

NAPNOC

notes

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RATS, VOICES AND VISIONS:

An Interview with Philip Arnoult

To introduce what we hope will be an ongoing dialogue of self-sufficiency and economic development for neighborhood arts groups, we offer the following interview with Philip Arnoult, Director of the Theatre Project in Baltimore, Maryland, and President of NAPNOC. Philip founded the Theatre Project in 1971 and has been its guiding light ever since. From its earliest days, the Theatre Project has been an important link in the growing national and international network of alternative theaters; last spring it celebrated its 2000th free performance during a run of the Play Group from Knoxville, Tennessee, a company which has returned to Baltimore to play the Theatre Project year after year.

Performance at the Theatre Project has no single style or flavor -- in the last six months we've seen avant-garde European multi-media theater, the Play Group's work based on the story of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union organizing, Bob Carroll's amazing Salmon Show, the Illusion Theater from Minneapolis, two local dance troupes, and much, much more. The common concern in this dazzling array of forms is to use theater as a meeting place for the many people who make up the community as a whole, and not just the small, traditional audience of high arts. Philip's talk is sprinkled with references to "meetings," by which he means not dull affairs with agendas and Robert's Rules of Order, but human connections. Perhaps "encounters" is as good a word.

Aside from its ongoing classes, performances and workshops, the Theatre Project currently sponsors three major programs to which Philip refers frequently in this interview. The Baltimore Neighborhood Arts Circus, begun in 1977, has brought participatory workshops and performances to several hundred thousand Baltimore residents in their own neighborhoods, while encouraging neighborhoods to organized related activities like annual festivals.

Last year's enormously successful "Baltimore Voices," presented in community spaces throughout Baltimore, transformed the reminiscences of hundreds of Baltimoreans into a moving and invigorating multi-media theatrical experience. More oral history-based productions are now in the works.

The newest production, currently known as the "Rat Piece" or "Rat Squad," will not only help educate each student in Baltimore schools about how to help their neighborhoods eradicate these pests; it will also experiment with new theatrical forms to encourage kids to become more active and involved participants in community life.

We interviewed Philip to kick off our economic development dialogue because we believe neighborhood arts people have a good deal to learn from the Theatre Project's approach. What seems most important is this: The Theatre Project has built a substantial budget based on selling its services without abandoning its vision of community service, and without leaning on box-office potential. The people who came to the Theatre Project six or eight years ago can still afford to go there and feel comfortable when they do so -- yet the organization's budget is many times larger and its staff is full of new faces. Philip believes in using earned income potential to strengthen the Theatre Project, not to change it into a conventional institution. We hope you will read and take heart.

If you would like to get in touch with the Theatre Project, write to them at 45 W. Preston St., Baltimore, MD 21201.

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We began by asking Philip to comment on the trend we'd observed as people moved away from the grants economy and toward various methods of earning income: What does he think it means? He talked about the Theatre Project's own movement in that direction:

"First of all, I think the seed was in an understanding of the relationship with

A Note to Our Readers

Hamish Sandison's article on tax-deductibility wasn't ready for this issue; we hope to have it for you next month and we apologize for the delay.

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the local CETA prime sponsor as a contract and not a grant. In Baltimore we had a good base with CETA since 1974, but there were only the 3 or 4 positions that would come in every year. Then it started with the Neighborhood Arts Circus: Here was something the City wanted done and that I wanted to do, a defined thing. I guess, beginning there, I really have been adamant in my negotiations with the local CETA people about talking about a contract, not a grant.

"The best example of when that really came through to everybody at the Theatre Project was when, two years ago, the Circus had CETA money and some Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money. Because of something that was happening in the City Council, the CDBG money was held up. Now, if the Endowment tells me 'Well, we really can't do anything while we're waiting on Congress to appropriate the money,' I don't have much to do except wait and cross my fingers. In this case, I said 'I'm sorry, I can't do this project unless I have the money.' And it was a marvelous place to be -- it's just real simple.

"So first of all, the trend away from a grants mentality is beginning to change perceptions; a contract mentality implies that somebody wants something you can do. My wanting to do a play about Sufi da-da-da -- who wants me to do that and who's going to pay for it?

"Also, there was another step that led us in this direction. I was seeing burn-out, I was seeing that I couldn't ask people to live and continue to build at \$6,000 or \$7,000 a year -- that I really had to build not just an institutional economic base, but to be able to have people buy in for 3 or 5 years. So I began talking about jobs for artists. A lot of the impulse came out of the people I was working with at the Theatre Project, and also 'the family' around the country, and seeing, sometimes, groups and institutions die, but more often than not, people die, people burn out. So the impulses to strengthen that base were real human ones for me in the beginning, then they started getting clearer as I started taking the whole CETA thing and saying 'Okay, how can this really be made to work for us and how can it be made to work for the prime sponsor?' And what the prime was really interested in was job training and community service. The way I found it to be able to work was to articulate clear projects: In Voices, in the Circus project and in the Rat Squad, I didn't initiate those projects. They came and asked me to help solve a problem and I said 'Okay, here's what we can do and here's how much it's gonna cost'."

We stopped Philip here to ask him how he got into the enviable position of having people come to him and ask him to do work in the first place.

"The first step was moving from the grant mentality. If somebody gives you a grant, there's a sort of religion implied: We're doing good. Well, the contract base, the business base, there ain't much religion in it, and we had to deliver. We had to deliver not only a project, with its definition, but also an administrative and management capability that we have spent the last 3 or 4 years beefing up. I now have a mi-

cro-computer, and a lot of my friends look at me like I'm nuts, but those people I'm contracting with have computers. It's also the people and the staffing patterns that we have developed, almost always making the contract pay for delivering that level of administrative and fiscal clarity. I think that two things were important in building our credibility: One, that we delivered what we said we were going to deliver; and two, when we had an audit, I was the cleanest boy on the block.

"There's no way you can begin thinking about any kind of economic development until you're ready to tackle that management, fiscal and administrative gorilla. We're not picking up canned, traditional models, but by the same token there's not somebody out there with a newer, easier way to do cost accounting. We have found ourselves bringing in people who had that background. Right now the Theatre Project has four contracts, and probably ten different pieces of funding just in those contracts. So it's gotta be more than little scraps of paper and oh yeah, boy, we want to balance the checkbook."

The Theatre Project seems to us to be a neighborhood arts group which has adopted some of the tools of management that build credibility with people with resources -- but it hasn't adopted those methods wholesale. We asked Philip how his organization had resisted pressure to become just like a traditional institution.

"The vision has not changed; we wrestle with it every day. I used to make the analogy of falling out of a boat: There's one choice and that's to tread water and keep your head above water and there's not a lot of delicate honing involved. But when you finally get some support -- when you're not just treading water -- then the stakes and the need for clarity, and the need not to lose the vision once you start having some choices -- struggling with that is most of my role at the theater now, keeping it on the track. If I get off, there are people in it who have popped me back on the track. But the vision's as much a part of the struggle as is the other side, the tightening up.

"Another way of putting it is, we still give a lot of stuff away. In the old days, I never knew what I was giving away; now I know."

We asked Philip if he meant to urge people to put as much attention into the vision behind their work as they do into the management side as they are making the transition from a grants economy to one based on contracts.

"Almost more so. Going into a contract situation, you have to be much more precise. For example, I'm having to look at ways of testing the Rat Piece. The people who are buying that -- the City Department of Housing and Community Development is the primary buyer -- started out by saying 'We think there is a way to use theater to reach a certain age group, fourth and fifth and sixth graders to change their perception about their responsibility for the rat problem into which we're now pouring millions and millions of dollars. So we came up with the design and they said 'Yes, we want it.' It's important to me, since we have agreed that we want to do this,

that some testing goes on. We're not going to be able to do real sophisticated behavioral testing, but we sure can talk about the ten factors that are involved in this and do some follow-up testing in the schools.

"The essence of the vision is the potential for meetings. The central vision is that you can create a meeting that comes out of an arts impulse, and there is great potential for all kinds of things coming from it. I can't know what all of those are, and that's why I'm real eclectic about my response to form. So if I'm having meetings in Baltimore Voices that are happening back in the neighborhoods, with investors in those meetings -- 400 investors who gave their stories, who came to open rehearsals, who act as sort of the community producers -- that's the research I'm interested in, and the form will follow.

"I want to add something I think will be valuable to people. In 1977 or '78 -- I forget which year it was but the Circus was in place by then -- I did some of the most important work I've ever done with a consultant. I guess we had a four or five month consulting relationship and his job was to help us look at our economic development possibilities. To put it in even a more simple way: What sort of business could we get into?

"I learned a whole lot from him about the myth of marketing, and about what's wrong with the way that all of us think that as soon as we go into business the question is market. What I learned is how market's not enough without ongoing management systems. I mean business is business. It's not just 'Let's market our thing,' it's a whole lot more than that. But the most important thing he did was help us look at what our resources were and, before we did any proposals or business plan, make us really sure that we were looking at things that were almost inevitable out of the work that we were doing, and out of the vision.

"Looking at the Theatre Project this way, two possibilities evolved. One of them was looking at the physical resources that we had and the way our neighborhood was developing, at the idea of a restaurant and the cabaret theater. That is a form I'm real interested in and a resource that the Theatre Project has in its building. The other one was that the early forms we were dealing with in the Neighborhood Arts Circus were a marketable activity with shopping malls -- it's interesting that I'm going to a meeting about that this afternoon, coming full circle from two years ago.

"The most important thing to remember was that if you get off that track, if you get seduced off that track, you're gonna find yourself way down at the end of the road, and wake up one morning and find yourself saying 'This is not what I wanted, where am I and why am I here?'"

We asked Philip to tell us about the projects the Theatre Project was currently involved in, beginning with the Neighborhood Arts Circus.

"We had just started a youth training program. I don't think the first youth had come on board when I got a call from the guy we were working with, and he was a little

upset. He said that a proposal had just been put to the city to spend a hundred-odd thousand dollars to do 18 performances of Pinocchio in the park and asked 'Can't you come up with anything better than that?'. Three days later I had designed what we called the Baltimore Neighborhood Arts Circus. That first year it was a four-day or five-day presence in 24 neighborhoods, with participatory performing arts events, community talent showcases. We were seeing a narrow constituency there; people from two blocks away came, but nobody had seen anybody driving from another part of town. It was centered in a distinct physical space.

"We're doing the fourth Neighborhood Arts Circus now and have a fulltime community developer who, first of all, books the Circus. The Circus is 8 weeks this year: Three of the sites have community fairs we have done historically and in five others our developer works with a myriad of community groups to deliver a new festival with games of chance and church groups selling stuff for fundraising, but not under one specific umbrella. We serve as the catalyst.

"The Circus has evolved into two things, the summer festivals and a year-round apprenticeship program solely funded by CETA and youth programs, the Youth Incentive Entitlement Program and the Youth Employment and Training Program. The year-round program takes youth dollars and employs about 60 high school students. They're paid a minimum wage and work for fifteen hours a week training and performing during the school year, and then during the summer Circus work 32 hours a week. They are trained by adult trainers under CETA Titles II and VI, and some of the program is staffed administratively and technically by adult CETA trainers who are in turn trained by professional trainers. All of those are paid for out of that program.

"The project has changed every year. We do really heavy evaluations for the Circus internally and it changes. Next year in the fall we're going to get a much more production-oriented training program. We're going to develop a musical docu-drama on the Royal Theater -- it was like the Apollo Theater, in Baltimore. We'll be using a lot of the techniques we developed in Baltimore Voices. An even more specific Baltimore Voices link is that the students will be going through an oral history process with their families and they'll create a play called the Baltimore Family Album, based on stories from their grandfathers, their mothers and fathers. Then both of those things are going to tour together next year.

"Also last year we developed with the students a play about work -- it's not really about work, it's about a young girl and it's not about love and it's not real preachy. It's performed twice a month at CETA's Youth Assessment Center. Every kid that's coming into a job training program in Baltimore spends two weeks in this Center and they test there and get job skills training and so on. In the middle of that they see this play: It's about 35 minutes long; it's got the feeling of a pep rally. It's just a lot of antiphonal stuff, great performance experience for the ten students that are in it and a lot of people have looked at it as a real success. It's one of the places on the tour when anybody comes in."

Philip went on to tell us about Baltimore Voices.

"The Voices project started a year ago with a major grantee of the National Endowment for the Humanities coming to us and saying 'Look, we will just be finishing the massive oral histories of 6 Baltimore neighborhoods and is there a way to give this back to the neighborhoods using theater?' We thought about it and that kind of theater made a lot of sense to us. We decided to subcontract with them. When we first went into it I think their image was 'Inherit the Wind,' that kind of historical play. Instead, we have come up with this storytelling form and acknowledgement of the artifice of the actor and an acknowledgement of the space. Baltimore Voices is filled with six neighborhoods. One of the first things the actors do when they finally go down the stairs and get into the church basement is say 'Okay. That's Highlandtown over there.' I remember the first time I saw it and I had an actor say 'Well, it's over in Highlandtown' and he was pointing at Old West Baltimore and they are two different places. Even on that simple level, we need to acknowledge the space and then acknowledge the artifice."

"Very early we decided that when we took our theater into somebody's space, we transformed the space in many ways. Sometimes we'd set up bleachers and it would be a church basement where people are used to going and eating and all of a sudden there were chairs and a theater piece. We decided that our first response to them ought to help them into this new environment. It's very natural: The actors have finished their warm-ups and as people come in, they are handing out programs, they're helping people to their seats, they're being ushers. They don't have on stage make-up. Nobody knows that they're going to get up there and perform in a minute.

"Baltimore Voices was a subcontract with the NEH contractor and then a CETA piece fell in behind it. Four of the six actors have CETA salaries. In the first year it was a ten-month project for about \$180,000 total. It will continue. We're now doing deeper interviews with people we met through the show. We have one piece we're working on called the 'Joe Puddle Slide Show,' which is just one guy showing his slides and taking the words from the transcripts. There's another 20-minute piece that has sisters who were interviewed together and keep talking over each other.

"We also built a version of the show to work in 20 to 40 minutes that can be done without the slides. Every Friday in August a forty-minute version is being performed at the top of the World Trade Center in Baltimore. Instead of using slides as the background, it's a six-sided building, and you can point down and look at Little Italy, at the other neighborhoods. And it's been performed for consular delegations and the CETA private industry council in the City Hall ceremonial room. Last spring it was performed for the Department of Labor prime sponsor work group; and we took it to the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Seattle, and the U.S. Conference of Historians there.

"After the initial contract for Baltimore Voices, I'm trying to put together the pieces for its continuation. That will prob-

ably be one of the most traditional funding packages that we've ever had. We've never been able to get much money from traditional foundations, local foundations and corporations. And in the fall we'll be doing a one-hour Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting adaptation, so there is some funding that's going to be helping us do that. As someone said, 'Baltimore Voices is the Big Mac of the Theatre Project.' And it's also probably the most definitional work we've ever created in terms of what the Theatre Project is."

Philip moved on the talk about the Rat Piece.

"The Rat Squad started with the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in Baltimore calling a meeting of 3 theaters and saying 'We got this terrible problem with rats, we thought we could do some theater.' One of the respondents made an impassioned statement about how art was about beauty and truth and that it should not be perverted this way and what's wrong with America today in the arts is that people are trying to get theater to do other things. My response to it was that I thought the theater was a great communications and propaganda tool. I said I wouldn't be interested in doing a play about getting rid of rats, but I would be real interested in creating a theatrical experience that had as its focus individuals taking responsibility for their neighborhoods and their lives and trying to find a real, tangible way to talk about translating neighborhood to a nine, ten or eleven-year old. The rat things come in under that, but the play is about that."

We interrupted Philip to note that the Theatre Project had been offered a remarkably interesting array of theatrical and artistic problems -- particularly remarkable because a common idea of "social useful" art is that it offers no challenges, it's likely to be boringly traditional and safe. Philip noted that the Theatre Project frequently receives offers to become involved in more conventional projects, but turns them down. For example:

"'Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a place where actors could come together and read new works?' I think somebody ought to do that, but not us. It's interesting how the kinds of things we do want to do seem to come up, for example, how we got our computer. I love that story. When the Rat Squad contract came to us HCD said 'We want this to go to every fourth and fifth-grader in the city in their schools.' We called up the City school system and found out they had no record of what spaces they had. With Baltimore Voices we'd found we would always have to do an advance visit before we could even book it. So now we were faced with going to 185 schools because we're going to do one school a day -- two performances at each -- in this piece. It seemed inevitable to me that if we were going to go collect that information, that it should not just be ours. That was a major research project in itself, and if we had computer technology we could provide a service to City agencies and city arts groups, because we're also surveying all of the community spaces we performed Baltimore Voices in. We recognized the dynamic of a church basement that doesn't normally have performances and had a performance with us 6 months ago, and then our peo-

ple come and say 'This is a good space, we'd like to put you on this list.' The people who have the space begin to think of it as a new resource. At the end of the year we'll have about 250 spaces described with a survey instrument that we've designed that is real specific about performance -- what's the floor like, is it sprung wood, how many feet to the loading dock, is there parking, what are the sizes of the doors to get from there to the space, audience configurations, whether it's light-tight or not, what sort of sound system do they have, plus contacts, plus their performance history."

We asked Phillip if this story was typical of the Theatre Project's way of working. When they needed something, did they make a practice of thinking about who else needed it, who could benefit from it and how it might be paid for?

"Sure. Win, win, win. I haven't been in any contract where there's been a fucker and fuckee. I could only do that once. For people to keep wanting to come back to us, everyone has to win something. The people I'm doing the Rat Piece for, every time I do something with them they say 'Now, we want this thing later on about energy, we want it to go to the high schools.'"

We asked Phillip to tell us about the development work centered on the Theatre Project's facility.

"First of all, Baltimore's not every American city. My experience with the CETA prime sponsor has proven that. It's been the birthplace and the focus of a lot of really creative public/private partnerships, neighborhood redevelopment and the development of culture. The City has been a partner in all the major cultural institutions and even some of the non-major institutions.

"We had a five or six-year history in the same building when I had a meeting with the then-Director of HCD. My intent in the meeting was to find out if there were any city-owned properties I could move into. I did not think we could keep our building, but the housing Director had an idea of what might be possible. Plus, I had a track record. So it was with the City's help that we acquired the ownership of the property. We were in an urban renewal area and the City bought our building for \$75,000 and sold it to us for \$5. Then we got a \$90,000 easement grant to bring it up to code; that was money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, passed through the local agency.

"As part of the package the City also bought the four contiguous townhouses for us. We took them over about a year and a half or two years later. And now we find ourselves with an interest in about a two million dollar capital development program.

"A major key to that was 3 years ago we applied for and got a \$15,000 grant from Architecture (now Design Arts) at the NEA, and we put together both a design prospectus and a program prospectus. The implications, for instance, were year-round performances instead of eight months, two additional theaters, training spaces, office spaces, better security.

"Then we took that prospectus and found a developer, a financial consultant in Balti-

more that we contracted with. This was no freebie, this was a contract, but it was a contract that is the way that I guess people do things. You know, we were having trouble paying our rent, but we paid this developer a hundred-dollar-a-month retainer, plus 4% of billed expenses. When the package is put together he will recapture his expenses.

"What we are looking at is this: The critical variables are, one, that we are a nonprofit. Two, we have ownership. We're not paying a dollar-a-year rent, we have the title to this property. Three, while the building itself has not been given national historical recognition, we are in a historical district, which is all one needs for the tax benefits. Four, in our plan there was investment potential, because we're talking about a restaurant. We're not thinking that we know how to run a restaurant, so that is a vendor or lease possibility. Someone told me that to be a nonprofit organization owning historically significant property is one of the best tax shelter positions that anybody could ever be in.

"So our financial consultant is putting together an equity syndication, which means that a group of disinterested investors will purchase the building from us -- they're high-bracket taxpayers, maybe dentists in Iowa who are convinced that the syndication is a better place for their money than municipal bonds -- all or part, on a sale/lease-back. They invest in the capital development, and because of the historical designation, depreciation is accelerated from 20 to 5 years. There are probably going to be City-guaranteed or low-interest loans, I'm not sure. The way the thing is finally put together may depend on other factors -- for instance the current prime interest rate or the current availability of city bonds.

"When the development is done the theater's going to have to pay to lease the building. We can't pay a dollar a year to the syndicate -- there are all sorts of IRS problems if you try to do that -- but have to pay a real going rate. But what do we have? We have some sort of endowment created from the sale of the building. Plus we have the investment potential of the restaurant. We did two market surveys on the restaurant and they ranged between a million and a million and a half dollars gross a year. You know, when we bought the building the Symphony was planning to move out into the county and no one knew what was going to happen to the district. Now they're building a \$15 million Symphony Hall across the street and \$6 million is being put into the old hall a block away. So we're sitting in the middle of 5,000 seats and can make a lot of money in a restaurant. If we figure 10% of the restaurant gross for the lease of the space, that's \$125,000 a year. If I get that from another group of investors -- the restaurateurs -- and they have the credit to sign a 10-year lease, which is the minimum a restaurant will want, right? -- I then have the leverage of the restaurant's credit and paper to allow the development syndicate to know that I've got part or even all of my lease payments.

"So if you're talking about replicating this model, remember, it's a building that can be on the national historical register or is part of an historical district, a non-

profit, that can either buy or already owns the building -- and one other important thing: I've been talking to some people in the last couple of years who say 'Hey, we want to do this.' But if it's five arts groups that are going together to cut up a big building, and they're each taking 20% of the space, and there's not the commercial investment potential, then what you're talking about is spending a lot of money in capital development and then you got five arts groups with huge operating expenses and a big plant. So I would say now look for a building that you only need 60 or 70% of, and then turn the other 30 or 40% into something that makes sense to the neighborhood, that makes sense to what you are doing, as commercial development."

We asked Philip how these income-generating projects related to the Theatre Project's ongoing program of free performances.

"Well, for instance, I've been able to get training money for both the adult and youth training programs to have some of the people who are coming in to do mainstage performances train those trainers. Eddie Lee from Atlanta's Academy Theater is bringing his new Southern Theater Conspiracy. Eddie had a long history in youth programming down at the Academy; I couldn't think of a better teacher that I'd want to spend 4 weeks with the trainers. Pigeon Drop is coming in. They are really good clowns, so I'm able to augment the financial relationship I have with them for the free performances by paying them for training.

"This year the Theatre Project's entire budget will be over a million dollars. We're not getting grants; less than 9% of our budget is donated income. All the CETA money is contracts. We're projecting about \$40,000 or \$45,000 in non-restricted grants and about the same amount from people who make donations at performances.

"Sometimes it makes fiscal planning difficult. You know most people are either on a July 1 or October 1 grants cycle, but our contracts sometimes bracket years. For instance the Rat Piece is April 1 to May 30, so that money falls within two fiscal years. Right now I think there are 54 fulltime employees and I expect to hire about 10-12 people in the next two weeks.

"I am real proud that about 80 or 85% of the current staff are local people, graduates of state colleges and community colleges. Every time I have jobs opening up I call all the local colleges. I will say a lot of people come here and decide that it's the other way they want to go, toward conventional theater. But it's a real clear choice for us not to go that way.

"Right now with two companies in rehearsal, Baltimore Voices and the Rat Piece company, there's some real interest in looking at an evolving style for our work, a performance style. In a way, everything we're doing is experimental: I'm as interested in experimentation and research in the form of the meeting which takes into consideration who we're meeting with as well as what we're creating with the meeting. In Baltimore Voices, not only am I interested in opening up the 8 o'clock-to-10 o'clock-curtain rising-actors going in one entrance-

public coming in another, but also opening up the process of that work, opening it up to these 400 investors of time and energy and talk. That's the way I define experimentation, not in trying to discover a 'New Language for the Theater' -- I get real bored with that.

"Audience is a real important thing here. I keep pressing people to do what we did -- it was real simple. We did an audience survey and it was 2500 responses over about two months. Somebody from the University of Baltimore set it up, and I now very proudly say 'In this audience study we found that 89% of our audiences made less than \$20,000 a year. 69% made less than \$15,000 a year, and 49% made under \$10,000 a year. 20% were students. Median age: Early 30's, early to mid-30's. 50% of our audience in blue and pink-collar non-professional jobs. 20% are black.' Well, look at a traditional audience profile and then look at what we're talking about. (Note: These figures are for audiences that come to the Theatre Project to see performances; its many performances in community settings diverge even further from the traditional theater audience.)

"I think one of the strongest ways we can define ourselves is who we're doing it for. 'Well, we play theater for everyone.' Bullshit! If there's anything to be studied in this movement we're talking about it's what sort of statistics could you pull down about who the users of that particular theater are. We have a lot of repeat business too. People come to our theater more often-- you know, you can only go to regional theater six times a year."

We asked Philip if his audience study didn't throw a new light on the question of "audience development." When the major institutions complained of their problems in building an audience beyond the traditional 2% of the population, weren't they really ignoring their own role in selecting a narrow audience by what they produce and how they produce it?

"Early in the Theatre Project I talked about if what I really wanted to do was make this meeting, then what are the barriers to that meeting? A barrier is price, any price. A barrier is having that attendee have to be organized enough to have a calendar and decide 'Oh, let's go to the theater on the 13th' and then go through the rigamarole about reserving space and so on. The audience I just described has seen everything from high-art New York theater to African dance created in the community in Baltimore to the Play Group's evolution and growth. With our incredible, eclectic array of forms, form becomes less important than the whole -- how everything moves around the meetings. Someone said the thing about coming to the Theatre Project is that you feel like somebody's at home; there's somebody there. In everybody's contract, no matter what program they're in, they work the house, they've always done it. There's one of the directors at every performance and it's not 'I'm working house and I'm schlepping because I have to,' it's 'I'm part of this theater, I know something about it.'"

SOME RELEVANT RESOURCES

For some months we have been collecting publications and other information about technical assistance groups that can be helpful to neighborhood arts people thinking about economic development. What follows is by no means a comprehensive listing, but it includes the resources we think will be most helpful to you as a starting place for economic development research.

Each organization and publication listed will refer you to a dozen others, and before you know it, you may be over-dosed on information. Take our advice: Before you do too much research into resources, follow the Theatre Project's example and do some serious thinking and planning about what your organization does best, what its resources are, and what you want it to be doing in the future. As Philip said in his interview, the projects you undertake should be "almost inevitable out of the work" that you are doing -- and "out of the vision" behind it.

One word of caution: Most organizations that provide this kind of technical assistance have little contact with arts groups of any kind. You may encounter difficulty in translating your concerns into language that is familiar to them. Don't count on them to supply the necessary imaginative framework for your planning: If your organization gets involved in economic development projects, it will probably be breaking new ground -- you'll need imagination, clarity and perseverance to succeed.

Center for Community Change

Some of the most lucid and accessible resources on community development are produced by the Center for Community Change (CCC), a multi-faceted, Washington-based organization that assists local community development organizations in low-income urban and rural areas all over the U.S. Its publications provide solid background and guidance to groups who are seeking to make use of federal aid programs.

The CCC's newsletter, Monitor, keeps its readers up on trends and changes in federal funding programs that affect community-based groups. The June issue, for example, discusses the many cuts in domestic human services in Carter's 1981 budget, and summarizes changes being made in CETA, the Community Development Block Grant program, and housing and nutrition programs. Monitor appears 4-5 times each year.

In addition, the CCC has issued six Action Guides, each focusing on a particular federal program or range of programs. Each Guide offers an explanation of a program as well as a complete, step-by-step discussion of how community groups can make use of the resources each offers. Four of the Guides focus on an individual program: "General Revenue Sharing: Influencing Local Budgets"; "The Comprehensive Employment and Training Program (CETA)"; "Citizen Involvement in Community Development: An Opportunity and a Challenge"; and "The Community Reinvestment Act." "Rural Development Programs" outlines the whole rural development process and summarizes a large number of potentially useful support programs -- though not all of it is directly applicable, we've found this publication to be a useful introduction for people

working in urban areas too. "Citizen Involvement in the Budget Process" discusses ways that citizens and community groups can influence the local budgeting process.

A \$15/year subscription includes the Monitor, a copy of each of the Action Guides listed above, and a copy of each new Guide as it is released. Subscriptions should be sent to Eileen Paul, Director of Publications, at the address listed below. Action Guides can also be purchased separately; write or call for a complete publications list.

In addition, the CCC publishes Catalyst, a quarterly newsletter focusing on CETA. Catalyst subscriptions are free; contact CCC to get on the mailing list. CCC also has staff in Washington and field representatives in Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, New York, Richmond (VA) and San Diego to assist local groups with CETA-related problems. Further information on publications, CETA assistance and other CCC programs is available at 1000 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington DC 20007. The general phone number is (202) 338-3565; the CETA project can be reached at (202) 338-4712.

The National Conference for Community Economic Development

NCCED is a national association of community based organizations active in economic development. Most of them are community development corporations (CDCs) based in low-income communities. The NCCED monitors federal policy-making that affects economic development areas and serves a constituency that includes some of the largest and most sophisticated CDCs in the country (e.g., TELACU in Los Angeles and Hough Development Corporation in Cleveland). But its information and communication activities cover programs of interest to any community group with a serious interest in economic development work.

Two newsletters issued by the NCCED are sent free to all its members: Each issue of the bi-monthly Interchange provides in-depth information about a resource or technique that community groups can use in their economic development work; one recent issue discussed Small Business Administration programs, while another featured articles about CDCs and resource lists for people interested in putting one together. The Informer is a more informal monthly summary of technical assistance sources, conference, research and other resources relevant to community economic development and related concerns like neighborhood preservation and alternate technologies.

Other NCCED publications and individual consultation are available only to NCCED's organizational members -- but the scale of membership fees for CDCs, which often have large budgets, begins at \$200. Individual memberships are currently \$10 per year, in return for which individual members receive Interchange and The Informer. For further information, contact the NCCED at 2025 I St. NW, Room 901, Washington, DC 20006; phone (202) 659-8411.

The National Economic Development and Law Center

NED&CL provides legal and other technical

assistance to community-based organizations involved in economic development projects. The NED&LC helps with legal counseling and representation, planning and program development, monitoring federal legislation, and training for lawyers and community groups involved with community economic development.

Headquartered in Berkeley, CA, with a smaller office in Washington, DC, the NED&LC issues a bi-monthly newsletter, the Economic Development & Law Center Report. The Report contains articles on model community programs, the impact of legislation and funding programs on community economic development work, and other issues that affect community groups.

A second Center periodical is the Community Opportunities & Development Newsletter. The C.O.D. Newsletter contains articles on funding opportunities for community-based organizations, including application deadlines, recent changes in federal programs, case studies on ways that community organizations have used various sources to support their development efforts, and profiles of government and foundation funding sources.

Both newsletters are free to legal services offices and community groups that qualify for free legal services. We tried to get a firmer definition of who was eligible and were told that people should contact the Center to find out if, or how, they can qualify. You might also contact a local legal services office to see if they have copies you can use.

The Center has also produced several special publications. Of particular interest to neighborhood arts people are several "how-to" guides: "Neighborhood Resource Information Centers" present guidelines on organizing and maintaining a resource center on public and private funding sources. "Organizing Production Cooperatives: A Strategy for Community Economic Development" describes production cooperatives and offers guidelines for their organization, finance and management. Also available are: "Model Incorporation and Tax Exemption Application Documents," "Community Development Credit Unions: A Self-Help Manual," and "Community Development Block Grants: A Strategy for Neighborhood Groups." These special publications range in price from \$3-\$10; organizations receiving Legal Services Corporation assistance qualify for some reduced rates. Contact Ms. Cris Hayes, NED&LC, 2150 Shattuck Ave, Suite 300, Berkeley, CA 94704; phone (415)548-2600.

Neighborhood Information Sharing Exchange

NISE promotes cooperation among all kinds of organizations involved in neighborhood work, including neighborhood arts groups as well as groups involved in alternative technology, community economic development, transportation and human services.

NISE is supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through its Office of Neighborhood Development. It produces a newsletter -- The Exchange -- and it provides information directly to member groups that call or write.

NISE membership is open to any neighborhood organization, and the price of membership is information, not money. To join,

an organization is required to complete a 6-page "neighborhood organization profile," which asks for information about group structure, funding, history, program activities and community. Participating in NISE also means making a commitment to keep NISE informed of your activities by adding it to your mailing list, and to share your expertise with other NISE members who might be referred to you. For example, NISE has called NAPNOC and asked us for information on community murals in response to a question from another member.

The Exchange is intended to be a monthly newsletter, but in its first four months of existence only two issues have come out, and a third isn't projected until September. NISE seems to be going through a period of adjustment as this relatively new project becomes established. So far, the newsletter has contained articles on the Consumer Coop Bank, several community development corporations, workers' cooperatives, homesharing for older people, and a bunch of little items on new legislation and resources.

NAPNOC belongs to NISE, and we think it represents a valuable resource for neighborhood arts people who want to link up with other kinds of neighborhood organizing efforts. NISE is currently "going computerized" by joining the Electronic Information Exchange System (EIES). In the future, neighborhood arts organizations who are NISE members may be able to take advantage of its information systems to find sponsors for touring events or exchanges, or to find out about groups with programs that are potential models.

For more information, write NISE at 1725 K St., Suite 1212, Washington, DC 20006; or call the toll-free "Network Action Line" at (800)424-2852. In Washington, call 293-2813.

The ABCs of Washington

In response to requests from several readers, here is some information on the organizations mentioned in the "Dodging Nasty Issues with the High Chiefs of Art," which appeared in the last issue of NAPNOC notes. Washington is full of arts service organizations which bear an acronym consisting mostly of "N's," "A's," and "C's," and they can be pretty confusing, even to experts.

National Endowment for the Arts

The NEA was created by the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, along with an independent parallel agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities. The NEA has grown from a tiny agency by federal standards (\$2.5 million in 1966) to its 1980 budget of \$154 million. Though its enabling legislation gives it broad and general purposes and powers, the NEA has adopted a policy of support of "professional arts," mainly through funding for established arts institutions, as explained in last month's issue.

Most NEA money (over 60%) is distributed through its "disciplinary" grants programs (e.g., Visual Arts, Music and Dance). The second largest share is distributed through the Office of Partnership, mainly in \$275,000 annual bloc grants to State Arts Agencies (SAAs) in 56 states, territories and special jurisdictions, and in Artists-in-Schools programs. The remaining amount

(under 12%) comprises the things that "fall between the cracks" of the disciplinary programs: Inter-Arts (formerly Special Projects), Expansion Arts, and Folk Arts. So far, most of the money that has gone to neighborhood arts groups has come from these three categories, and most of that has come from Expansion Arts, which was established in the early 1970's to deal with just this constituency. Expansion Arts grants amounted to \$8.224 million in fiscal 1979, less than 5% of the regular NEA program funds.

Livingston Biddle is Chairman of the NEA and of the Presidentially-appointed National Council of the Arts that advises him on policy and programmatic decisions. Unlike most other public arts agency structures, the NEA's Chairman acts as head of staff as well as running Council meetings. Though the NEA's enabling legislation gives broad authority to the Chairman to make grants, the Endowment's complex system of "peer review" panels was developed early on to protect the Chairman from this exposed position by delegating some granting and policy-making authority.

Understanding the present internal politics of the NEA (where the rest of the country is referred to as "The Field") is aided by a look at its formative years under the iron hand of Nancy Hanks, a Rockefeller family protegee famed for her ability to increase the agency's Congressional appropriations. Hanks' tight control of NEA staff was typified by her Planning Department's review of "the pinks" (pink carbon copies of all outgoing correspondence). An offensive "pink" was returned to the offending correspondent marked with a ☹ in Hanks' own hand.

Though Biddle's ascent to the Chairmanship excited optimism, he has increasingly been criticized as a weak and directionless leader. Several key executive staff members -- Biddle appointees -- have resigned, leaving Mary Ann Tighe, Deputy Director of (disciplinary grants) Programs in a preeminent position. Despite early speculation that Biddle would bring to the agency a new feeling of populism, the Endowment under Biddle and Tighe has redoubled its emphasis on "quality," an NEA code-word for high art and its values.

A "federal-state reassessment" process, which began while Hanks was still in office, resulted in the creation of the elevated "Office of Partnership," which sponsored the meeting covered in NAPNOC notes #2. Its predecessor was the Federal-State Program which administered the bloc grants to each SAA. As the NEA received increasing pressure from other public arts agencies (especially local arts councils) it has cautiously extended the idea of working in "partnership." So far, the rhetoric which accompanied the establishment of this new division has been far grander in scope than its actual program activities. In 1979, Hank Putsch (you will recall "Putsch's Pyramid" in the last issue) moved from head of Fed-State to head the new Office of Partnership.

NEA publishes a bimonthly magazine, The Cultural Post, which contains articles about its programs and grantees. A subscription is \$10/year, and can be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Govern-

ment Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. General guidelines for the NEA's grant programs can be obtained by writing to General Information, NEA, 7th Floor, West Wing, 2401 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20506. Guidelines for particular programs can be obtained by writing to the appropriate division at the above street address.

NASAA and NACAA

NASAA and NACAA are, respectively, the National Assembly of State and Community Arts Agencies; they cosponsored the Partnership meeting we covered last month. Though each is an independent organization, both trace their roots about ten years back when they began to function as sub-groups of ACA (then the "Associated Councils of the Arts," but since 1978 known as the "American Council for the Arts"). In its "Associated Councils" days, ACA was the single, big national organization in the arts council field, encompassing hundreds of arts councils, both state and local. State and local arts councils would each hold an "assembly" in conjunction with ACA conferences to consider issues of particular concern to their constituencies. As first NASAA and then NACAA began to expand its role in addressing the concerns of its constituents, both began to take on autonomous activities and eventually separated from ACA altogether: NASAA in 1974 and NACAA in 1978 (when ACA got out of the business of coordinating arts councils and changed its mission to "serving the needs of all the arts that cut across art forms").

NASAA has a very clearly defined constituency: The 56 officially-designated state arts agencies, one in each state and territory. NASAA played an active role in criticizing the paternalistic role of the NEA toward the SAAs in the closing years of Nancy Hanks' administration and pressed for more equal treatment as "partners" of the Endowment in administering such programs as Artists-in-School and Dance Touring (which rely on SAAs for their implementation).

NASAA continues to monitor NEA programs and policies as they affect its members, and it has seen to it that SAA representatives sit on most NEA policy and grant-making panels. It publishes a newsletter with information on "Faces in the Field" (who's filling which jobs in the highly-mobile and somewhat inbred field of SAA staffers), activities and events which concern SAAs (e.g. "percent for art" programs in various states, new legislation, court rulings) and information on NASAA's own activities and publications.

A big NASAA project recently has been the "National Information Systems Project" (NISP). NASAA coordinated the efforts to standardize data collection and organization for arts agencies. Many months were spent trying to standardize terminology and data handling procedures. If you are on the NEA's mailing list you received a mailing recently (actually, we have received seven copies to date, one at a time) asking you to check a bunch of boxes which describe the work you do and list the kinds of information you want to receive from the Endowment. This is because the NEA is switching its mailing list to be compatible with the NISP system.

As SAAs have matured as public agencies, they have individually become more critical

of NEA policies which fail to take into account the differing conditions in each state. The need to address these concerns was one of the reasons for NASAA's formation and growth. At the National Partnership Meeting in June, many NASAA members expressed concern that NASAA's dependence upon NEA funding has blunted this necessary critical thrust.

Roy Helms (former Director of the Alaska SAA) is NASAA's current Director. Helms is leaving and his replacement has yet to be chosen. It remains to be seen whether new Director will mean a change in scope for the organization; at the moment, NASAA functions primarily as a way for state arts agency people to keep in touch and promote their mutual interests. NASAA, 1010 Vermont Ave NW, Suite 316, Washington, DC 20005.

NACAA's constituency is not so clearly defined. "Community arts agencies" (sometimes abbreviated by NACAA and NEA as "CAAs") are public or private, nonprofit arts councils or commissions -- Boston's Office of Cultural Affairs and Baton Rouge's Arts and Humanities Council are examples.

NACAA's functions in relation to its constituency are pretty similar to NASAA's: The organization hosts an annual conference that includes workshops for CAA representatives. It also keeps community arts councils in touch with each other, and maintains an office in Washington from which it works to advance the mutual interests of its members. Lobbying for a program of NEA funding for CAAs has been high on NACAA's agenda in recent years.

NACAA's Director is Charles Dambach, who used to run a CAA himself. NACAA, 1625 I Street NW, Room 725-A, Washington, DC 20006.

Where NAPNOC Fits In

The NEA likes the idea of an orderly pyramid of organizations: NEA at the top of the triangle, NASAA beneath it, and NACAA holding up the base. NAPNOC can't be placed in this structure because our members are so diverse. They aren't any one kind of organizations -- like "CAAs" or "SAAs" -- and don't fit into a neat hierarchy of responsibility. NAPNOC's "constituency" is made up of all kinds of community-based cultural groups and the people who work with them -- theater people, neighborhood workers, muralists, poets, administrators, musicians, and many others.

Neighborhood arts organizations are not another rung on the ladder of arts bureaucracy. They don't give grants; in fact, most have a hard time getting grants. And more often than not, neighborhood arts organizations find the bulk of their support entirely outside the pyramid of arts agencies -- as Philip Arnoult's interview in this issue demonstrates.

But the biggest difference between NAPNOC and groups like NACAA and NASAA is that NAPNOC is interested in broad policy issues, in raising the important questions that affect our work and our culture, and in trying to be honestly critical -- calling it the way we see it. We received many calls and letters about last month's article on the "high chiefs." Far and away the most common response from readers was that the article said things they had thought themselves, but people had never seen these thoughts discussed in print before. That's just one of the necessary and unique roles NAPNOC exists to fill.

NAPNOC

neighborhood arts programs
national organizing committee

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