

Serving and leading: A comparative examination of management values among performing arts service organization (PASO) models

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Bio

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ABSTRACT

Performing arts service organizations in the United States have evolved dramatically during the past decade. In the beginning of the 1990's most non-profit associations focused primarily on producing annual meetings of their memberships. Now they function as more strategic organizations that serve members, the artistic disciplines and their publics through a variety of programs and policy agendas closely related to political and social environments. Today, the collective constituencies of arts service organizations encompass every performing arts discipline and management function in North America. The 2003 report of Performing Arts Research Coalition, which is a project of five major national performing arts service organizations, specifies that the population public "a very high value on the role of the arts in their lives.

The paper focuses on the case of three Performing Arts Service Organization networks with different geographic boundaries: Theatre Bay Area(local) , Association of

California Symphony Orchestras(state) and Dance/USA(national). Historical context, a network and membership snapshot, current programs, economic picture and funding status for each organization are summarized.. Following presentation of the case situation is situation analysis of recent challenges and responses affecting the national, state or local political and social environment as it pertains to each organization, and an assessment of the quality and value of services based on the examination of a variety of data and materials, including interview and survey results.

A model is proposed in which key services are identified in leadership of the respective PASO networks: advising, advocacy, databases, funding support, knowledge base, networking and training. The point of view presented of the service in this application model is that the type of activity a PASO renders best, is related to the geographic boundary network (local, state or national) identified in its mission statement.

This paper is a discussion of the program and service value related to the actions of three successful Performing Arts Service Organizations (PASO's) in the United States in leading their networks on a national, statewide and local basis. The nature of the performing arts is grounded in a propensity toward group or collective tasks to achieve artistic and organizational success. Although the increasing interest in networks from a scientific point of view is not a primary issue of the research, some of the considerations available in a new book by researcher Duncan Watts' *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age*, provide a helpful context in which to focus relationships of arts networks, such as PASOs. Watts tells fascinating stories of networks as "distributed systems . . . that are both more vulnerable and more robust than populations of isolated entities. As earlier network theorists such as Granovetter have proposed, Watts points out that, "If influence is damaging then each is more vulnerable than they would be if they were alone.

More to the point of this paper, he reminds us that, "on the other hand, if they can find each other through that same chain, or if they are both embedded in some mutually reinforcing web of relations . . . then each may be capable of weathering a greater storm than they could be themselves." (Watts, 2003) This idea offers further explanation of why the performing arts service organizations have been embraced by their members.

Similarly to other industries such as health care, the arts and culture industry underwent transformation in the 1960s and 1970s when "the commercial and traditional voluntary/mutual benefit cultural enterprises which provided services to Americans were gradually supplanted by professionally managed public benefit organizations who were

able to gain support from a mixture of financial resources (earned revenues, individual and corporate donations, and grants and contracts from federal, state and local agencies), and those mutual benefit enterprises disappeared by 1990.

Arts activist and writer Roberto Bedoya, writing about the national arts-service organizations such as the forerunners of Dance USA and Opera America, notes that much of their development “occurred at the same time as the 1970s movement of self-determination, where cultural identity and social systems were closely examined. This resulted in art practices that produced critiques, made claims and affirmed experiences that changed our understanding of the public sphere, the public good and community. These acts of cultural citizenship, which served the public interest, need protection, advocacy and support, and this is the work of arts-service organizations and it’s where the abilities of networks come into play.”(Bedoya,2000)

Since the 1970’s any number of performing arts service organizations (PASO) have evolved to provide professional leadership to members in arts discipline and interest areas. Others with specific focus on the performing arts include Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Chamber Music America, Chorus America, Dance USA, Opera America and Theatre Communications Group, performing arts unions such as IASTSE (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees), Actor's Equity, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, the Screen Actors Guild. The American Symphony Orchestra League pre-dates the arts transformation period having been established in 1942.

There are also performing arts service groups whose operations focus on state and local interests. Today, the collective constituencies of arts service organizations

encompass every performing arts discipline and management function in North America.

What characterizes the operations of PASOs? According to the Arts resource Network, based in Seattle, an Arts Service Organization (ASO) is “a non-profit organization serving the people or institutions within the arts community who create, produce, distribute, diffuse, present and/or conserve the arts. ASOs provide artists in various disciplines and communities with a public voice, opportunities to grow and develop as artists, access to audiences and a range of support services.” Insofar as the public-at-large is concerned, ASO’s “also increase the public’s access to the province’s cultural resources through a variety of mechanisms, including important arts and education initiatives.” (<http://www.artsresourcenetwork.org>)

How is an arts service organization’s fulfillment of its mission to be evaluated? Within the past year, the Canada Council has given the field some leadership in setting up a formal recognition structure, and definition of purview and responsibility for arts service organizations. Earlier, a Canadian Colloquium on Cultural Organizations of the Future in 1997, summarized the considerations and objectives in conducting network related activity which I think are eminently applicable to arts service organization as performance indicator guidelines:

“(1) the network must offer advantages to all participants, (2) the advantages must be proportional to or greater than the contributions made;(3) All members must be aware of their reliance on the others to achieve their goals, (4) the organization of the network must not involve excessive risk or complications, (5) the agreement between the parties must be fairly simple (6) those in charge of the project must be dynamic and efficient,

and (7) membership must be on a voluntary basis and take into account the interests of all parties”.(Berube, 1997) Additionally, the recommendation suggested that the “organization must exploit communications resources and conduct exchanges on a regular basis” p.183

In the United States, public expectations of the nonprofit sector regarding arts and culture have recently been polled, studied, and assessed in various ways. As a result, there is more clarity about these expectations and the values they reflect. A 1998 report of the National Commission on Philanthropy and Civic Renewal included the statement about the arts sector that “we expect it to enrich our lives, to preserve and have ready for us the cultural and other opportunities which we sometimes want but could never fully support.” p42 (Mark Roseman, 1998)

The 2003 report of Performing Arts Research Coalition, which is a project of five major national performing arts service organizations, further specifies public expectations, indicating that the population places “a very high value on the role of the arts in their lives in terms of enjoyment, their understanding of themselves and other cultures, creativity, and connection to their communities”. (p.11) Beyond the personal value is demonstration that public that participate in the performing arts “place an even greater value on the arts in their communities than they do in their own lives. Quality of life associated with the arts impacts community pride, but also helps to “promote understanding of other people and different ways of life, and help preserve and share cultural heritage, especially, contribute to the education of children. Even a majority of those who don’t attend performances “share similar views”. (p13) Mary Kopczynski and Mark Hager, 2003).

The ability to research and publish studies with definitive data is prevalent activity that is a phenomenon of service by performing arts organizations only apparent in the past decade, and one that as the following evaluation reveals, becomes increasingly important to its membership. The question arises, is the research an action of PASO leadership or service?

Ben Cameron, the always-articulate CEO of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national PASO for theater suggests that managing, examining and addressing the tension between service and leadership is a significant element of performing arts work. However, while acknowledging that the best leaders serve their constituents, Cameron suggests that “leadership implies more” including first, “a vision that compels, that animates and inspires that invites others to join”, second, “the galvanizing and harnessing of collective energies, recognizing that groups working in concert are always more effective, more imaginative, more creative than individuals working in isolation, and finally, embracing “hard decision making, unpopular direction at times, having the audacity to stop when others want to go, the courage to forge ahead when others want to rest” (Cameron, 2002)

Interestingly, he uses the metaphor of sailing, rather than performing, to support those leadership qualities in defining the search to serve. “It’s as if we are on a sailing vessel: on the one hand, we are on the decks, scrubbing the wooden planks, trimming sails, etc. - on the other, we are asked, indeed we are privileged, to sit in the crow’s nest, to sit above our memberships, to be the ones to shout “Land ho” or (more likely) to discern the emergence of shapes in the fog of the confusing seas in which we now sail.”

After, looking at research, leadership and service, among other elements, it is time to pay attention to the organizations under examination in this paper. 37% of the universe of arts service organizations is associated with the live performing arts, according to Ohio State University's arts service Mapping Project. These three, Theatre Bay Area, Association of California Symphony Orchestras and Dance/USA, follow the Mapping Project criteria in that they "function as strategic organizations that serve members, their artistic disciplines and their publics through a variety of programs and policy agendas closely related to political and social environments. Artistic issues are promoted as the center of program activities. Companies of all sizes, individual performers, and arts administrators form the key elements of these membership associations." (Wyzomirski and Cherbo, 2003)

Briefly related are the history, network and membership snapshot, current programs, economic picture and funding status for each organization under study.

Next is an analysis of recent challenges and responses affecting the national, state or local political and social environment as it pertains to each organization, Also included is an assessment of the quality and value of services based on the examination of a variety of data and materials, including interview and survey results.

In sum, the case analysis reveals why and what these particular groups do well and what the PASO Model should contain. What should be the program and service priorities for developing and successfully maintaining a performing arts service organization at the local, state, or federal level?

Performing Arts Service Organization #1.

Theatre Bay Area (TBA), the local nonprofit member service organization for theater in the San Francisco Bay Area of California.

Acknowledged regionally and nationally to be a premiere performing arts service organization, TBA was founded by theatre workers in 1976, with a mission “to unite, strengthen and promote theatre in the region”. Maintaining an annual budget of \$1,000,000, TBA is a service provider to more than 300 member companies and 2,900 individual members in the San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California. Although it facilitates communication networks, opportunities and the creation of resources for theatre (and dance) companies and theatre (and dance) workers (as well as audiences and patrons), TBA does not present theater nor act as a casting agency.

Programs and Services

TBA's programs include: group and individual Member Services, publication of Callboard magazine, a monthly magazine that is the primary source for Northern California auditions, and job openings, an annual Theater Directory, operation of TIX Bay Area (the half-price ticket booth at Union Square in San Francisco), administration of the Mary Mason Lemonade Fund for critically ill theatre workers, and production of annual General Auditions where 300plus actors are seen by union and nonunion theater casting directors.. TBA administers the CA\$H grant program for artists and small companies. It also facilitates the Nomadic Theatre & Dance Company Task Force, a group of companies with budgets under \$100,000 who do not have permanent homes, which meets under TBA's mantle.

Management Structure

The 15 member Board of Directors, comprised of local theater workers and supporters from different professions meets monthly to provide oversight of the mission and organizational financial stability. A Theater Services Committee represents the various interests in the TBA membership and is represented on the Board. Led by the Executive Director, the 12 member staff manages member services and other program activities. A volunteer group of 50 members helps with administering events such as the general auditions.

Member Benefits

Company member benefits include: access to (snail) mailing list, subscription to Management Memo, discounts on TBA publications, free or discount advertising in Callboard, and in local newspapers, admission to TBA General Auditions as an auditor, liability insurance services for performances, group health insurance, access to the Talent Bank, and an invitation to Annual Event for member companies and staff.

Individual member benefits are also numerous. They include: a subscription to Callboard, TBA Hotline of audition listings, job notices and complimentary ticket offers, TBA General Auditions, Inclusion in Talent Bank, of headshots and resumes in TBA's office, discounts to monthly workshops and symposia, a choice of health coverage plans, Credit union membership; access to low-cost loans, VISA card, direct deposit, discounts on Bay Area theatre tickets and classes, access to TBA publications resource center, discounts on Callboard advertising, discounts on TBA publications. Individual joint members of TBA and Dancers' Group a quasi-service group for local dancers, also receive "In Dance" (newsletter listing jobs, auditions, a comprehensive monthly dance

calendar, advertising discounts), a bi-weekly e-mail bulletin, and career development workshops from Dancers' Group.

Values

In support of its mission, TBA seeks to act as “a liaison between the theatrical community and government, business and others who benefit from a healthy and thriving theatre community.” Through a partially completed strategic planning process, TBA’s Board identified the belief that “theatre and other performing arts are an essential public good, crucial to a healthy society as a source of personal enrichment and a center for building community” (Strategic Plan Draft, June 2002). Also, as part of this process, core values (in the broadest and narrowest terms) of Access, Diversity, Expression and Advocacy were established as central to a proactive and effective commitment to its services to the theatrical community. Having administered an Executive Director change in 2002-2003, the Board has recently resumed planning activity with the new Executive Director.

Situational Issues

In the course of this research, focus group and email survey questions, were asked of Theater Service Committee (TSC) members to assess TBA on the value and effectiveness of its services. They also provided input on the needs of the theater community. Advocacy for theater was the unmet need most often cited including advocacy to think of theatre as an entertainment option and to cultivate a common sense of ownership among the public “They should be rooting for theatres the way they root for sports teams”, said one member. Perhaps, noted another member there should

be more active advocacy to” promote the Bay Area as a theatre region instead of separate theatre communities”. (TSC survey, 2003)

Networking opportunities through member meetings, workshops and on-line communications were cited most frequently as a valuable service for “keeping people connected in a field that tends towards isolation”. Learning much from other members is a result of networking cited by both experienced and inexperienced TSC members. The sense of access to the staff and TBA offices was also cited as extremely valuable, as one theatre manager explained, “like living next door to a resourceful neighbor; they always have that cup of sugar when you need it or if they don't, they know how to get it and will go to the extremes necessary to help you in your search for whatever it is that will make you do your job better.” Appreciation was also expressed about TBAs responsiveness to small organizations “Not every service organization is responsive to small nomadic organizations.”

Significant challenges to TBA do lie ahead, according to TSC members. Keeping in touch was “both a value and a challenge in this tricky climate”. Members have sensed a leadership void following the departure three years ago of an extremely charismatic, proactive Executive Director. They also thought that by “not effectively communicating its services over the past two years because of constantly changing leadership”, TBA must take more steps to serve as the “epicenter” of regional activity and conversation, to “be the leader in times of change and crisis” with a “secure leadership team.” “I personally believe,” wrote one respondent, “that TBA has the capacity to address and be a leader in greater community issues IF they chose to.”

But, the overall affirmation of this performing arts service organization is clear, at least among TSC representatives. As a bottom line, the majority of respondents cited the value of TBA as a collective voice, for example, as a “ground zero for our community, the glue that binds us together”. In a similar vein was the opinion expressed that “without [TBA], we are a colder, less connected, more indistinct, less resourceful, and less vibrant community.” In this respect, TBA offers an excellent model of the impact that a local PASO. should have in serving its members.

Overall, TBA is financially stable, running successful programs and has a strong and visible stature in the community, even after undergoing three Executive Director changes in three years, including 10 months of that time under the guidance of an Interim ED. This sustained organizational stability can be attributed to (1) a respectful relationship among the Program Staff and the Board of Directors (2) proven strength of membership services and established popular programs that are well managed by their respective directors, and (3) installation of an interim ED to maintain professional leadership of TBA.

However, there are elements of turmoil internally, and reflections of the troubled external environment afflicting the theater community and the San Francisco Bay Area region at large. This region was the epic-center of the Dot-Com Boom and is the center of the Dot-Com bust, compounded by a serious drop in tourism and leading to a dramatically weakened local economic situation. .

The essence of the financial and organizational challenge, as has been noted in media and funding circles, during the past 12 months is an unprecedented simultaneous

decline in both ticket sale revenues and all contributions sources ((individual, foundation, corporate and government) for American performing arts.

Given this challenge and the environment, there is general consensus in the organization that it needs to proceed carefully in assessing internal structure, capacity and procedures to sustain past and future growth in a strategic and controlled way. It's a lesson learned directly from the demise of its one-time counterpart Dance Bay Area. The former dancers service organization took on too many programs for its funding base, winding up with deep deficits, bankruptcy, and a fractured dance community in 1993. During the past four years the community has turned to TBA for support. To date via theater and individual services membership, support is being delivered in a limited manner- the dancing shadow of the past always a reminder for caution.

Performing Arts Service Organization #2.

Association of California Symphony Orchestras (ACSO) the statewide nonprofit service organization for California orchestras.

The Association of California Symphony Orchestras aims to “be recognized as the pre-eminent leader in serving the needs and influencing the success of orchestras in California and the surrounding region.” It is independent of, but maintains a collegial relationship with, the national orchestra service organization, the American Symphony Orchestra League.

ACSO was formed in 1969 by a group of individuals “interested in sharing information and material resources for the mutual benefit of their organizations. Their collaborative effort was also directed towards political advocacy and creating/supporting

legislation that would reflect the importance of the arts and music in California". "The state of the art of orchestras in California", says its executive director and chief advocate, "is fabulous!"

Management Structure

A Board of Directors, supported by executive director, Kris Sinclair, who joined ACSO in 1985 and an executive assistant, who oversee the Association's programs and activities, governs ACSO. ACSO's 2002/03 budget is \$280,000. 80% of which is from program revenues and membership dues and 20% from grants and contributions.

Programs and Services

ACSO's programs and services are specifically designed to support orchestras, artist managements, youth orchestras, colleges/universities/ conservatories, symphony leagues and guilds (volunteer workers), orchestra trustees, conductors, musicians and staff. The Association lists approximately 120 member organizations and over 350 individual members.

ACSO services and benefits to its organizational and individual members include. Workshops and annual conferences, providing specialized information, training, and networking, consultants for boards and staff, quarterly newsletters, monthly job announcements, orchestral resource/information center, a statewide advocacy network, annual membership directory, special reports and publications, web site with links to orchestras (statewide, nationwide, worldwide), workers' compensation plan, federal credit union, and planned giving plan.

Values

Through a Strategic Planning process completed in 2002, ACSO has identified its core values (“essential and enduring tenets” (p.3 strategic Plan, 2002) as membership, collegiality, resource sharing, responsiveness and value (as in “programs and services add value and are affordable”(p3). This core of values support a vision of leadership, “pre-eminent” leadership in its services to “assist, educate and advocate” for its constituency which is identified specifically as “classical music producers and presenters in California and the region”. (Some ACSO members are from neighboring states.)

Situational Issues

Over three years, the Governor and legislature have watched changing tax revenues impact a shift on the California budget process from planning for surpluses to major cuts in most state agencies and departments in order to achieve the balanced budget required of American states. (While the Federal government can run a deficit, the state governments cannot.) Major foundations like computer giant Packard have lost up to 50% of their endowment income, which in Packard’s case means close to a billion dollars, from the continuing losses in the stock market. The result is a decrease Like most arts organizations, California orchestras have to adapt quickly to the loss of funding sources, and with the guidance of their PASO reach deeper into their communities, The executive director was quick to differentiate ACSO from the ASOL (American Symphony Orchestra League, the national orchestra service), noting that “we develop and provide services often in advance of the east coast or national service organizations. It’s whole way thinking, because California has had to be inclusive and

figure out how to get along with everybody . . . Funders hesitate because of our lack of strong arts emphasis as opposed to service emphasis.”

She also said that “ those who do support are fully understanding of ACSO’s goals as an organization and appreciate what we do, which is training for the managers of their (funders) applicant organizations, which creates confidence in the field.” (Sinclair, Interview 2003).

When surveyed, it was clear that ACSO is regarded favorably by its membership, especially for the training and education opportunities. I asked Board members what they and others thought; many mentioned the importance of ACSO sponsored staff and trustee education. Professional development is considered crucial to managing change in a hierarchical, tradition-oriented organization like a classical orchestra, which lacks the flexibility of smaller ensembles in theater and dance. Of equal importance, respondents highlighted networking opportunities and collegial relationships with peers that are fostered by ACSO statewide and regional meetings. Also mentioned frequently was the importance of in depth studies of interest to orchestras and statistics provided to use as background to attract new supporters. Many noted the importance of regularly convened discussions that ASOL, the national organizations can’t provide which engender solidarity in the field. Of great value to many, particularly from the smaller and mid-sized orchestras are the creative solutions and reliable accessibility offered by staff for consultation and information. Comments included mention of the “personal type of phone call that is so useful” and the awareness that, “in hard times like these they are there for us.”

Coupled with the need for assistance in a long-term down economy, and averting chronic crisis management is the challenge of maintaining a broad base of membership participation, which has been a hallmark of ACSO. “How DO you make the Central Valley Youth Orchestra happy”, wrote one respondent in an email assessment, “at the same time as the LA Philharmonic?” Even though Los Angeles and San Francisco participate fully in ACSO programs, other orchestras with large budgets wonder if ACSO can truly serve large orchestras. Perhaps, the important point is that opportunities, like the annual conference, are available for all leaders to benefit from shared experiences: “I’ve encountered a knowledgeable, caring network of executive directors,” writes one Board member, “to whom I can turn, year-round for advice, encouragement, and quite often sympathy.” Furthermore, everyone believes they benefit from ACSO’s consistent leadership in advocacy efforts over the years in Sacramento in lobbying the governor and the legislature.

Performing Arts Service Organization #3.

Dance/USA, the national nonprofit service organization for professional dance

Dance/USA, founded in 1982, seeks “to advance the art form of dance” by addressing the needs, concerns, and interests of professional dance. Primarily It offers a variety of programs for members and the dance field at large, but also works with organizations within (like Opera America) and outside the arts field” with whom common goals are shared”. (See website at [http://www. Dance/USA.org](http://www.Dance/USA.org))

The 400 plus members of the organization represent ballet, modern, ethnic, jazz and tap companies, dance service and presenting organizations, individuals, and other organizations. In addition to its regular membership programs and services, Dance/USA has undertaken special projects on topics of significance to the field such as archives and preservation, career transitions for dancers, dance touring, dance education and dance audiences.

Convening of the field through **Professional Development** activity for members is a central priority of service for Dance/USA, with biennial National Roundtables that offer peer networking opportunities, and workshops and seminars on topics, which help to define and influence the state of the art. In addition, the semi-annual Managers' Council meetings bring managers of member dance companies together to address specific trends and concerns and the annual Artists' Council convenes artistic directors, choreographers, and other individual artists. Service Organization directors and Presenters also meet regularly. The **Dance Forums** include the Dance BASIC, a seminar for entry-level managers and, Dance ADVANCED for experienced administrators, and issue forums, at which individuals discuss specialized topics. **Core member Services** include publications; data collection and analysis; government affairs

Other published priorities include **Regional services** for members, **Image and Visibility** strategies that strengthen the public perception, visibility and image of dance, **Enhanced research** capabilities and **Information Services** to provide statistical information on dance-related issues, such as the Personnel Compensation Survey. **Financial Support** for appropriate regional and national programs, **Government Affairs**, the advocacy program and **Public Communications**, including the quarterly

periodical, *Dance/USA Journal*. Finally, **Collaboration is** considered an important priority through partnerships with other national performing arts service organizations and collaborations in arts education, dance preservation and documentation, among other fields.

Core Organizational Values

As a national organization, leadership of the network of members would have to be a primary value. Indeed, Dance USA identifies itself with “leadership as the primary advocate for the not-for-profit, professional dance community”. (See website)

Other core values are identified as Inclusiveness and communication to inform decision-making, daily activity for the artist, administrator, and trustee, and informing a greater public.

The mantle of a catalyst “to support the vital interests of organizations and individuals in the dance community” has become more visible with the dynamics of contemporary politics and economy, and another continuing priority” Collaboration, to draw on strengths, expertise and points-of view that create a stronger dance community. “Our field is spread out across the nation and around the world” one member said in response to my survey;” Dance/USA best virtue is the connection it provides to the field and the common challenges that dance faces around the country.”

Members surveyed agreed with the Executive Director’s statement to the researchers “time after time, members come up to me and say that the Roundtables and Councils are the single most helpful event we provide”(Andrea Snyder, Interview 2003). The sharing of experiences was gratifying to most people, and just meeting with peers to discuss current issues, was described as valuable and enlightening. The

Roundtable “allows the managers to meet, exchange, support and challenge each other. It creates community where none would exist otherwise.” Also cited as helpful was the information exchange and data available to help one understand what the yardsticks are for success. Networking, especially for younger managers of mid-sized companies and program managers of the larger companies, was described as vitally important.

Situational Issues

Opening his talk at the Winter 2002 Dance USA Roundtable, Douglas Sonntag, Director of the Dance Program at the National Endowment for the Arts certainly didn't play favorites in the field. “I would say” he reflected, “the state of American dance is complicated. There is no single description that fully encompasses its strengths, weaknesses and general health. It is surely one of the most diverse disciplines in contemporary culture.”(Sonntag, 2002)

Dance USA serves at once a broader and narrower spectrum of the dance community. The national value of the organization is undisputed, among its members, in placing dance at the table in advocacy and promoting alliances and joint research with other national performing arts service organizations. From its Washington, DC base, the leaders of the organization are able to supply data on demand to Congress and other resource bases that impact and benefit the dance community as a whole. This does not always translate to the regional level.

During the 1980s there were a number of regional and statewide dance service organizations, many of which have disappeared, largely due to a fragile funding and nomadic support base. Currently, Dance/USA is assessing large communities, which

may need more centralized services similar to Dance NYC, which was established as a subsidiary chapter in 2002. Dance NYC's birth, as part of the infrastructure of Dance/USA was a radical change from the arms-length history of the organization towards regional service entities. As with so many changes in the nation's community values landscape, this action was catalyzed by September 11, 2001.

It may help to alleviate, at least for the New York region the repeated comment from members about the absence of Dancers from the Roundtables, that the existing relationship between Dance USA and the dancers is minimal, at best: "this is due to low awareness of Dance/USA among dancers". The potential, people believe, is there, but the outcome appears to be in the "wait-and-see" category.

Another group in the same category appears to be artistic directors, who used to attend roundtable meetings, but whose attendance has fallen off sharply. A survey respondent wrote "the field artistic leaders have not really taken Dance/USA into their lives. Finding a way to engage the more charismatic leaders of our field would help elevate the dialogue about dance in national policy."

Also as part of a new closer look at the regions, beyond the annual state of dance issued by Dance USA, the organization has conducted an investigation of the needs of San Francisco Bay Area, to be followed by similar studies in Chicago and Washington, DC. The studies are anticipated to be "regional assessments that can guide current and future artists, administrators and funders." (Dance Assessment, p. VI) I followed the path from the assessment development to the publication to a March 2003 Town Meeting of the San Francisco Bay Area dance community convened by Dance USA when the results of a needs assessment were presented and discussed.

While clarifying the unique elements of this community, the study also noted the similarity between the conditions experienced by dance groups in the Bay Area and national trends. Similar studies are being conducted in other consolidated metropolitan areas that are the truly large population centers in the United States.

First, the assessments' identification of the Bay Area dance community is indisputable to anyone who has spent time in San Francisco arts world: "No one sat down to design the Bay Area 'dance community' as it exists today. It is instead, a complicated matrix of varied and interacting responses to powerful social, political, artistic and economic forces, including its own aesthetic diversity. It is more like a brawling international port-city marketplace and less like an organized corporate hierarchy." (Dance Assessment, p12.)

However the community "lacks an organized way to network" following the demise of its regional association in 1993. Noted one established artist, "we don't have a structure to function as a community where we gather and discuss ongoing issues". (Dance Assessment p44) At the same time, there is antipathy towards organization expressed: "bureaucracy and institutionalization kill the art here." (Dance Assessment p 48)

Commentary by interviewees in the report also relates to the value of Dance/USA as a national service organization, and the services provided or not provided at a regional level. The Dance USA Roundtables are beyond the scope of this need for the represented in communities like the Bay Area, due to costs and perceived differences in services around the country. The concept of a DanceUSA satellite seems to resonate, "sure that there would be more interaction, and we could be players along with

everybody else to address the issues that are common to all of us” .(Dance Assessment p49)

The Assessment’s written response to this concept noted the importance of ability of the dance community to support a satellite entity, with concerns that “there should be safeguards against the organization’s overextending its self. Taking a lesson from the nationwide pattern of closures among dance service organizations, a centralized provider should focus on the more severe needs for information and support “(Dance Assessment p 49).

As a national PASO, Dance/USA must weigh the value of its current services in seeking to balance those services with the expressed needs of an artistically diverse, and by its very nature, a non-verbally communicative field. In line with this, a December 2002 meeting of key individuals in the dance world was convened to assess and brainstorm what could be done to strengthen the field. Together with the latest Roundtable discussion results, the organization’s priorities for service may shift to involve more career-long support for individuals, a reinvention funding rationales regarding dance and more identification with the essential centers of dance, including regional center.

Building a model for Performing Arts Service Organizations is one of the results looked for as part of this examination of these three groups, which I believe are exemplary representatives of their respective local, state and national network of memberships. They are each long-term survivors of changing times, economies and political environments. Furthermore, as their members have indicated, they are

organizations with the: the ability to listen. And "by listening to the people they engage" as Michael Moore has written, "organizations can devise targeted, relevant and workable strategies and tactics." The following table identifies such strategies and tactics, and the degree to which they apply to the different PASO, according to its geographic boundary.

WHO DOES WHAT BEST?

TYPE OF SERVICES	BEST APPLICATION OF SERVICES		
	Geographic Boundary		
	National	State	Local
Advising	By group	Direct>Member	Direct>Member
Advocacy	Direct	Direct/Linked	Mostly Linked
Databases	Comparative	Resources	Direct to Member
Funding Support	Collaborative	Collaborative	Direct to artist
Knowledge Base	General	Specific	Specific
Networking	Direct/Links	Direct/Links	Direct
Training	Direct >organization	Direct> organization	Direct> individual

The point of view presented in this application model is that the type of activity a PASO renders best, is related to the kind of geographic boundary network that is identified in its mission statement. I have included some examples of the application model to assist the reader to apply the rest of the boundaries to the services list.

Thus a national PASO, like Dance USA, or a state-based service organization, like ACSO, appropriate a consistent ongoing percentage of staff time and energy to

direct governmental and legislative advocacy, than does a local PASO like Theatre Bay Area, which links with state or national advocacy groups and appropriates advocacy time on much more of an ad hoc basis.

As a local PASO, Theatre Bay Area staff time and knowledge is definitely “street level, divided equally among the interests of its individual artists and company members, while Dance/USA’s lesser amount of attention directly to individual dancers or choreographers is mostly ad hoc or collaborative in nature. PASOs try to meet the need of the arts community to provide a link between the arts-delivery and arts-creation systems. Funding support certainly meets that need, whether directly as in the Theater Bay Area peer-to-peer CASH grants to individuals and small ensembles or collaboratively, as in Dance/USA’s current National College Choreography Initiative in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts

In managing service networks, the state level ACSO seems to be the most efficient, perhaps because network focus is systemically controlled to include only one type of organization, the classical orchestra, and only individuals directly supporting the orchestra. Networking is integrated into direct service activity at conferences, etc., but members, especially managers, also do independently negotiate relationships across orchestral and California’s geographic boundaries after initial meetings at (ACSO-organized) conferences or workshops. DANCE USA Roundtable includes more time set aside for sub-networks, called Councils (e.g. managers, modern dance, large ballet companies), but sessions for artists are sparsely attended. This indicates, to me, that the best target group for PASOs is the administrators.

“In moving toward a healthier cultural environment”, Roberto Bedoya wrote, “arts-service organizations should also reflect upon the political economy of art; they should investigate the ways society and art create and fulfill needs, and how that effects their work.” The importance of networking and connection among other services is an application of Bedoya’s point, along with the other services identified. It is hoped the discussion presented in this paper will be helpful assistance for those in other countries who plan to develop performing arts service organizations. Just remember that geography does matter in the PASO success as a strategic organization!

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