

## 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 November 18, 2010.

### Members Present:

Douglas Brimhall  
Amanda Buscas  
Joe Cooper  
Vincent DiBella

Keiko Dilbeck  
Merlin Ellis  
Dr. Robbi D. Venditti

### Members Absent:

Dr. D. Kent Layton  
Lars Nielson, Jr.  
Rebecca Nolan  
Pamela Williams

### Guests Present:

Karen Rolston

### Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein      Rob Schultz  
Sunnee O'Rork      Jean Kaminski

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

### Approval of Minutes

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of October 28. There being none, the Board members present unanimously approved the October 28 minutes. They will be posted on the City's web page.

**Items from Citizens Present:** There were no citizens present.

### Hear a Presentation – East Valley Children's Theatre – Karen Rolston

Karen Rolston is the Artistic Director of East Valley Children's Theatre located at 4830 E. Main Street in Mesa. East Valley Children's Theatre (EVCT) is more than just a theatre; it is a place where children can grow and develop into confident young adults. At EVCT, youth gain self-esteem and develop creativity. EVCT's mission is to offer youth, ages 5 – 18, opportunities to experience the process and product of live theatrical performances, by children for children; children 8 – 18 years of age are invited to audition for every show.

EVCT began its 14<sup>th</sup> season this fall and performs in the Nesbitt/Elliott Playhouse at Mesa Arts Center (MAC). They are managed by an all-volunteer board of directors – only the designer, teachers, and play director are paid. They have grown from one production and one workshop to an award-winning children's theatre that serve approximately 70 – 100 children in the East Valley each year.

### EVCT offers the following programs:

#### ***Productions:***

Four fully-staged theatrical products each season presented at MAC

#### ***Playwriting Contest:***

Promoting playwriting of original works for children's theatre; scripts come from the around the world

#### ***Scholarship Program:***

Supporting former EVCT youth studying theatre in college

#### ***Theatre Workshops:***

Two series of eight workshops focusing on theatre skills, one in the fall and one in the spring

#### ***Drama Classes:***

Six week classes that meet once a week throughout the year covering a variety of theatre techniques and topics

#### ***Intergenerational Theatre Program:***

Youth work with senior citizens to create plays that they then perform for the seniors who inspired their scripts, as well as other retirement and assisted living facilities

#### ***EVCT Express:***

Youth who meet once a week and create a performance piece, which they perform in the community

#### ***On the Spot Improv:***

Youth who meet once a week to practice improvisation techniques and games which are then performed throughout the Valley.

#### ***EVCT Bravo:***

Troupe rehearses songs and choreography from Broadway to perform in the East Valley

#### ***Summer and Spring Musical Theatre Camps:***

Youth participate in intense acting, dancing, and singing skill courses and perform on the final day of camp

#### ***Technical Theatre Program:***

Youth learn the basics of technical theatre through training at MAC, working with theatre professionals and hands on training.

### **Community Outreach Program:**

Youth perform free at various non-profit organizations who serve children and their families, i.e., Sunshine Acres, MPS Learning Tree Program, and Children's First Academy (school for the homeless)

Ms. Rolston closed by saying that East Valley Children's Theatre is proud to be a Founding Resident Company at MAC, where EVCT has performed since MAC opened.

### **Discuss and Take Action – Consider Holding Museum and Cultural Advisory Board Meetings Every Other Month – Douglas Brimhall**

Dr. Robbi Venditti reiterated her reasons for suggesting that the Board move to a bi-monthly meeting: in doing so, it would free up staff to attend to other duties; it might increase attendance, as it is only a six-month rather than a twelve-month commitment; and half the duties of the Museum and Cultural Advisory Board have been eliminated when Arts and Cultural Grants, Mini-Grants, and the Public Art Program were no longer funded by the City. Douglas Brimhall made a point of stating that he wished the Board could regain some of that former responsibility, but as it stands, it makes sense to cut back to bi-monthly meetings.

Cindy Ornstein commented that she hopes that when the Board does meet, Board members are comfortable to openly discuss their thoughts and ideas on arts issues that they feel need to be addressed. Coming from different walks in life, the Board represents the community; it is an opportunity to be a sounding board for the community and for staff and Council to hear another perspective on things that may need to be addressed. Ms. Ornstein also said that the Board may be called on to play an active role in advocacy on the importance of arts and culture for our state and take this message to our legislators for their continued support of the Arizona Commission on the Arts.

Vince DiBella made a motion that the Board would meet on a bi-monthly basis on the fourth Thursday of the month, Keiko Dilbeck seconded, and the Board members present unanimously agreed. The next regular meeting of the Museum and Cultural Advisory Board is scheduled for January 27, 2011.

### **Staff Reports**

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

- Opened NASA with a reception – the Mayor welcomed approximately 100 visitors at the ribbon cutting ceremony, with approximately 220 attending throughout the evening. The exhibit is sponsored by General Dynamics and the *Arizona Republic*. Several students from The New School for the Arts also did a chalk drawing in the front of the Museum for the opening. It is a high-end exhibit and well worth seeing even if you do not have children. The exhibit includes alien puppets, Tang, Astronaut Ice Cream, glow in the dark room, and augmented reality given to the Museum by a Board member – a software program where you use paddles that show against a screen that can make all sorts of things happen. The show itself is spectacular with artists such as Andy Warhol, Alexander Calder, Norman Rockwell, and Robert Rauchenberg to name a few. The exhibit runs through to January 23, 2011.
- Art Zone will have a soft opening on Tuesday, November 23. The opening will feature a Jackson Pollock computer program, big light brights, etc. This area of the Museum has evolved and has nine hands-on activities that will alternate, such as the Jerry Riopelle beams.
- Applied for and received a Piper Trust fellowship. The fellowship will allow the Museum Administrator to travel to various Children's Museums, including the Smithsonian, that have traveling exhibits. She will learn their best practices on how they make it work for them. After travel, Sunnee O'Rork will create a Business Plan to create traveling exhibits at AMY. This would create a new revenue stream for the Museum. The fellowship comes with a \$10,000 grant for staff and Board development, which also allows AMY the opportunity to become eligible to apply for a \$50,000 to help implement the Business Plan.
- Paula Calapez began a part-time position at the Museum as an Office Assistant II. She will primarily work with the Museum Administrator. The Museum will also be hiring a part-time Museum Accounting Specialist; interviews take place on December 2. These two part-time positions were created due to the retirement of Beth Bartholow.
- Sunnee O'Rork, Youth Administrator, was pleased to learn that Mayor Smith and Councilmember Dave Richins spoke of their experience at the NASA exhibit, and how much fun they had, at a Council Study Session.
- Deb Dahl, AMY Friends Board Chair for close to six years, is stepping down in January; Corinne Brooks will serve as the new Board Chair. Two new members have joined the Board – Dominic Bowman and Karen Sherman.

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

- The Museum is doing well both in terms of attendance and revenue; last year was a record year, and this year the numbers are running about the same.
- Hosted an opening reception for the Lon Megargee print and oil painting exhibition of traditional western art.

- The Origins exhibit has replaced the old dark, lighted tunnel creating a new entry way into the history of the earth.
- Dr. Bob McCord hosted paleontologists from Florida State and New Mexico State for three days as they studied elements of the Museum's collection.
- The Paleo Dig Pit has opened in the courtyard area by panning for gold; kids love this added, interactive feature where they can excavate for fossils.

### Mesa Arts Center/Mesa Contemporary Arts – Rob Schultz

- Day of the Dead festival had great crowds and good sales; several Mercado vendors sold out. The altar contest was successful – the Thursday night reception with the Consul General of Mexico in Phoenix was well received. MAC will continue, and work on expanding, our relationship with the Consulate in the next year. The Consulate arranged for MAC to give-away free Spanish text books. Kids arts activities, art demos, etc. enlivened the campus the entire weekend.
- Mesa Arts Festival will take place on December 11 and 12, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. This festival is a juried art exhibition with art works for sale, and again with art demos and kids activities. This year the festival has expanded and Center Street will be closed for a "kids zone" with carnival games, bounce houses, and a gingerbread house contest along Main Street in the merchant's stores.
- Out-to-Lunch fall concert series continues through December 16, each Thursday from 12:30 – 1:30 in the Wells Fargo Garden. The first concert drew 230 people; the second one, 450 people; and today, there were 405 at the concert.
- Mesa Contemporary Arts' (MCA) 10 x 10 event was a success. The event took place on October 10, 2010, with gross sales over \$5,000 – net sales to be determined. Artists donated a 10 x 10 art piece that was for sale for \$100 each.
- The Arts Education Program is doing well. Revenue is up considerably for youth and adult classes, as well as participation compared to last year at this time. Registration for spring classes begins Friday, December 3, which typically brings in higher revenue and attendance numbers than the fall.
- The Volunteer Program had 250 volunteers putting in a little over 4,000 hours, for a total savings to the City of approximately \$85,000.
- In Arts Education Outreach – staff has been presenting our production of "Pedro's Magic Shoes" in Mesa and Gilbert elementary schools. The play is bilingual, and easy to follow if students do not speak Spanish, and ends on Tuesday, November 23.

Vince DiBella asked what we are contributing the increase in art classes' revenue and attendance to. Mr. Schultz responded that he couldn't pin-point one specific thing, but staff is working hard to post classes on the MAC website at least one week prior to registration and word of mouth - instructors are helping to promote classes with their students. Cindy Ornstein added that our summer and break camps have also helped to heighten awareness and get the word out about MAC and how much their children enjoy being here. Marketing has been doing creative things, such as interviews with instructors, etc. and putting them on You Tube and various blogs to get the word out. They also created a new poster that has attracted attention.

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

#### **Performing Live:**

- Ticket sales have been somewhat challenging, but seems to be picking up with elections behind us. Ms. Ornstein commented that people are focused on elections and are distracted from other activities during that time.
- Some shows are picking up – the Doo Wop show had approximately 200 more attendees this year compared to last year and Savion Glover's phenomenal show drew close to 900. Staff is cautiously optimistic. Some new shows have been added to the season that should draw good crowds, such as Clay Aiken and Engelbert Humperdinck.
- MAC is collaborating with Mesa Public Schools (MPS) and Jazz at Lincoln Center to introduce an education program in the schools. It is in the pilot stage this year at Red Mountain High School and will roll out next year. Some preliminary programming has been done and there has been teacher training session with Social Studies teachers. The premise of the program is to teach American history through jazz; the history of jazz correlates with the history of the US. The curriculum was created by the National Education Association (NEA) in conjunction with Jazz at Lincoln Center. Partners are: ASU, MPS, and local jazz station, KJAZZ that will play music that goes with the curriculum.
- The first National Geographic Live lecture, in November, was attended well. Each lecture has a school show the following morning, which was fully booked; in fact, we had to turn students away.

Ms. Ornstein continued to say that some positive things are happening in conjunction with downtown Mesa. The Downtown Mesa Association has a new director, David Short, and a new Downtown Coordinator has been assigned to the City of Mesa Economic Development Department, Melissa Woodall.

In the next week or so, the Light Rail artists will be in the community and met with committee members to hear why they were selected. There is also a public meet and greet scheduled on Friday, December 10, from 6 – 7 p.m. during the Second Friday event. It is an opportunity to meet with the artist who will create the Public Art component at the MAC Light Rail stop.

MAC is moving forward with looking at opportunities to tie into Second Fridays starting the first of the year. Also, staff is looking at long-term ideas to add more festivals at specific times during the year. Ms. Ornstein said that we can look for at least one new major festival next year. There is discussion regarding a major festival the weekend prior to the Arizona centennial in Mesa.

Ms. Ornstein encouraged the Board to check out Second Friday in downtown Mesa. Each month the event has been growing and drawing more people. She said the event has a good, community event feel. The presence of “steam punk” followers make it most interesting.

Ms. Ornstein said that she feels we are on the cusp of a time when there will be a lot of collaborative opportunities. After being in Mesa for four months and talking to numerous citizens and organization heads, she has found that there is a strong sense that a large number of people embrace the vision of the Mesa Arts Center as a resource to the community – reaching out, connecting, assessable, etc.

Mesa Takes Flight is continuing to move along. There are approximately 15 partners on board at this time. A planning meeting will take place around early to mid-December.

### **Report on Conferences and/or Meetings/Performances Attended: Board Members – Information Only**

Douglas Brimhall reported that there was a Light Rail meeting with the stakeholders who gave their input to the architects on their designs. The meeting was positive.

Cindy Ornstein shared that the Main Street Corridor Plan project was presented to Council on where it stands to date. You can find information on the project on the City of Mesa website. The project shows the form-based areas around the different Light Rail stops and what they envision as maintenance, transformational, etc. Mesa Arts Center’s parking lot is shown as having the potential to go through transformation with the idea that, in the future, there could be new development there with parking on a bottom level.

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, read an e-mail message from Board member Lars Nielson, Jr. who was not able to attend.  
. . . “I hope it is Ok to put my opinion and “vote” in writing to you...

With the limited amount of business we have to conduct, let’s move our meetings to every other month. As budgets and grants become available we could move back to monthly. Also, a compliment to the staff in the Ikeda center. My wife and I both attended a couple of shows over the past two months – every person we talked to was friendly and bubbling over with a desire to help. We visited with the staff in the sales booth, greeters, and ushers. They are a great group of people.”

Joe Cooper reported that he and his wife attended “Straight No Chaser.” He found it comical that prior to the concert, the house voice comes on and tells patrons to turn off their cell phones and that there are no pictures allowed. When the band came out, the first thing he said was – everyone, take pictures and get it up on You Tube that is how we grew! The group is an interesting phenomenon as their fan base grew through You Tube. The group was so popular they have been booked to return next year.

Dr. Robbie Venditti asked how “Last Comic Standing” did. Cindy Ornstein stated that it did okay, not what we had expected, but okay. Dr. Venditti said that they also saw “America’s Got Talent” in Phoenix and the quality of that show was horrible. They were impressed with the quality of “Last Comic Standing” here at Mesa Arts Center.

Ms. Ornstein reported that this is the last weekend for “Celebrity Autobiography.” A couple of shows were cancelled, but she recommended that if you have not seen it, to try and go, it is an extremely funny show.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ornstein, Director  
Arts and Culture Department