

Exploring the Metropolis, Inc.

Workspace Solutions for NYC's Performing Arts Communities

2010

Annual Report

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Exploring the Metropolis is THE resource on rehearsal and performance space issues and solutions for New York's performing arts communities. When we began in 1982, we envisioned a neutral, non-membership organization to focus on the impact of real estate on the performing arts in New York City. With the passage of time our work has focused on infrastructure – rehearsal and performance space – needs of the performing arts. Our studies, our free NYC Performing Arts Spaces database website program, and our ongoing musicians' residency program serve that goal.

Transitions Complete

On September 1, 2010, we completed our 2007 strategic plan with the transfer of the DBA and ownership of NYC Performing Arts Spaces to Fractured Atlas, a technology-based national arts service organization. Fractured Atlas is taking our initial vision and prototype and expanding it to other cities.

Administrative Continuity

We continue as a small organization: Eugenie C. Cowan, founder, is Director; David H. Johnston leads more assignments and is Associate Director. One continuing member of our team is Brian Wu of Inside Out Design, a strategic thinker who is responsible for our web and graphic design work. We engage other consultants as needed.

Resuming our identity as Exploring the Metropolis meant the creation and launch in November of a new website at exploringthemetropolis.org. It includes a history of our studies and other work since 1982. The blog focuses on our activities with the Con Edison Musicians' Residency: Composition Program and with topics of interest for the field. Our semi-monthly e-blasts announce our and others' opportunities for the performing arts field. The blog, social media and our newly revamped e-blasts reach hundreds in government and the performing arts community.

Programs: Studies and Our On-Going Residency Program

Performing artists, cultural facilities that provide rehearsal and performance space, government legislators and administrators and foundations increasingly rely on our knowledge of the field. Some seek advice, such as the Downtown

Alliance, on expanding a performing arts presence; Opera America, on assessing plans for its new facility; and the New York Chinese Cultural Center, on finding ways to make better use of its studio spaces.

“[We Make Do, More Time is Better, But Budget is King](#)” was a study commissioned by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to assess the need for a dedicated dance facility for mid-career single-choreographer-led companies in New York. We based our research on surveys, focus groups and studies of capital projects.

Instead of a new or renovated facility, we proposed ways to increase affordability and occupancy rates in existing facilities and to provide operating support for them and for artists. We presented these findings to New York Grantmakers in the Arts in November. Follow-up collaborations led by Mellon will focus on the dance rehearsal space subsidy program of the Dance Program of the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), the most important dance community-wide support. Collaborators will include NYSCA, the City’s Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), other foundations, and our organization to ensure that the subsidy program continues.

Our [Con Edison Musicians’ Residency Program: Composition](#) completed its second year, with our Musicians’ Advisory Group helping to define need and refine guidelines. A panel of jurors chose six New York composers who each had three months of free, consistent workspace in cultural facilities. Host facilities were Flushing Town Hall again, Turtle Bay Music School, and the Florence E. Smith Community Center in Corona, Queens. The Florence E. Smith Community Center was suggested through collaboration with the City’s Department for the Aging (DFTA).

The facilities also offered free public programs: In November Evan Mazunik presented a lecture/demonstration at the Corona facility. In December an excerpt from Judith Sainte Croix’s new opera involved choral students from host facility Turtle Bay Music School. Hundreds of community residents have participated in or attended these free programs.

The composers chosen in 2010 will also perform in a Manhattan senior center in Spanish Harlem and in two Queens Public Library branches in 2011. These partnerships with DFTA and QPL were initiated by DCA in 2009.