

# **10<sup>th</sup> Annual Canadian Arts Summit**

**Sofitel Montréal**

**Closing Remarks by Ben Cameron**

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Thank you for that no pressure introduction! I'm delighted and honored to be here. Ever since I first journeyed north of the border in 1972 as part of the University of North Carolina/University of Toronto exchange and spent a significant number of months at St. Mike's College, I've been the beneficiary of the unbelievable Canadian openness, warmth and hospitality from virtually every one I've met, including and especially Howard [Howard Jang]. Over the last two days, all of you have extended that same warmth, generosity and hospitality –something I especially appreciate since my return to the dark side of philanthropy where I now “live” - and where we have a saying, “Welcome to philanthropy, you have just had your last bad meal and your last sincere compliment.” How true that can be! Knowing that you know that I can't make grants in Canada and that you're still nice to me makes your hospitality even more remarkable and appreciated.

Indeed, I am honored to be here out of the sense of gratitude I owe Canadian artists and arts organizations. As a theatre professional, I owe much of my sense of Shakespearean production to Robin Phillips. I owe my deepest memories of Shakespearean performances to Nicholas Pennell and William Hutt, to Martha Henry, to Marti Maraden, to the great artists I had the wonderful opportunity to encounter when I was visiting the

Shaw and the Stratford Festivals over the years as I was training. As an opera fan, my sense of opera was changed forever the first time I saw Jon Vickers sing Peter Grimes. More recently in other arts areas, the work of Canadian artists - the work of James Kudelka, the work of Daniel MacIvor—has been illuminating and powerful for me. And last night, at the home of Constance, who, set a new standard for gracious warmth and a new standard for hospitality, I had my first encounter with the works of the Group of Seven, works that graced those walls in a way that will live with me for many, many years. For all of these reasons and more, it is a great honour and a great pleasure to be among you.

That said, I have three caveats at this moment about appearing on the agenda at this time:

1. First of all, I know I am the last thing that stands between you and the bar, so depending on how long I go on, you can easily turn on me like dogs at a bear-baiting, snarling at the bear.
2. Secondly, I dread talking to any group without prepared remarks. In Shakespeare only one person stands proudly to say, “I will speak extempore fromr my mother wit,” that person being Sir Andrew Agucheek, as close a character to the village idiot as Shakespeare ever wrote.
3. And thirdly, and most importantly, in this context, I know I’m not one of you.

And by that I know that there are three liabilities in what I may observe.

- As a non-Canadian, I have no deep understanding of the complexity of your government and arts subsidy structure. Listening through my US ears, I may be imposing inadvertently wrong filters on what I think I have heard.

- Secondly, because I don't know you all as individuals, I am tone-deaf to what I frequently perceive as the richest part of sub-text in any meeting: the infinitely fascinating conjunction of speaker to idea. Appreciating WHO said something is often at least as important as what was said. That rich subtext is one that I simply am not able to appreciate.
- And third, and finally, for me, this meeting is a single snapshot of a moment in time. Having never been among you before, I cannot judge if you are happier or more stressed, more victorious or more despondent. Comparative analyses or emotional trends are things I have no way to judge. All I can do is share with you what I think I have heard over the last 48 hours.

In this review of the last two days, I am the first to appreciate that each of you is a remarkable leader in the Canadian arts scene and that you don't need me to walk you through your conference one session at a time. Indeed, I think my primary value is less about re-playing or simply regurgitating session by session what you saw, but more about trying to synthesize a bit, to reflect on what I heard and perhaps to try to provoke a different kind of conversation or awareness.

In general, these past two days have been incredibly rich. Marc Scorca launched us on one strand with a real sense of pragmatism about what we must do to be more effective advocates for the future. The artists panel quickly launched us on a second strand of idealism, reminding us of why doing art in the first place is important at all. And the subsequent panels and the speakers launched us on a third strand, a strand of deep inquiry

where we dissected, probed, mined, looked at things, all as a prelude to more effective collective, concerted action that will unite and guide us after we leave to return to our respective homes.

Within those three strands of the conference, often heard great causes for celebration and great claims of victories. As early as my reading of the pre-conference panel book, I found myself envious of the support you receive in Canada from your government, contrasting (per one study I consulted) your per capita spending by the federal government on the arts is \$3.68 per citizen - a number that even though it may be far short of what Germany, France and Finland spend, still makes our meager \$.44 cents per citizen in the United States an embarrassment for those of us south of the border. And the very idea that you have a Ministry and a Minister speaks volumes about a governmental priority placed on arts and culture, a priority far deeper than our temporal National Endowment for the Arts that is buffeted about in annual political and re-appropriation debates. These two days have increased that sense of envy: I heard about the capital gains tax victory, for example, and the Superbuild fund and the fantastic work that has grown from that initiative. I heard about the organizational victories of this very Summit- your growth from 21 to 44 participating organizations in a mere ten years, more than doubling your numbers. And, the very way in which you individually offer your own previous resources – and I know how precious they are – to fund this organization and this meeting—these are all important achievements.

I heard spiritual victories and spiritual celebrations as well, not least of all in your readiness to laugh together. Having attended many similar meetings, characterized mostly by complaining, whining, groaning, and the occasional throwing of chairs, I see in your easy rise to humour a wonderful earmark of a community in formation, marked by a healthy sense of mutual respect and regard for one another.

And finally, and what is the most important, promising victory celebration, that I heard? I heard what it is in the number of your board members who are here. I can't emphasize strongly enough the significance of their attendance. Those of us in the arts show up for this meeting because this is what we do for a living. We have a vested interest in being here, we hope to get better tools, we hope to get better networks, we hope to advance our cause. Board members don't have that same obligation to be here. They are sacrificing their time, their energy, their expertise, voluntarily. I take this to be their way of saying, essentially - when we pose the question at the heart of any advocacy effort, "do we matter to your lives?" - our board members are the first to stand up with a resounding voice and say, "yes, you do and we offer you the investment of our time and energy to prove it."

Having been at the NEA - as some of you know I was head of theatre at the National Endowment in the United States (and if it helps to pinpoint the moment, let me say I was at the NEA at the time of Robert Maplethorpe, Andre Serano and the N.E.A. four controversies) - I will tell you that in moments of such arts controversy the voice of the artist is too self-interested to be heard. It is the PTA mother, it is the bank president, it's the real estate agent, those are the voices that can be heard when ours cannot be. It is

most passionately and powerfully our board members who are able and increasingly must be that voice. Indeed as time passes, our board members' responsibility is to think of themselves not just as supporters of our organization but, more deeply, as activists on our behalf--a fundamental shift of responsibility that marks the successful organization. Board members, by their very presence at this meeting, have made that manifest, and I salute them all.

It would, of course, be disingenuous to say that every strand of the meeting was marked by celebration and victory. And indeed, as in most meetings, I heard a palpable sense of frustration, fatigue and stress. I heard it in the anecdotal conversations on breaks and on the bus to Constance's home last night, for example, in the way in which people were really hungry to learn from one another: "how are you coping with...", "what are you doing about...", "what does it mean to..." etc. I heard it in the way questions were framed, framing often which underlined the battle-weariness and fatigue.

I hear it first in the post-artist panel when one person asked, "Talk to us about the stress and strain of being an artist and a leader," not "talk to us about how your work as an artist energizes your leadership work." I heard it in the repeated comments when various ones of you said, "We've had this advocacy conversation for the last 25 years." "We've talked about this before." "We've articulated these arguments before." And especially in one person's observation to the Minister, "I feel like time and again I'm an orange that you're asking to look like a watermelon," an observation marked by palpable fatigue and

frustration. And I heard it in the growing testiness that accompanied the post debate conversation yesterday afternoon.

And, frankly, I hear it through locution. I'm a great believer in locution, something I learned in my corporate life at Target Stores, which, you may know if you are familiar with south of the border. They were very serious about our status, not as "employees," but as "team members," where we did not have "customers," we had "guests"—an enforced vocabulary that, in subtle and profound ways, transformed the encounter at the cash register when the person ringing the merchandise saw not merely a customer but a guest in a home. Minor word choice, major transformation.

But in that same way of locutionary importance, I heard your frustration in the title of this convening - "Putting Arts at the Centre of Society." We did not gather to "preserve" arts at the centre or "bolster" arts at the centre or "celebrate" arts at the centre, but to PUT the arts at the centre, an acknowledgement that we are not where we wish to be.

Underneath all of these challenges, were perhaps three larger trends that were noted in the panel book, that occasionally surfaced in questions to panelists but that for the most part were rarely the major topic of our discussions—three trends that also are at the center of much of the arts community discussion in the United States:

1. First of all - our overwhelmingly homogeneous composition. Howard's own generous description notwithstanding, we are almost monolithically white. That said, I must say it was fascinating to me that in this almost entirely white group,

- we were addressed by two Ministers of Culture, both of whom were people of colour.
2. A second level, that in conversations, I heard a lot of concern about - our average age. I know I often think of myself as middle-aged (even though when I do my math I do not expect to live to be 110). But I heard a real sense of emerging concern about where a new generation of leaders will come from—a generation not only skilled and interested (and masochistic enough to assume the duties that we wish to have them assume)—and concern about the implications for our organizations. Will they be flexible and permeable enough to absorb the new energies and perspectives of the future? Are we ready to offer young leaders a more active role than that of custodians for what we have built?
  3. And I feel real concern with the numbers I saw in the panel book section on Canadian audience statistics, noting a striking stagnation and/or loss of audiences, (depending on whether you are museums or performing arts), over the last ten years. This dwindling audience was the focus of much discussion in our last panel, where we noted the emergence of an audience that is less well understood, more mercurial, less loyal if subscriptions are taken as any indicator - and we shared our real uncertainty in how to reach the increasingly fractured audience, dividing into niche upon niche upon niche, upon niche.

Of all the sessions, the two that were most provocative were yesterday's Debate and this last session about reaching audiences. Because of our theme is around advocacy, and because our time together is somewhat limited, I have actually chosen to focus more of

my attention on that first panel, the Debate – “Should government fund the arts?”- even while the panel on audiences is closer to my own concerns.

The debate about the appropriateness of government funding is one I heard many times in my NEA years and that I find increasingly dispiriting. Our struggle in the United States in this debate has been both technical and philosophical, and I was fascinated to recognize comparable struggles here yesterday.

Three technical challenges stood out to me:

First, our collective inability to establish a dominant frame of debate. Framing is an idea espoused by George Lakoff in his book “Don’t Think about the Elephant,” a book that garnered significant attention in the United States around the time of the 2004 Presidential election. A “frame” is consciously chosen locution that defines debate. It is rich, specific, strategic articulation of word choice that is not value neutral. By establishing the frame, the lens through which the topic is discussed, it determines every subsequent discussion that follows in its wake. Think, for example, of how NAPSTER framed its debate by “File Sharing” and how different the debate would have been if it had defined as “plagiarism” or “theft”. The radical right in the United States has framed issues for gay and lesbian couples as “gay marriage” and “special rights for gay people.” Think about how different that debate would be if the frame were “Domestic Fairness” or “Equal Rights for Same Sex Partners.” And most critically in the United States, on 9/12, when we woke up to hear about the “war on terror”, how different would our national

reaction have been if we woken up to hear about the newly launched “war on global inequity” or “the wake up call for renewable energy”? The frame determines the subsequent debate.

In yesterday’s discussion, I was struck by the speed in which the anti-government spokesman defined the frame of “coercion”—the frame that the government funding of the arts is a coercive activity, stealing money from taxpayers, many of whom choose not to patronize the arts experience. This frame is far from value neutral and links the arts community and coercion. Yet clearly this frame is doubly suspect. Virtually all government funding works in this way, determining use of government funds without exempting those who do not agree or benefit directly. Vegans, for example, do not decry the subsidy to beef and cattle farmers. Montreal drivers who never drive in Vancouver do not decry the tax money spent on those highways. And for those of us who are childless, we do not complain that we do not have children to benefit from education subsidy. No taxpayer, in fact, benefits from all of the various ways in which his or her tax dollars are used, and the “utilitarian” argument offered yesterday simply, flies in the face of all government practice. The frame we should have established—in the face of the coercive frame—the same frame we accept in every other level of government practice: subsidy as the culmination of collective judgement for the common good—a very different frame than that of the coercive artist. And if we frame the question around arts subsidy springing from our collective judgement about what contributes to the common good, then the very debate itself has to shift as well.

Secondly, in that debate, I was struck by the fact that we accepted his depiction of our convictions as existing outside of the mainstream. In the United States ( maybe you have these numbers for Canada), belief of the value of the arts is far from being a minority opinion: polls show us that 89% of Americans want the arts in their lives and that in ten cities where we did audience research 65% of adults attend at least one non-profit professional performing arts event every year—powerful numbers that build a far more powerful case for government subsidy than many causes that receive far greater funding can muster.

Thirdly, we allowed him to use a specific portion of arts subsidy to define the issue entirely. In virtually every example cited by Andrew – and boy, is he charming, boy was he good! he is GOOD! – in virtually every example, historically warped, misinterpreted and anachronistic as they all were---in these distorted example he used, he focused exclusively on the the creation of new work by contemporary artists. And he leapt from those examples to the conclusion that government subsidy as a whole should be abolished. Indeed we bought those examples and fought the argument on that ground. But while creation of new work is a critical portion of any government’s portfolio, it is just one piece of what most government subsidies do. In the face of his arguments and the confusion of our own passions, in the throes of our arts-community love of inclusivity, we did not recognize the laurels of victory when they were handed to us on the proverbial silver platter. If you were paying attention, he said, “I don’t have a problem with government funding the National Gallery”—an admission that he does not opposed government subsidies for preservation. He said, “I don’t have a problem with

sending school kids to museums or arts center,” an admission that he accepts the importance of government subsidy around access. We should have at that moment declared that we had won the debate. By his own admission, he believes in government subsidy for the arts: he disagrees with a specific subset of that subsidy, and that’s a very different debate than the one we had on the table. Had we truly seized that opening, we should have had a unanimous vote for the defeat of his resolution with he himself voting against his idea, because even by his own words, he IS a proponent of government subsidy for the arts.

Such moments of debating technique aside, the most dispiriting thing about all arts debates, of which this was one, is our collective difficulty, even when we are invited to do so, to do more than assert a case for the arts but to quantify and prove a case for the arts. Andrew explicitly extended that challenge to us time and time again. Don’t assert it: prove it, prove it, prove it. And we were never able to do so.

In the United States, we have data that can be used to bolster our advocacy case, which historically has centered on three basic planes, which I’m sure many of you know.

1. The first of those is the economic, which is the one I heard you cited most frequently here. In the United States, we know, largely thanks to Americans for the Arts, represented at this meeting by Gary [Steuer], that every dollar spent on an arts ticket typically leverages an additional \$3-5 or \$5-7 for the local economy. Dollars spent on parking, dollars spent on restaurants, dollars spent at the local printer who prints the

programs, the local piano tuner who tunes the instruments, the local fabric store where we buy the fabric for the costumes to be made, in, as noted in a recent New York study, the million dollars was generated by the New York theatre community in baby-sitting fees.

2. Our second argument is educational. The great study for me is that by Shirley Brice Heath of Stanford University, a demographer who in 1998 was asked to study the impact of after-school activities on children. Not an arts researcher by trade, she looked at all forms of after-school activity at an inner city East Palo Alto, California group of schools—schools in high crime, low income, high risk areas. She looked at girl scouts, she looked at sports teams, she looked at after-school arts programs and more. After several years of study, she concluded it's the arts kids who blow everyone else out of the water. It's the arts kids who become four times more likely to run for class office. It's the arts kids who become eight times more likely to participate in maths and science fairs, the arts kids who score 120 points higher on their college entrance exams. It's the arts kids whose disciplinary infractions plummet to near-zero. It's the arts kids who are exponentially more likely to graduate from high school than their non-arts colleagues. Findings that have been reinforced time after time after time: by MIT studies that show that kids who study Shakespeare have greater verbal acuity, greater tolerance of ambiguity, greater self-esteem, etc., and more studies that emerge with every passing year.

3. And third, social interaction. My own favourite, as a former theatre professional, is a study out of UCLA that shows that a high school kid who has been in a play is 42% less likely to tolerate racist behaviour than a kid who has never been in a play.

These are statistics we all must know—and not being Canadian, I had to wonder, “Have these studies not been done here?”—which implies one course of action for the future—or “Have they been done, but we simply don’t know them”—which implied different actions for us all. Armed with quantifiable evidence, we should be able to stand as advocates in front of any group and say if you CARE about the economic vitality of your community, you MUST CARE about the arts. If you CARE about the educational achievement of your children, you MUST CARE about the arts. If you CARE about an inclusive, tolerant, embracing, diverse society, you MUST CARE about the arts.

And with the passage of time we are seeing the resonance of each of those arguments gather further steam. Arts are increasingly important to business and commerce. Daniel Pink in “A Whole New Mind” already talks about the arts advantage as being the salient characteristic of thriving corporations quoting Chris Bangles of BMW, who says basically, “We don’t make cars, we make moving works of art which express a driver’s love of beauty.” And at Target Stores we always knew that WalMart (that evil empire) had the price advantage: WalMart, always the low price, always owns price-point. Target, however, had Michael Graves’s teapots, we had Issac Mizrahi designer clothes, trend forward fashion, better advertising, better copy-writing, better actors, and more. We had the arts advantage, and even though there is no Target Store in New York City,

Target is at the heart of New York consumer consciousness in a way WalMart is not—the result not of price but of the arts. And in that business context, the importance of the arts is going to increase.

In terms of education, the value of the arts is going to increase. In the United States we are deeply, deeply concerned about the quality of our public schools, a concern that perhaps does not have an equivalent sense of desperation here in Canada. As an expert in international education, Robinson offers a fantastic insight into the nature of the problem. In every public school system, there is a hierarchy, math and science at the top, humanities in the middle, arts and creativity at the bottom. That hierarchy is a conscious structure, the result of the rise of public education being created to address and solve the problems of the industrial age. Now that we live in a post-industrial economy, the very structure of education is out of sync with the world in which we live: if we are to thrive in a post-industrial world, that hierarchy must be inverted with the cultivation of creativity as our top priority. And while I would never claim that the arts own creativity exclusively, in that domain, we have much to contribute.

And when it comes to social interaction, we need the arts more than ever. I live 20 miles outside of New York City and every day I take the train and the subways to get to work. When non-New Yorkers ask me, what's the biggest difference between life in New York now versus life in New York before 9/11, I hear that difference every day. I can't stand on the subway platform, I can't stand on the train platform, I can't stand at an airport without every few minutes hearing the announcement over and over and over, "Ladies

and gentlemen, please report any suspicious behaviour or any suspicious packages to the authorities nearest you.” In ways overt and profound, we are increasingly being encouraged to view our fellow human beings with hostility and suspicion and fear, to recoil from people not like us. Whatever else we in the arts do, we bring people together and invite them to view their fellow human beings with generosity and curiosity. If we are to survive as a human race, boy do we need that capacity now.

Ultimately, advocacy is two pronged. Advocacy is supported by deep data that quantifies our arguments and is complemented by rich anecdotes that put a human face on what numbers alone cannot say. In our US national political conventions, every year without fail a politician who wishes to make a point says, 83% of welfare mothers do a, b, c and d. “And here standing in the gallery is Mary Smith, a welfare mother from Detroit, Michigan, who blah, blah, blah.” Data plus human face is a persuasive argument.

There are many arguments from which we could build a platform. And we better have all the arguments at our fingers’ ends. Because the cardinal rule of advocacy – this was the single best advice anyone gave me - “advocacy has nothing to do with how right or wrong you are, with the justice of your cause, or the nobility of your ambition. Advocacy has only to do with your ability to speak to where your audience is listening from.”

When it’s that Chamber of Commerce you’re addressing, you’d better have those economic facts ready, when it’s the school board you are speaking to, you’d better know that impact on students, and when it’s the community centre, you’d better know those issues around race relations. We have to have all of those in our arsenal, and more, to be

able to speak to where our audience is listening from, speaking across disciplines with the same data and the same arguments and the same voice as we go forward.

Now, ultimately, everything I have noted are extrinsic arguments—they accrue to a community as a result of our work. And part of that reason I hear often hear fatigue in advocacy meetings, part of the motivation behind the comparison of the orange and the watermelon is because, frankly, for those of us who have made our lives in the arts, these arguments feel inauthentic, they feel inorganic. Let's face it, they're not really in general why any of us do what we do. Nor is it why audiences come. No one sits at home and says, "Gee, honey, if we go to the theatre tonight, it will leverage \$5-7 additional dollars for the local economy and our children will score 120 points higher on their S.A.T.s. than if we stay home." We go for the transformative moment. The moment of artistic expression. The moment of emotional transport. And indeed the newest advent of research in the United States is mapping the intrinsic value of the arts as well as the extrinsic. "Gifts of the Muse" from the Wallace Foundation is the first in a wave of research measuring the value of the arts in terms like "captivation", "pleasure", "extended empathy", all of which then possibly spill over into beneficial social bonds.

In 1963, McNeil Lowery, who was the head of the arts division at the Ford Foundation, which began the great philanthropic arts movement in the United States, was challenged to explain why funding the arts was important, he said, "I will give you ten reasons."

And here are his ten reasons:

- They are important, he said, because of their importance to the image of American society abroad.
- They are important because they are a means of communication and consequently of understanding between this country and others.
- They are important because they are an expression of national purpose.
- They are important because they are an important influence in the liberal education of the individual.
- They are important because they are the key to an American's understanding of himself, his times and his destiny.
- They are important because they are a purposeful occupation for youth.
- In their institutional form, they are vital to the social, moral and educational resources of an American community.
- They are good for business, especially in new centres of population.
- They are components for strengthening the moral and spiritual bastions in a people whose national security is threatened.
- They are the offset to the materialism of a new and generally affluent society.

Ten fantastic reasons that could have been written last week. Ten reasons that give you much to choose from in building your advocacy case, noting only that whichever of those you choose, you need to find evidence to prove your case- as any good demographer will tell you, if you can describe it, you can measure it. To those of you who said in an earlier panel that measurement of the arts is killing us, I would disagree and say “No, on the contrary, inappropriate measurement of the arts is killing us.” It's time for us to

define and seize the appropriate measurement, to measure our impact, to quantify our behaviour and to march forward effectively under a new banner.

Coming into the home stretch, what I hope to do in my closing minutes is to provoke maybe a different set of reflections - to ask whether as we move forward and as we think about coming together again, we can be more aggressive, more imaginative in re-articulating the frame of reference by which we hope to understand ourselves. In these moments, I draw inspiration from you great compatriot, Wayne Gretzky, whose quote I have on my wall at my office. When asked why he is such a great hockey player, he said, "I skate to where the puck will be."

In our discussions over the last 48 hours, have we been trying to skate to where the puck is today - a journey that we may take only to find the puck has moved? Indeed, how do we begin to skate towards where the puck will be?

At the outset Marc Scorca said we need to understand more about the contemporary culture, about education, about Madonna. I would like to enlarge that frame: I contend that what we have to understand is MUCH bigger—the emergence and impact of technology itself on the arts.

During the 1990's, those of us in the United States tended to regard technology as an instrument of dissemination. How are will email help us "get the word out?" How will we sell tickets on-line? How will we capture what we do on our websites... etc.? But

increasingly, we are aware that the impact of technology is far more profound.

Technology is changing the art form, yes, in part, by giving us new opportunities in design or in lighting or in sets, by enhancing our technical abilities and more. But it is also changing the art form in more indirect ways. In the United States, we now talk about audiences who increasingly insist on shorter, more intense experiences – a direct reflection of an shorter attention-span shaped by technology. A two hour play without intermission? Oh, my God—endless for today’s audiences. 90 minutes and no intermission? Better, but can we be done in 75 and then go home? The arts are responding in new ways, whether you think that is good or bad: even the Metropolitan Opera has a new reduced version of *The Magic Flute* that takes the 2.5 – 3 hour version and presents it in a more compatible 80-minute or so version, a reflection of a change that’s afoot.

Technology is creating new expectations of customization: thanks to the web, we believe we can get whatever we want, whenever we want it and customized to fit our personal needs. We can shop at 8 at night, 3 in the morning - even more, we can get our culture on demand through You Tube and iTunes any time we want it- expectations of customization and personalization that performing arts organizations, at least, cannot meet. And what will it mean in the future when we someone to pay \$100 for a theatre ticket when that customer has become accustomed to downloading free entertainment on the internet any day of the week and/or paying a mere 99 cents a song?

And yet the challenges transcend the arts themselves: technology is weakening larger social bonds. Ellen Ullmann, a wonderful thinker whose “Museum of Me” article led us to invite her to a theatre conference several years ago, told that audience you may love selling tickets on line, it’s certainly a convenience a lot of us make use of, but there is great social value in standing in a ticket line beside someone not like you for 15 minutes—indeed that societies are strengthened through such causal “social abrasions,” casual encounters that make us rub up against others and that lie at the heart of a coherent social fabric. With the increasing convenience of the web comes the increased loss of these abrasions, - and that more and more we need to be aware of how our larger social fabric may be unraveling.

Such unraveling is compounded by the ability of the web to “silo” us: no matter how paranoid your fantasy, there is a website out there to confirm your point of view. Increasingly in the theatre world we see growing audience resistance to encountering any idea not instantly recognizable as one’s own, an increasing polarization in our country, for instance, that has led to audiences at some theatres walking out when they hear the President criticized, for example. When I listened to our discussion here at the conference juxtaposing popularity versus art—a division I see less in number (if I’m investing in an imaginative idea, I want nothing less than a packed house to experience the work) than in intention - popularity meaning art that only confirms what we knew to be true before we walked in the door versus art, pieces that expand our view of the possibilities of our imagination. Is our increasing resistance to ideas not our own causing

a resistance to new ideas or increasing the demand for confirmation, for reassurance, for the “popular”?

Looming in the background is the possibilities of technology in dismantling the notion of the professional artist. In **The Long Tail**, author Chris Anderson two major shifts in artistic production. With the advent of new technology, the means of production has been democratized: in 1935 if you wanted to make a movie you had to work for Warner Brothers because who could afford a movie camera? Now few of us don't know a 12-14 year-olds who is making movies on his or her own, using cell phone, computer or video cam technology. At the same time, the means of distribution has been democratized: you don't need MGM to release a movie, you can release it world-wide overnight on the web. With these shifts we are seeing the emergence of a class of amateurs doing work at a professional level. The question will be asked—indeed it was asked in so many words by yesterday's debater who assured us that arts would flourish everywhere even if arts subsidy stopped-- “Why must we support the professional artist if making work on a professional level is so occurring so widely among an amateur class?”

If we don't have a defense for professional artistry, we are likely to suffer the outcome of that argument.

I recently heard futurist Andrew Zollie talk about the transformations of retail over time. In large part, he traced the shifts through a look at the coffee industry, a trajectory that I think was first described in a book called **The Experience Economy**, When the coffee

market first started, power lay in the hands of the farmer: if you grew the coffee bean, you were the dominant force. This was a commodity market. But then the economy changed and we went from being a commodity market to being a product market. And the power shifted away from the farmer to Maxwell House and their colleagues, those who processed and ground the coffee that you could buy and bring home, etc., etc. Then we shifted again, from product to service. The big player in coffee was no longer Maxwell House but was Dunkin' Donuts where you could buy a cup of coffee already made for you for 25 cents or 50 cents. And then the economy shifted yet again, and we went to the “experience” economy and we all know that in coffee the power shifted from Dunkin' Donuts to Starbucks, where we are willing to part with \$1.75 for a miniscule cup that somehow we've been convinced is a “tall”—how did they do that?—as part of a larger Starbucks experience: indeed Starbucks, as you may know, has a position called the CEO, which stands for the chief entertainment officer. In the arts community in the United States, we are often only beginning to appreciate that we are service industry groups in a time of experience economies.

But Andrew warned us that the economy has shifted yet again. We are leaving the experience economy behind and moving into a community economy—an economy where value will no longer be consumed but where value will be co-created. That's a powerful, powerful shift.

Andrew's example of the mp3 industry was especially illuminating. Anyone know how many of these different MP3 players are on the market roughly? Roughly? A couple of

hundred? 11,292—a figure that makes most people gasp. For most of us, if I say MP3, you have one thought: I-Pod. I-Pod. Not because it's the cheapest. It's not. Not because it has the biggest memory space. It doesn't. Not because it's the easiest to download. It's not. Not because it has the longest battery power. It doesn't. Not because it has the best sound reproduction. It doesn't. I-Pod seized the market because they alone emphasized I-Pod as part of an exchange - of creating an experience. You didn't buy an I-Pod merely to download, you built an I-Pod to create playlists of your favorites, to download Podcast, to enter a world where you the consumer are the creator as well, potentially. And through that emphasis, I-Pod cornered the market.

Television today is witnessing a major loss of audience to You Tube, a website where the consumer provides the experience. The power of the restaurant critic has been decimated by Zagat where the collective consumer passes judgment and defines a restaurant value. And in a series of national dance conversations we just held in the United States, I was fascinated by the universal awareness that there is a moment for dance right now. "Dancing with the Stars" is No. 1, "So You Think You Can Dance" is top 10. Dance is in the public consciousness right now—even though we as performing arts organizations have no idea of how to capitalize on this interest or what to do about it. These shows and American/ Canadian Idol are predicated on the active involvement the consumer, far more than a passive observer. And in that regard, the future challenge that we need to consider is this: How can we see our work less as a product to be consumed and more as a springboard to our audience's own creativity?

That's a huge shift and a shift that increasingly in the future invites us to reframe our world – one in which we no longer have audiences, we have participants. Where we may not need arts education programs but arts engagement programs. There are questions that invite us to consider, what will be best for the art form—what is best for dance, for example, and not just for the dance company-- and to have the courage to leave behind the structures and programs with which we have grown comfortable with if what is great for the arts organization is not what is great for the arts form.

Earlier, we heard about the Boston Opera Company drawing several hundred thousand people to the Boston Common for a free performance of **Carmen**. Certainly, it was not particularly beneficial to the Company, as we heard—no positive bump in audience numbers (although why we expect people who love to picnic on the grass under open skies with a bottle of wine nearby as they lounge in blue jeans to instantly transfer to a suit and tie, rigid seat, high ticket experience is another topic entirely). But it may have been great for operas. It would not surprise me that of those 200,000 people, thousands of copies of **Carmen** recordings were sold, that people actually began to sample other operas, that those engaged by free events were more favorably disposed to art initiatives and arts subsidy, that it was ultimately great for opera and great for the arts.

Are we focussed on what is great for the art form, even if it's not great for our arts organization?

These discussions are scary and, if embraced, threaten to change virtually everything we may now know to be true about our organizations. This is hard, hard, hard work, a struggle, frustrating, fraught with uncertainty. But, I have to say, especially today, the work of the arts is of the utmost critical importance. Through the arts, we are engaged in a struggle for our national character, for the emerging sensibility of the young, especially the young, who prioritize the “bombardment” of sensation through violent film and video over the contemplation and deep understand of experience, especially in a popular cultural context that often seems to value humiliation over humanity. We are being asked to reassert what it means to be humane and unlike the questioner who asked to abstain in voting after yesterday’s debate, this is a struggle in which we do not get to abstain, unless we want to recognize that abstention is tantamount to surrender.

In that regard, let me just leave you with an image that I hope will be useful to you as you move forward. A Harris poll conducted in the United States more than a decade ago asked respondents, “If your house is on fire, what’s the first thing you’ll grab when you run out the door?” The overwhelming answer: “family photographs”.

And I say to you, the arts ARE our family photographs.

As a man whose ancestors came from England, Ireland, Scotland and Germany, the plays of Beckett, the plays of Shakespeare, the plays of Goethe, these are my family photographs. As a man born and raised in the southern part of the United States, the plays of Tennessee Williams, the stories of Carson McCullough, the novels of William

Faulkner are my family photographs. As a man in contemporary New York, the plays of David Mamet, the plays of David Rabe, are my family photographs. As a gay man, the dances of Bill T. Jones, the plays of Tony Kushner are my family photographs. But as an American, an American, the novels of Toni Morrison, the poetry of Maya Angelou, the songs of my native American brothers and sisters, the poetry of my Asian aunts and uncles, these are our family photographs. And if we do our job right, they will live and breathe as testaments to who we were, what we thought, what we felt, - just as we turn to the plays of Aeschylus, Socrates and Euripides as the living photos of ancient Greece - not to some record of wars worn or lost.

Ultimately, as our ballet dancer first noted, we did not choose this, this chose us. But when we choose to answer that call, what we really do is, we honour the past, we commemorate the present, we shape and we change the future in a way that does honour to all and violence to none. I don't care how much opponents may try to shame us from that path. For those of us who are spiritually inclined, it is God's work.

In that light, I would like to thank you for your part in doing God's work for this great nation of Canada, regardless of where you come from and the communities you serve, I would to assure you that our hands are outstretched from south of the border if we can ever be of service to you in any way, at any time. And I'd like to thank you for your kindness and patience in listening to me this afternoon. God speed you in your work.

