



Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Approves \$1.5 Million to Launch the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts

New York City, October 9, 2008—EmcArts is pleased to announce the Fall 2008 launch of the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts, designed and managed by EmcArts with a generous \$1.5-million supporting grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF). The Innovation Lab program is designed to help producing and presenting organizations in theatre, dance, and jazz design and prototype innovations that address major challenges.

An expansion of EmcArts' successful pilot Lab for American orchestras (funded by a grant of \$910,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation), the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts was created specifically to address the new, urgent priorities that have arisen in conjunction with major shifts in the operating and funding environment for the arts, challenges that cannot be resolved by business-as-usual practices, no matter how well-executed.

Ben Cameron, Program Director for the Arts at DDCF, says: "The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is delighted to support the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts. Given the enormous challenges generated by changes in technology, demographics, audience behavior, generational leadership, and now by the national economy, performing arts organizations must explore new ways of operating for the future. The strategies nurtured by the Lab will benefit not only the Lab participants, but entire performing arts fields as new practices are developed and shared. Through its strategic emphasis on innovation, its high-quality technical assistance, and its deliberate trajectory from planning to ownership to implementation, the Lab promises to have significant impact for the arts."

In this emergent, ever-shifting landscape, the capacity of American arts institutions to innovate, now and for the foreseeable future, is a leading indicator of sustained marketplace success and viability. However, most arts institutions struggle with implementing truly new ideas and are unable to fully harness the power of innovation across their organizations. To give clarity to its approach to innovation work, EmcArts has used its research to arrive at the following definition of organizational innovation:

innovation new pathways to mission fulfillment that are discontinuous from previous practice and result from shifts in underlying organizational assumptions

The Innovation Lab is designed to serve as a catalyst for the journey to these new pathways: to help organizations challenge core operating assumptions, engage in intense planning on a practical innovation project, create a sense of organization-wide investment in change, and test innovative strategies with grants that help organizations prototype new practices.

EmcArts President Richard Evans comments, "Organizational innovation – a true departure from the familiar – is a big leap for most arts organizations, whose resources are stretched at all times. The Lab bridges that gap by providing a strong framework within which new strategies can be explored and prototyped in relatively low-stakes environments before a full launch. One feature of the program is that this framework is flexible. We are pleased to partner with DDCF to customize the Lab from an

orchestra-gear ed pilot program to one aligned with DDCF’s programs. Likewise, it can be tailored to other disciplines and local circumstances. We hope that other foundations nationwide will find the Lab program of benefit to their communities, now that innovation in the arts is so crucial to organizational sustainability.”

The Lab has three phases: **Phase 1**—an Innovation Team (of up to 10 people) at each participating organization defines project goals and success measures, and conducts pertinent research; **Phase 2**—Innovation Teams from the four organizations in each Lab cohort attend an Intensive retreat that serves as a project “accelerator”; and **Phase 3**—Lab participants use \$25,000 of seed grant money to prototype and evaluate their innovative strategy before the final roll-out. Ultimately, the Lab gives arts organizations the time and space they need away from the regular workplace to plan, engage, participate, and learn how to innovate effectively, supported by EmcArts facilitation, technical expertise, and financial support.

In its pilot form, Lab participants frequently described their experience as “transformative”:

The Lab was instrumental in helping us chart a strategic course for our work. The opportunity to break away from the day-to-day pressures to build and articulate a common vision, and plan, was critical.... The insightful and professional guidance we received from everyone involved with the Lab helped to facilitate powerful discussions and consensus building among our various constituency groups, which included staff, Board members, and musicians. It was an incredible experience for our team and has resulted in several key electronic media initiatives.

– Philadelphia Orchestra Vice President of Marketing and Public Relations J. Edward Cambron

The Innovation Lab was the catalyst that made our breakthrough musician-developed *Leading from Every Chair*® program, a collaboration with FedEx, successful.

– Memphis Symphony Orchestra President & CEO Ryan Fleur

The partnership with DDCF provides funding for three Lab Cohorts, each comprised of four participating organizations. The first Round of 2008–2009 applications will be solicited from the roughly 70 organizations that had advanced to the pre-proposal stage of the Nonprofit Finance Fund’s *Leading for the Future: Innovative Support for Artistic Excellence* initiative, also supported by DDCF. Two additional application Rounds will be held in 2009; each of these Rounds will be open to all professionally managed producing and presenting organizations in theatre, dance, and jazz nationally.



EmcArts Inc. is a New York-based nonprofit service organization for learning and innovation in the arts. To learn more about the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts or EmcArts’ other innovation services, please visit <www.EmcArts.org> or contact **Melissa Dibble, Director of Client Partnerships, at <MDibble@EmcArts.org> or (212) 362-8541, ext. 24.**

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation’s mission is to improve the quality of people’s lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and the prevention of child maltreatment, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke’s properties.