



Statement on the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts Round 3 Grantees Announced

New York City, June 17, 2009—Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, COCA—Center of Creative Arts, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, and University Musical Society (UMS) have been selected to participate in the third round of the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts, a program open to producing and presenting organizations in theatre, dance, and jazz that supports the design and prototyping of innovations that address major challenges. Designed and managed by EmcArts with a generous \$1.5-million grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF), the Innovation Lab was created 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. The partnership with DDCF has provided funding for three Lab Cohorts, each comprised of four participating organizations. Grantees from the previous rounds were **The Civilians, MAPP International Productions, Roadside Theatre/Appalshop, STREB, Children’s Theatre Company, HERE Arts Center, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.**

Cohort 3 Innovation Lab Grantees—Project Descriptions

The projects proposed by Cohort 3 Lab grantees focus on organizational management, infrastructure, and program and audience expansion activities, specifically those geared toward weathering the volatile economic environment, as well as on strengthening long-term organizational stability and marketplace viability:

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company will serve as the lead participant in a Lab project with **Dance Theater Workshop (DTW)** to explore the feasibility of an innovative strategic partnership in which they would share DTW’s Chelsea facilities. The Lab will enable the two groups to explore the institutional changes needed for the partnership to succeed and to investigate innovative partnership models that will reinvigorate and benefit both organizations, including shared artistic and operational resources. Since 1982, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company has been shaping the evolution of contemporary dance through the creation and performance of over 140 works. Recognized as one of the most innovative and powerful forces in modern dance today, it has performed its ever-enlarging repertoire in over 200 cities in 30 countries. DTW, one of America’s preeminent performing arts institutions, was created as an artist collective in 1965. Since that time, DTW has become a world renowned center for contemporary dance, housing a 185-seat theater, two rehearsal studios, and administrative offices.

COCA—Center of Creative Arts, the largest multidisciplinary community arts center in the St. Louis region, will use the Lab to test and develop a new line of programming, *Creativity in Business*. The program is designed to give participants the tools they need to apply creativity and innovation to produce positive bottom-line results in commercial businesses. Through the program, which grew out of a recent speaker series of the same name, COCA hopes to achieve the following aims: to broaden COCA’s core audiences, provide an innovative, new revenue stream, bridge the gap between the artistic and corporate communities, and challenge and broaden the definitions of creativity and art. Possible program components may include speakers, symposia, seminars and classes, social networks, web platforms, awards, and creative mentoring.

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, one of the largest contemporary dance companies in the U.S. and one of the few international companies based out of Maryland, is known for its commitment to innovation in modern dance,



through the integration of other disciplines and the challenging of traditional dance concepts of space and place. Founded in 1976, the company has flourished under the singular vision and stable leadership of its founding choreographer. Since 2002, the company has been in the process of a gradual leadership transition plan and, as Liz Lerman decreases her involvement in daily operations, is now at a critical juncture. The Lab will be used to enable the company to navigate the most significant challenge in its history – the transition to new leadership. Rather than replacing Liz Lerman with a single artistic director – a model that does not support long-term sustainability – the company will use the Lab to explore a structure of multiple dance laboratories supported by multiple artist leaders and to re-configure itself as a viable artistic entity in a diverse, competitive marketplace.

University Musical Society (UMS), a multidisciplinary performing arts presenter serving Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the surrounding region, offers over 70 performances and 100 free educational activities each season. UMS is also unique among university-based presenters because it is affiliated with the University of Michigan and located on the U–M campus, but functions as an artistically and financially independent organization. With the closing of *The Ann Arbor News*, the local daily paper, in July 2009, UMS will be losing a major vehicle for promotion and communication and finds its business model at risk. The Lab proposal grew out of UMS’s need to make a paradigm shift in its approach to all external communications and marketing. The Lab project will be used to develop a new social media strategy, to examine organizational roles and practices in order to integrate new media strategies, to expand the company’s internal methods of information gathering and communications, and to engage new audiences.

About the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts

Most arts institutions operate using constantly stretched resources and consequently struggle to implement truly new ideas. At the same time, however, the capacity of American arts organizations **to innovate – to find new pathways to mission fulfillment that are discontinuous from previous practice and that result from shifts in underlying organizational assumptions** – is and will be a leading indicator of sustained marketplace success and viability. The Innovation Lab was designed to serve as a catalyst for the journey to these new pathways: to help arts 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.

Ultimately, the three-phase Innovation Lab provides a strong framework within which new strategies can be explored and prototyped in relatively low-stakes environments before a full launch. Within each Cohort, the four participating Lab organizations have each identified a cross-constituent Innovation Team to plan, experiment, and implement their innovation within a year’s time. As part of the Innovation Lab, these four teams then participate in a five-day Intensive retreat designed to accelerate their projects. Lab participants receive ongoing facilitation support throughout the program and use \$25,000 of seed grant money to prototype and evaluate their innovative strategy before the final roll-out.



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.

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