuous process.

Think of advocacy as long-term development.

Advocacy Vs. Lobbying

Advocacy is voicing support for an issue or cause, such as telling the public about the benefits of arts education. There are no limits to pure advocacy by nonprofits.

Lobbying (sometimes called "direct advocacy") refers to advocacy efforts intended to influence legislation, such as writing to City Council to oppose a bill that affects arts education. Nonprofits may engage in a limited amount of lobbying. Read the box below or visit the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, CLPI.org, for information.

Engaging in significant advocacy/lobbying activities? File a 501(h) provision with your taxes.

If your organization is spending more than 10% of its expenditures on direct advocacy/lobbying, you should file a 501(h) provision form. The current 501(h) provision allows nonprofit arts organizations to allocate expenditures of up to 20% of the first \$500,000 of their annual budget to direct advocacy and lobbying. If the organization exceeds \$500,000 in annual income, only 15% of the *next* \$500,000 can go to advocacy expenditures, and so on up to \$1 million. To engage the 501(h) provision an organization must complete the IRS Form 5768.

MAKING THE CASE

Economic Impact

Los Angeles County's creative industries generate nearly \$121 billion in sales/receipts, comprise about 1 million direct and indirect jobs (1 in 6 total) and are recognized as one of the largest business sectors in the region (2009 Otis Report on the Creative Economy).

Americans for the Arts' *Creative Industries: Business & Employment in the Arts* reports offer research-based approach to understanding the scope and importance of the arts to the nation's economy. The creative industries are a part of one of the fastest growing segments of the nation's economy. Nationally, the creative industries make up 4.3% of all businesses and 2.2% of all employees. In Los Angeles County alone, there are 36,075 arts-related businesses that employ 239,005 people.

Arts and Civic Engagement

According to the National Endowment report *The Arts and Civic Engagement*, Americans who participate in the arts are nearly twice as physically active as non-participants and attend sporting events at twice the rate of non-arts participants. Nearly half of all avid readers and arts participants engage in community volunteer work, as opposed to the 20% volunteer rate for those who do not regularly read or participate in the arts.

Arts and Students

Young people who participate in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, three times more likely to be elected to class office within their schools, four times more likely to participate in a math and science fair, three times more likely to win an award for school attendance, participate in youth groups nearly four times as frequently, read for pleasure nearly twice as often and perform community service more than four times as often. (Study by Stanford University and Carnegie Foundation For the Advancement of Teaching, 1998)

Things To Know

LA is home to over one hundred fifty thousand independent artists, three thousand arts and cultural organizations, world-class art institutions and the nation's largest collection of small theaters.

The county of Los Angeles includes 88 cities, 80 school districts, 4,061 square miles and over 10 million residents-- the largest population of any county in the nation.

In 2006 the LA County Board of Supervisors increased its organizational grant program budget 100% from \$2,259,000 to \$4,518,000, making the LA County Arts Commission the largest public funder of the arts in LA County.

At just 3 cents per person, California now ranks 52nd in the nation in per-capita arts funding, counting Puerto Rico and Guam.

TALKING TO POLICYMAKERS

- Share ownership of good ideas and avoid speaking or acting out of self-interest.
- Get a policy in place before controversy arises. Our goal is for every elected or appointed official in Los Angeles County to have an arts/arts education policy.
- Speak their language: use data and concrete details whenever possible.
- It is our responsibility to keep decision-makers informed. Providing candidates or recently elected/appointed officials with information about local arts issues is a good start to an informed relationship.
- Reach out to field deputies/staff. They are often very accessible and happy to speak with advocates. Many elected officials have a specific Arts Deputy; find them by calling the official's main office.
- Be a squeaky wheel, not a gadfly (maintain credibility). Elected officials quickly learn to tune out those who only show up to yell at them.
- Stay focused on the specific issue. "We want the 2% allocation restored to this program" is more effective than "Arts are important."
- Small conversations can be a vehicle for sharing ideas that can grow.

Advocacy & Educationing Decision Makers was created by Andrew Campbell in 2007. It was revised and designed by Arts for LA in 2007 and 2010.

Arts for LA is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit arts advocacy organization fostering a healthy environment in which arts and culture in the region may thrive and be accessible to all in Los Angeles.

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Articles are not to exceed 1,500 words. Please send all articles in an attachment and all photographs saved as a JPEG. If you would like your biography included please send with your article.

Please credit all outside photographers.

THANK YOU!



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