

## Museum and Cultural Advisory Board - Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting at the Mesa Arts Center, One East Main Street, third floor, south Studios conference room, on March 24, 2011

### Members Present:

Douglas Brimhall  
Joe Cooper  
Vincent DiBella  
Merlin Ellis  
Dr. Robbi D. Venditti  
Lars Nielson, Jr. (via phone for approval of minutes)

### Members Absent:

Dr. D. Kent Layton  
Keiko Dilbeck  
Rebecca Nolan  
Pamela Williams

### Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein  
Dr. Tom Wilson  
Sunnee O'Rork  
Jean Kaminski

### Guests Present:

Dott McDaniel  
Dr. Debra Jo Davey

**Public Comments:** There were no citizens present outside of the guest speakers.

### Hear Presentation – Update on Mesa Encore Theatre as They Approach 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2012 – Debra Jo Davey, Artistic Director

Chair, Douglas Brimhall, was detained; therefore, Mesa Encore Theatre went ahead with their presentation at 4:08 p.m.

Dott McDaniel, President, and Dr. Debra Jo Davey, Artistic Director, spoke about their organization, Mesa Encore Theatre, which is celebrating their 75<sup>th</sup> year. Mesa Encore Theatre, which began in 1937, is the longest continuously operating community theater in Arizona. Ms. McDaniel presented the following information: **What They Do:** enrich community, expand imagination, build skills and confidence, and entertain brilliantly; **Why They Do It** – tell a human story, foster understanding, and for the joy of performance; and **How They Do It** – collaboration and creativity, bring actors and audiences together, and keep live theater accessible. She also stated that they **began** as an outreach of Mesa Parks and Recreation and trucked their shows to school stages; **presently**, they are one of the Founding Resident Companies of Mesa Arts Center and have been entertaining audiences for 75 years; **and in the future**, they plan to do more outreach to youth and children (including going into protected environments such as shelters), and obtain better involvement and investment from corporations, foundations, individuals, partnerships, etc. What theater does for youth is incredible, said Ms. McDaniel; it builds self-esteem, confidence, diverts from negative behavior, and opens doors.

Ms. McDaniel reported that, through research, she discovered that community and regional theaters present more productions to more audiences and do more performances than all professional theaters put together. They are truly the lifeblood of a community. She believes that every community **must** have a community theater associated with them to be vital.

Ms. McDaniel and Dr. Davey shared the upcoming season that will be released to the public soon. When "Man of La Mancha" opens in April, Mesa Encore Theatre is offering an early bird 2011-2012 special that includes a season ticket for \$99, a second season ticket for \$75, and a free ticket to the final performance of the current season, "The Music Man." Mesa Encore Theater continues to offer the least expensive live performance ticket around.

Cindy Ornstein commented that Mesa Encore Theatre's productions are phenomenal and recommended that "Man of La Mancha" would be a great opportunity to check out their work.

Merlin Ellis asked which of their shows were best suited for children. Dr. Davey replied that next season there are several shows that would be wonderful for children, as well as their final performance this season, "The Music Man."

Cindy Ornstein congratulated Ms. McDaniel and Dr. Davey on their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Ms. McDaniel stated that the organization is determined to remain vibrant. Ticket sales provide approximately 65% of their revenue, she said, and for the past several years, a Board member or two have been bridging the financial gap, but that cannot continue. They are strategically and aggressively pursuing a plan to find corporate sponsorship and individuals who are looking to support a small arts organization.

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, arrived and suggested that the Board's support of Mesa Encore Theatre be added as an agenda item in April. The Board could then discuss a way to commend the organization and possibly make a recommendation to Council to commemorate their 75 years as an arts organization in Mesa.

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes from the January 27 meeting. There being none, Dr. Robbi D. Venditti made a motion, Joe Cooper seconded, and the Board members present unanimously approved the January 27 minutes. They will be posted on the City's webpage.

### **Discussion – Consider Moving the May 26 Board Meeting to April 28 in Order to Hear a Presentation on Light Rail Station Design.**

MB Finnerty asked to make a presentation to the Board on the Light Rail station designs prior to going to Council in May. Since the Board recently voted to meet every other month, there was no meeting scheduled in April; therefore, the Board members present agreed to meet on Thursday, April 28, 4:00 – 5:30 p.m. rather than Thursday, May 26.

### **Staff Reports**

#### Arizona Museum for Youth (AMY) – Sunnee O'Rork

- The Museum opened "Fairytales" with 286 in attendance as well as "Play Ball" which had 106 in attendance on their respective opening nights.
- The Museum's marketing team is collaborating with the other Arts and Culture facilities on an on-line school tour marketing campaign.
- The Museum's public relation team brought in Amanda Zajac of the *East Valley Tribune* to streamline a video interview on the "Fairytales" exhibit for the papers website.
- Installed a 10 foot wing-span Tsuru paper crane in the lobby of the Museum. The crane was constructed by Keiko Conn and her group.
- Submitted a grant proposal to Arizona Commission on the Arts for operational support for the Gallery Educator Program.
- On February 7, several Arts and Culture staff and AMY Board members attended Arts Congress and were able to have conversations with Senators and Representatives regarding continuous support for the arts.
- Staff at AMY assisted AzMNH staff with the painting and finishing of two interactive exhibits.
- Fremont Junior High School has artwork displayed in the Museum lobby in relationship to the "Fairytales" exhibit.
- The Museum will hold their annual Champagne & Crepes fundraiser this coming Saturday, March 26.
- Met with Jeremy Babendue – Director of the Arizona Science and Technology festival; the Museum will be a hub for Science with the 0 – five year olds in conjunction with the "Wing It" exhibit.
- Ms. O'Rork attended, along with AMY Friends Board chair Corrine Brooks, a day-long session titled "Resilient Organizations: A Day with BoardSource" at Piper Trust.
- At the last meeting, Dr. Venditti asked how many of the AMY members were new this past year. Ms. O'Rork reported that of the 1,000 family members, 481 are new this year. Staff is in the process of analyzing the membership program to see what the renewal rate is and take a look at other patterns. Most often there is an uptick in membership when there is a new exhibit.

#### Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) – Dr. Tom Wilson

- Two new exhibits are up: The "Sea of Cortez" and "The Primal Desert Next Door."
- Spring break at the Museum saw \$68,000 in revenue for the month of March, which exceeds revenue in the past two years in March.
- Last Saturday was the Mesa Grande Open House, which saw 600 – 700 visitors. Mesa Grande is recognized as an Arizona 2012 Centennial Legacy Project. It is anticipated that Mesa Grande will open next year, as part of the Centennial Celebration, with the trails completed and a small welcome center.

### **Director's Report – Cindy Ornstein**

- Mesa Contemporary Arts (MCA) will have an opening reception on April 8 from 7 – 10 p.m, which is also a 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in downtown Mesa. "Chicanitas" and "Rust Farms" is open now, even though the formal opening will be on April 8. "Vermilion Remains" opens April 1; and "Wood & Stone, Substance & Spirit" opens on April 8. "Vermilion Remains" is a look at science through art focusing on the Sea of Cortez, which ties in with the "Sea of Cortez" exhibit at AzMNH. Staffs at the two Museums are looking at cross promotional and collaborative programming opportunities.
- Staff presented the Arts and Culture Fees and Charges to a City Council committee this morning. There does not appear to be any objections to the recommended fees.
- Takashi Nakazato, Japanese master ceramist, had a successful February residency at MAC. His workshop was full and there was a reception for him that was co-presented with the Japanese Culture Club of Phoenix. Having Takashi here

through the month of February, and the previous "Jump to Japan" exhibit at AMY, continues to build our relationship with the Japanese community.

- Classes continue to go well. The half-day workshops during spring break were well received. Spring Break Camp was full every day – a huge success.
- Approximately 42,000 individual tickets have been sold for Performing Live; with six sold out shows. Box Office has seen an uptick in ticket sales since January.
- Herb Alpert and his wife Lani Hall are confirmed for May 12. Also added are three blockbusters: Experience Hendrix on May 23, a duo show with Lyle Lovett and John Hiatt on June 5, and Guy Fieri and his food show on June 7. Ms. Ornstein stated that staff feels confident that we will make, and possibly exceed, Performing Live revenue projections for this fiscal year.
- There was discussion regarding programming for younger audiences. Ms. Ornstein reported that Great Big Sea, which was sold out, was mostly a young audience who were on their feet dancing in the Piper Theater Wednesday night. Randy Vogel is exploring more programming for that age group. Ms. Ornstein commented that we are experiencing somewhat of a phenomenon. Concert audiences are changing because such a large number of people are activity exploring new music on-line that they have never had access to before. Audiences for certain types of music are widening, and people are becoming more eclectic in their taste because of being exposed to so much for free on-line. In the past, most exposure to music was through what was played on the radio. Now the control is in the hands of the user and what interests them.
- MAC is in the process of unveiling a new look for the website with a new homepage and new navigation making it much cleaner, contemporary, and less confusing. Audio tracks will be available for musical artists, and if you like it, you will be able to buy it from the website through iTunes. MAC will receive a percentage from the songs purchased on iTunes.
- Just shy of 16,000 people went through AMOCOCO during the 10 days at MAC with nothing but positive feedback. The ticket also included free admission to MCA, who had 5,300 visitors from AMOCOCO go through along with 300 of their regular visitors. At this time, MCA attendance is at approximately 16,500 visitors for the year vs. a total of 10,000 for the entire last fiscal year. Combined with additional outreach, promotion, and activities, we hope to continue to build audiences for MCA and overcome the issue of people not knowing the galleries are there, building interest in contemporary art, and removing barriers that keep people from coming. If approved by Council, MCA will be open with no admission fee (except for any blockbuster exhibits that may come along) every day. In the past, MCA has been open free to the public on 2<sup>nd</sup> Fridays, Thursdays, and on 3 For Free Sundays.
- Mandy Buscas, a former Museum and Cultural Advisory Board Member, has been hired as the new Director of Outreach Education. She will begin on April 18, is a Mesa native, and has been with the Arizona Commission on the Arts for the past 10 years.
- The first version of the Mesa Takes Flight brochure has been distributed. More dates have already been added since the print and the updated brochure will go out in May. A website for Mesa Takes Flight has been added and sits on the City's website at [www.mesatakesflight.com](http://www.mesatakesflight.com). The webpage will be updated on a regular basis as new information becomes available. Mesa Takes Flight is currently striving to accomplish two things: 1) identify events already in place, and 2) work with organizations that have feature offerings/events/activities that can be incorporated into events that are already in place.
- Senior Leadership in the Department has begun initial conversations on strategic positioning. At this time, there is a work-in-progress document that senior management will continue to flush out, take to staff for input and feedback, and when completed, present to the Board.

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, asked if there were any mishaps during the 10 days of AMOCOCO. Ms. Ornstein responded, "No," however, we did have to add two – three additional air conditioners as temperatures reached record breaking highs during that week. The days ran smoothly and the volunteers did a fabulous job; the first few days the lines were slow, but by mid-week, there were consistent lines throughout the rest of the week. The community weaving project was also a huge success.

Mr. Brimhall also asked if the Arts Congress was successful. Ms. Ornstein replied that from the experience of staff who attended, it seemed to be successful; legislators were open and receptive to speaking with staff and Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ornstein, Director  
Arts and Culture Department