

CULTURE · POLITICS · TECHNOLOGY Stream

A Graduate Journal of Communication • Spring 2010 • 3(1) • ISSN 1916-5897 • www.streamjournal.org

Stream: Culture/Politics/Technology is a peer-reviewed, open-access e-journal published by the Communication Graduate Student Caucus at Simon Fraser University.

Managing Editor: Danielle Deveau

Editorial Board: Rebecca Scott, Arsalan Butt

Copy Editor: Danielle Deveau

Design and Layout: Laurynas Navidauskas

This journal provides a unique, national forum for emerging Canadian researchers. Encompassing communication studies approaches to the often overlapping “streams” of culture, politics and technology, Stream challenges conceptions of these subjects with innovative, interdisciplinary scholarship. Visit www.streamjournal.org for more information.

The editors would like to thank and acknowledge the work of all those who volunteered as peer-reviewers.

Submit to Stream

Stream is interested in publishing articles and book reviews by Canadian graduate students in communication studies and related fields. Papers should fit into one of the three proposed “streams,” but we invite contributors to challenge their conceptions of these subjects with interdisciplinary approaches to these subject areas. We hope that this student initiative will become a space for graduate students to publish new work and expand upon new ideas, contributing to a thriving graduate intellectual culture.

Visit www.streamjournal.org for full author guidelines and register to submit a paper.

Become a Peer-reviewer

Register at www.streamjournal.org and enter yourself into our database of graduate student reviewers.

Stream and Creative Commons

Stream supports and strives to integrate the ideals of the creative commons and copyleft movements at every possible level. To that end, journal articles are immediately freely available to the public, released under a Creative Commons Attribution–Noncommercial–No derivative works licence.

Furthermore, they may be reproduced and distributed freely for noncommercial uses if the author is identified and nothing is changed.

Consider including Stream articles in your students’ courseware packages.



Government Imposition of Sustainable Business Practices in the Arts: A Saving Grace?

Brigit M. Knecht

“Most arts administrators in the city [of Calgary] are cautiously confident in their ability to survive a recession, which reflects either an outbreak of blind optimism or a realization that they have spent years getting their financial houses in order for just such a day” (Hunt, 2009, p. A1)

The fall of 2008 found the arts community in Canada in an uproar. The federal government had recently announced that within the next few years it would cut \$50 million from government sponsored arts programs. Community supporters, arts groups, high profile artists, academics, and politicians launched protest rallies, signed Facebook petitions, and wrote letters to the editors of major newspapers and Members of Parliament to protest the cuts to arts funding. The government responded with statements like the following by Stephen Harper: “We have a responsibility to make sure the spending that we’re doing is effective and that involves analyzing every program and making sure we spend where we’re getting the best results” (cited in Akin & O’Neill, 2008, p. 2). The government response only served to further enrage arts-supporting ordinary Canadians. What was not explained during the course of the debate, however, was the simple fact that economic priorities have long been a major part of arts funding. Harper’s statements, and the cuts themselves, were not out of line with the economic mindset that has directed arts funding initiatives both federally and provincially for decades. Nowhere is this more evident than in Alberta where arts organizations have been required to run their organizations with exaggerated efficiency since the economic crash of the 1980’s. Under premier Ralph Klein’s leadership arts funding bodies in Alberta began operating from a *best results* position and looking to economic indicators as a measure of organizational success and sustainability. Indeed, Harper’s statements reflect Klein’s approach, which over the years has been adopted by the granting bodies of other provinces and by the federal agency, the Canada Council for the Arts.

The economic crash that occurred in the middle of the Canadian federal election turned the attention of the electorate from arts funding and social values to concerns about job losses and the need for economic stimulus packages by other major industries of the country. The arts have been all but forgotten. How then, with no stimulus package yet appearing to aid the cul-



1. Other funding programs and applications from the AFA exist for emerging artists, individual artists, professional development, and independent projects among others. These programs are not discussed here.

tural sector, will arts organizations weather the storm? In Alberta, where arts groups are accustomed to operating with very little government support, the economic crash has so far been the cause for little concern. I posit that it was precisely the economic approach of the provincial government that has prepared arts organizations in Alberta to endure the recession. Using the funding applications for *Major Performing Arts Organizations*¹ of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts as an example, this paper therefore intends to demonstrate how the government has long been prioritizing economic sustainability for the cultural sector through the imposition of business and financial language in arts funding applications and that, though perhaps not the intended result of such economic imposition, good business practices will help to see non-profit arts organizations through the current economic crisis to emerge, if not unscathed, then at least in tact.

Lougheed, Klein, and the Imposition of Sustainability

To understand Alberta's approach to arts funding, it is necessary to briefly summarize the transition undergone in this province vis-à-vis arts funding. Stepping back to the tenure of premier Peter Lougheed, 1971-1985, and Alberta's first economic boom, the arts in Alberta enjoyed a period of significant support and generous government funding. Lougheed believed that the province's wealth had something to offer the spirit and thus he used the powers of the state to gain policy objectives through what was termed his *province building strategy* (Smith, 2001). The strategy greatly expanded the provincial bureaucracy adding, among others, an independent Department of Culture in 1976. The creation of the Department of Culture moved arts and culture to the top rung of the ladder of government priorities and presaged a decade in which the provincial government of Alberta placed culture high on its list of priorities. Thus the period of Peter Lougheed's premiership is frequently referred to as the 'Camelot era' in Alberta (Fraser, 2003; Melnyk, 1995; Smith, 2001).

During this time, a slew of arts grants were created. Organized under two major units, the Cultural Development Branch was meant to encourage the performing arts, the visual arts and crafts, film, and literature while the Cultural Heritage Division was meant to oversee grant programs that supported a wide variety of heritage projects (Fraser, 2003). To manage the volume of arts grants being distributed the government established many arm's length funding institutions including the Alberta Art Foundation, the Alberta Foundation for the Literary Arts, and the Alberta Foundation for the Performing Arts. Receipt of grants was possible for any organization that met the requirements of "artistic merit, suitability, and political objectives" (Melnyk, 1995, p. 257). The most important assistance program was the Alberta Matching

Grants Program, which matched private donations to arts organizations dollar for dollar up to 25% of an organization's budget. This program encouraged new levels of corporate and private philanthropy in support of Alberta theatre groups, symphony orchestras, opera and dance companies (Whitson, Wall, & Cardinal, 2006).

The Alberta approach to legislation, programming, and financing of the arts became models in their field and were echoed in provinces across Canada, and the Matching Grants Program was the recipient of an international award for innovation in financial support (Fraser, 2003; Whitson, Wall, & Cardinal, 2006). The mid-1970s thus, unsurprisingly, saw an explosion of cultural events and art organizations in Alberta. The creation of major arts organizations such as the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, Alberta Theatre Projects and Calgary Opera in Calgary, the Edmonton Fringe Festival, and numerous summer arts programs, folk, jazz and film festivals, and an Artist-in-Residence program that supported visits by leading Alberta artists to rural communities and schools. Also, the establishment of the Banff Centre as an arts institution of international renown was achieved with the passing of the Banff Centre Act, which established the Banff Centre for Continuing Education as an autonomous institution with university status (Whitson, Wall, & Cardinal, 2006). Of course the period of financial largesse was not to last and the Alberta economy suffered a collapse in the early 1980's. Fuelled in part by an American recession and in part by the National Energy Program² instituted by the Federal government, the "bust" of the 1980's resulted in major cuts to arts support in Alberta that began with Lougheed's successor, Don Getty (1985-1992), and were extended through the tenure of Ralph Klein as premier (1992-2007).

2. Introduced in 1980, the NEP strove to keep the oil-patch in Canadian hands and to prevent foreign firms from making obscene profits on booming oil prices. Its chosen weapons included a combination of subsidies, regulated prices and heavy taxes that had the effect of keeping domestic oil and natural gas prices as much as 30% below world price levels. This took about \$50 billion out of Alberta's economy in five years, sent major oil companies to the US and elsewhere, and precipitated a recession in the oil-patch (Nikiforuk, Pratt & Wanagas, 1987).

Elected on a platform of change, Klein promised to balance the provincial budget, eliminate the deficit, and pay off the debt. He began a crusade of public sector downsizing and a systematic marketization of the province. Klein made it a goal to ensure that Alberta became a competitor in the global marketplace and his restructuring of the provincial government included a strict corporatist model (with congruence between state, market, and society) and the implementation of business plans which held the government accountable in ways similar to those in private business (Flanagan, 2005; Harrison, 2005; Smith, 2001). "The application of a business plan concept to all of government operations, in a comprehensive, systematic, and coordinated way...was unique at the time" (Flanagan, 2005, p. 121). As services were privatized, government reduced, and new management strategies implemented Albertans soon realized they had to "sink or swim in a highly competitive global market economy, and that public policy was to be sublimated to this goal" (Smith, 2001, p. 303).

3. After ongoing erosion of its budget, the Department of Culture was, in 1987, renamed the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism. The ministry underwent significant budget and staff cuts and the mandate of the department also shifted. It now included “a new emphasis on the ‘cultural industries’ and on the economic importance of the arts including a new language of ‘cultural goods and services’” (Whitson, Wall, & Cardinal, 2006).

In the culture sector, one of Ralph Klein’s first acts was to transform the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism³ into a multi-purpose ministry of Community Development, where culture competed for attention with social housing, programs for women and seniors, and the provincial addictions treatment agency (Whitson, Wall, & Cardinal, 2006). As with all other areas of government, the cultural sector was expected to develop performance measures by which their value, social and fiscal, could be evaluated. The “quantitative measures of performance and the establishment of clear standards against which public services could be assessed by users and taxpayers” (Smith, 2001, p. 299) were not measures that arts organizations could easily implement to the satisfaction of the government. As Klein’s vision of government did not readily include support for any organizations that couldn’t compete in a market economy, arts organizations began to feel the increasing pinch of financial cutbacks and the constantly growing requirements of self-sustainability, transparency, and accountability. More specifically, the Matching Grants Program, which had earned such recognition for the province, was abandoned as were several less notable, but no less important, arts funding programs. The Alberta Foundation for the Arts became the sole source of arts funding with all of its money coming from lotteries (Fraser, 2003).

The provincial government under Klein introduced a new word into the lexicon of arts management, and indeed into the entire non-profit sector. The word, meant to encourage fiscal responsibility, was *sustainability*. Meaning quite simply “to avoid the depletion of (natural) resources,” (Oxford English Dictionary) the concept of sustainability was accompanied by requests for transparency in operations and accounting, with greater responsibility placed upon the boards of non-profit organizations to maintain a controlled business focus in the operation of the organization. Though the word sustainability should hold the meaning of its definition, it has come to mean something quite different. Sustainability now quietly refers to *surplus* and has allowed government granting bodies, and arts boards themselves, to impose regulations and demands for arts organizations to maintain such *emergency* resources as a Cash Reserve Fund, and/or an Accumulated Surplus Fund (AFA, 2004). In this way sustainability has taken on a life of its own, now meaning not just the maintenance of finances but also the accumulation of surplus, and has quite clearly become a government tool that is used to impose an economic method of operation onto arts organizations.

The AFA Grant Applications

The transformation of the word sustainability from a term encouraging a balanced budget into an entire discourse of economic viability for arts organizations is revealed in the ever-thickening grant applications that arts orga-

nizations must submit to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA). In these documents the change in meaning of sustainability becomes discernible.

1997/1998

Though having already undergone some transformation under the market focus of Klein's provincial government, the granting process ten years ago was fairly simple. The application was a three-page document that reflected the government focus on economic sustainability in the truest sense of the word. Among the requirements, the application (AFA, 1997/1998) called for:

- A detailed description of the three-year business and artistic plans
- A detailed budget indicating the past year and current year operating budgets listing projections to year end
- Two year operating budget projections
- A completed Funding Terms and Conditions Agreement
- A Statement of Eligible Expenses form

The economic focus of the document was obvious but—balanced by the required artistic plan, which calls for an artistic philosophy and programming principles—it seemed fair and reasonable. Sustainability as interpreted by this document could suggest that an artistic vision in line with community needs is as necessary for sustainability as fiscal responsibility. The document, after all, does state in its Program Rationale that the AFA recognizes that Major Performing Organizations “enrich the cultural and social life of the province” (AFA, 1997/98). The economic priority of the document, however, is the dominant focus for in the next paragraph the Program Rationale states that the program “will continue to lend stability to professional performing arts organizations and support the development of *organizational financial self-sufficiency*.” Financial self-sufficiency seems a strange term for inclusion in an arts funding document but because the application makes fairly reasonable requests, and who can argue with the dominant language of a balanced budget, the government intention behind the terminology is obscured. The document's efforts to encourage self-sufficiency are found in the Terms and Conditions form, which directly reflects the Klein government's priority of privatization. It states:

To maintain eligibility in the year of the application, organizations must raise in the previous year from community derived revenue sources, i.e. municipal grants, fundraising and earned revenue (including box office), an amount at least equal to 65% of total revenue in the same year. (AFA, 1997/1998)

Therefore, in this early document, it is already possible to see how the minor inclusion of the economic language begins the subtle shift in meaning from sustainability-as-fiscal-responsibility, to sustainability-as-surplus.

1998/1999

The same grant application for the following year contains several changes that reveal that the impositions of economic priorities of government, through the language of sustainability, are becoming more forceful. A most notable change in the 1998/1999 document from the earlier 1997/1998 version is the introduction of a formula which will be calculated based on the information required of the new Community Derived Revenue form. The formula is as follows:

Company Allocation = company 5-year average community derived revenue, divided by the total 5-year average community derived revenue (expressed as a percentage) multiplied by the total AFA program budget. (AFA, 1998/1999)

Though the grant document still requires a three-year Artistic Plan, the grants will now be allocated based not on the artistic product of the company but on the ability of the organization to generate income outside of government sources. The statement of “financial self-sufficiency” remains in the document and what that statement means becomes clearer with the imposition of the formula. Furthermore, the grant application of 1998/1999 includes a Management Performance Factor that intends to reduce organizational debt by imposing a series of monetary penalties.

Step 1 - If an applicant’s accumulated debt rises above 15% of its expenditures, the organization will be required to produce cash flow and other financial information [...] before each monthly instalment will be released.

Step 2 - If [...] debt rises above 20%, the company must prepare and submit to the Foundation a detailed debt reduction plan with quarterly goals. If the company does not meet these goals, the Foundation may [...] reduce funding.

Step 3 - If [...] debt rises above 25%, the Foundation will reduce the annual grant at the rate of 3% for each \$100,000 increment, or portion thereof. (AFA, 1998/1999)

The Management Performance Factor achieves two things: first, it puts the operation of the organization into the hands of arts managers and boards with business backgrounds and experience, taking it effectively out of the hands of artists; and second, it imposes an increased requirement of manpower to accomplish the drafting of debt reduction plans should the organization falter. These penalties seem on the surface to be in accordance with a traditional definition of sustainability, however when tied to the new formula for funding the penalties seem more of a training ground for “financial self-sufficiency” than they do a reflection of government support.

2000/2001

By the granting period of 2000/2001, the application has grown into a six-page document with each year adding more reporting requirements. While the 1999/2000 application was basically the same as that of 1998/1999, the first form of the new millennium includes many added features. Among the changes is a statement that grant money is not to be used for “purchases that increase in value (e.g. building or property) or capital development (e.g. studio construction or renovations).” The statement about “financial self-sufficiency” remains in the document, but any attempt to build bricks-and-mortar stability is not allowed. This reflects the common practice of separating operating funds from capital funds. The operating grant is not intended to support infrastructure projects. The application requirements also expand to demand “past-year operating budget actuals; a *board-approved* current-year operating budget, listing projections to year end; and additional two-year operating budget projections” (AFA, 2000/2001). The formula remains intact, as does the Management Performance Factor, however the AFA imposes a limit to the funding for major performing arts organizations of \$780,000.

While the document still states that arts organizations “enrich the cultural and social life of the province” the statement is now so buried in requirements and financial jargon that the document reads in almost exclusively economic terms. The notion of *support* as being a measure of sustainability is nearly eliminated by the document’s emphasis on debt elimination and community derived revenue. Thus sustainability as a term becomes more and more clearly tied to economics. As yet sustainability does not *exactly* mean “surplus,” but the real meaning of the word is becoming increasingly obscured. The years which follow the 2000/2001 grant application make no major changes, though they do consistently increase the requirements necessary to complete the application. Added requirements include things such as lists of organizational directors and officers (AFA, 2002/2003) and single copies of audio and visual support materials (which are odd given that funding is based on the community derived revenue formula) (AFA, 2003/2004). Organizations now must be in operation in Alberta for at least a year to gain eligibility, which removes any possibility for emerging arts organizations to define themselves as “major organizations” and secure funding (AFA, 2003/2004). Furthermore, applicants who receive significant funding from the Lottery Fund of the Government of Alberta may not be eligible (AFA, 2001/2002). While these added requirements serve to limit the number of applicants and increase the manpower necessary to secure/produce the required documents, the most significant change in this period occurs in the 2003/2004 granting period. In the application for 2003/2004 the Management Performance Factor sees a reduction in debt allowance. Stage 1 moves from an accumulated debt allowance of 15% before penalty to 10%; Stage 2

from 20% to 12%; and Stage 3 from 25% to 15%. Also, at Stage 3 the reduction of the grant moves from 3% per \$100,000 to 5% per \$100,000. Thus the government increases the pressure on arts organizations to become “financially self-sufficient” by tightening the restrictions on funding, increasing the requirements of the application, all the while maintaining a limit on funding at \$780,000.

2004/2005

In 2004/2005, the now eight-page AFA grant application undergoes a significant transformation. The Program Rationale moves to the front of the document and makes several changes and additions, which are elaborated upon later in the application. To begin, the statement of support for operational “financial self-sufficiency” is replaced by the program’s new intention “to support the annual operating expenses of Alberta’s nine largest performing arts companies in a manner consistent with a philosophy of artistic and financial *sustainability*” (AFA, 2004/2005). Lest organizations question the magnanimity of government intentions the Community Derived Revenue plan is, for the first time, defined as intending to “encourage artistic mandates which resonate in and are supported by the broader community.” In other words, artistic product is a priority but if it is not saleable to the public such that you can make an appropriate percentage for the formula, the AFA will not contribute to funding it. A new Disclosure of Governance Practices form is included which is “intended to encourage a high standard of board stewardship for strategic planning, and operational, financial, and artistic risk management” (AFA, 2004/2005) which tacitly demands/requires increased board participation of business people in the operation of arts organizations. Board stewardship can be interpreted as an inclusion which essentially moves arts organizations into the realm of businesses by the simple fact that business people will never run an arts organization the way artists would, nor are they equipped to assess “artistic risk management” in the same way as artists. Herein we can see that sustainability means “business.”

A business oriented operational focus is not all that the 2004/2005 application reveals however. In it are included two new demands—the Cash Reserve and Accumulated Surplus funds. As stated these “concepts are intended to encourage the maintenance of a fiscal cushion against unforeseen financial deficits” (AFA, 2004/2005). Both of the new reserves must be maintained at a level decided upon by the AFA and failure to maintain either may result “in a company’s removal from the program.” While the Cash Reserve fund is defined as an “unencumbered, restricted cash account that can only be accessed upon a resolution of the company’s board of directors, and may only be used to temporarily finance unforeseen operating deficits,” the Accu-

4. *The APASF program was an arts stabilization program run by several prominent business people in Calgary during the 1980's and 1990's. There is no literature about the now defunct program and what little I was able to learn came from interview participants who had participated in the program. According to a participant at Calgary Opera, the APASF was a "reward program that basically praised or rewarded good governance and good business management. But if you failed and you didn't meet the criteria over that five-year period, you were booted out and you didn't get a cent. The Edmonton Symphony made it through, ATP did, Theatre Calgary did, Decidedly Jazz Dance and I think pretty everyone else didn't make it through the program" (informant, Calgary Opera).*

mulated Surplus requirement remains undefined in the document. The Cash Reserve fund must, at minimum, be equal to the original amount of working capital reserve dollars the Company was eligible to receive under the terms of the Alberta Performing Arts Stabilization Fund Stabilization Awards Program,⁴ an amount that was typically a minimum of \$500,000. If an organization touches the Cash Reserve fund, the amount must be paid back into the fund within "three fiscal years." Furthermore, "failure to maintain the Cash Reserve at the level approved by the AFA, as well as an Accumulated Surplus will result in an automatic grant reduction equal to 5% of the total grant for every \$100,000 off the reserve target or a range of reductions up to and including removal from the program" (AFA, 2004/2005).

How may we interpret the simultaneous transition away from the explicit wording of "financial self-sufficiency" with the gentler sounding "artistic and financial sustainability" and the simultaneous imposition of surplus funds, and governance practices disclosure? If we are to interpret the inclusion of the word sustainability as directly tied to a required Accumulated Surplus, then it is impossible to see sustainability as meaning anything *other* than surplus. In the years between 2004/2005 and 2008/2009 requirements continued to swell with such additions as the "current year update short narrative, year-to-date income statement, balance sheets, cash-flow forecast, statement of operations and operating fund balance, and statements of cash flow," (AFA, 2006/2007) but the general structure of the application remains the same.

2008/2009

By 2008/2009, Calgary arts organizations have become comfortable with the extreme demands of the AFA grant application, one of three that are submitted for funds (the other two are the municipal application of Calgary Arts Development, and federal, the Canada Council) each having different requirements. The document, now encompassing 25 pages, takes, for the participant organizations, months to complete and is the full time job of one organizational member with the assistance of everyone in management. The 2008/2009 application is the first fully electronic submission. The document contains many of the same elements as seen in all the previous years—a 65% requirement for community derived revenue, the formula for grant allocation (though the maximum allowed amount is now "to be determined by the board of the AFA") the necessary Cash Reserve fund, etc. The Accumulated Surplus fund is now more clearly called the Working Capital Reserve fund, which may be used for special purchases or projects but not for operational needs. Three key areas of responsibility are defined in the new document. They are: Governance Practices, Fiscal Responsibility, and Artistic Mandate.

5. Also granting bodies generally, provincial, municipal, and federal, are in talks to coordinate the financial reporting requirements to alleviate the burden of preparing statements with different requirements for each level of government.

New requirements include several AFA forms, including the Operating Grant Financial Form, a Diligence Questionnaire, the Governance Principles form, and a “copy of the organization’s most recent return to the Alberta Corporate Registry.” Fortunately some concessions have been made and organizations are now required to submit the three-year business, artistic, and programming plans, as well as the Cash Reserve Policy only once every three years.⁵ New to the current document is a list of Principles of Organizational Sustainability which includes four points:

- 1) The organization has a solid foundation for management and a structure that enhances and compliments its unique initiatives;
- 2) The organization encourages artistic excellence, and has a vision for artistic development that acknowledges its audience, donors, members, and sponsors (stakeholders);
- 3) The organization has a long-term financial plan in place, and has a structure to verify the integrity of financial reporting;
- 4) The organization values and recognizes the contributions of its Board of Directors, staff members, community members, volunteers, and has a succession plan in place to preserve and further its mandate. (AFA, 2008/2009)

The above Principles for Organizational Sustainability speak very plainly about fiscal responsibility and show that the duty of the Board of Directors is to ensure good financial management and transparency. Making a statement that the vision for artistic development should acknowledge its extra-government supporters, is in line with the community derived revenue formula, and reasserts the position that arts organizations must first turn to the consumer for recognition of their artistic product before the government will offer support. That the organization should value its board and volunteers (who are often one and the same) quietly asserts that the knowledge of business people in the operation of an arts organization is a necessity. Notably, in the Principles of Organizational Sustainability the notion of surplus is not mentioned even though the bulk of the application form deals with its mandatory requirement. Thus, the language of sustainability still functions as a tool for financial responsibility all the while infused with the subliminal message of surplus.

A House in Order

The stringent application of the AFA, and the imposed limit to the funds available, have effectively prepared arts organizations in Alberta to operate during this current recession. Arts organizations are equipped with reserve funds, business-oriented boards, and surplus budgets. In many cases, because government funding has been so low in Alberta for the past twenty years,

the major arts organizations have developed (or are developing) endowment programs and fostering important relationships with individual and corporate donors. Artistic programming, thanks in part to the community derived revenue formula, is clearly directed toward attracting patrons and subscribers rather than exclusively satisfying the artistic wishes of the organizations' programming committees and performers, and organizations operate with clear governance and effective administration. These are not organizations that will be caught with their finances in disarray if the recession worsens. Nor are they, thanks to the limited funding available from the AFA, overly reliant on funding from government bodies.

Of course, for all the preparation that the economic priorities of government have given to performing arts organizations in Alberta, it is impossible to predict the full effect that the recession may have in the long term. Corporate and individual donors may be facing personal losses in the stock market and be unable to renew their sponsorship commitments, and endowment funds have surely lost investment revenue. A recent Angus Reid poll suggests that ticket sales will also begin to decline with "56% of respondents suggesting they would be less likely to spend money to see an opera or ballet, 45% less likely to spend money to see a play, 40% less likely to visit a museum, 31% less likely to see a movie in a theatre, and 53% less likely to attend a professional sporting event" (Hunt, 2009, p. A6). Nonetheless, inasmuch as it is possible to be prepared for the eventuality of a recession, Alberta arts organizations are ready. Indeed, they have been in the process of preparing for an economic downturn since the last economic downturn of the 1980's. According to Greg Epton of Alberta Theatre Projects, "there have been substantial initiatives coast to coast that have improved the strength, planning and governance models of arts groups" (cited in Hunt, 2009, p. A6). As we have seen, government granting agencies have prioritized economically-driven operations through grant applications to force the implementation of such changes. Therefore, though ordinary Canadians hate to think of the socially valuable arts in quantitative terms, it may turn out that imposed economic prioritization by government will be the measure that preserves the intrinsic value of the arts for a post-recession society.

Author

Brigit Knecht is a professional violinist who currently performs as assistant concertmaster with the Red Deer Symphony, as an extra with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, and as a member of the Vad, Helia, and Players Ensembles. She has been a member of such groups as the Oklahoma City Philharmonic, the Flint Symphony, the Waterbury Symphony, the Armadillo String Quartet and the Crouse String Quartet. Brigit has appeared as a guest artist with the Land's End Chamber Ensemble, Kensington Sinfonia, and New Works Calgary, and as a resident artist at the Banff Centre. In 2005 Brigit performed the World Premiere of

Mirror Image, a solo violin work written specifically for her by composer Tawnie Olson, at Paine Hall in Boston. A recipient of the Canadian Federation of University Women's Creative Arts Award, her recordings include the independently released CD, *Uncharted*, with the Armadillo String Quartet and many concert recordings for CBC radio. Brigit also works as a musical director in the theatre. Nominated for a Betty Mitchell award, her favorite place to be is conducting from the orchestra pit. Selected credits include: *Bat Boy the Musical* (Mob Hit productions, Betty nom.), *Jaques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris* (Yale School of Drama), *Dido and Aeneas* (Opera Workshop), *The Captives* (Knebworth House), *An Ideal Husband* (Weston Playhouse). Brigit also plays the role of scholar at the University of Calgary where she teaches arts-based courses in both communications and engineering. She holds an M. Mus from Yale University, a B. Mus from the University of Calgary, and in 2010 will complete her PhD in cultural policy.

References

Akin, D., & J. O'Neill. (2008, August 26). Harper defends government's commitment to cultural sector. *CanWest News*. Southam Publications Inc. Retrieved Sept. 5, 2008, from <http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/>.

Alberta Foundation for the Arts. (2002). *Alberta Major Performing Arts Companies 2002-2003 Operating Grant Program application*. Government of Alberta.

Alberta Foundation for the Arts. (2003). *Alberta Major Performing Arts Companies 2002-2003 Operating Grant Program application*. Government of Alberta.

Alberta Foundation for the Arts. (2004). *Alberta Major Performing Arts Companies 2002-2003 Operating Grant Program application*. Government of Alberta.

Alberta Foundation for the Arts. (2005). *Alberta Major Performing Arts Companies 2002-2003 Operating Grant Program application*. Government of Alberta.

Alberta Foundation for the Arts. (2006). *Alberta Major Performing Arts Companies 2002-2003 Operating Grant Program application*. Government of Alberta.

Alberta Foundation for the Arts. (2007). *Alberta Major Performing Arts Companies 2002-2003 Operating Grant Program application*. Government of Alberta.

Alberta Foundation for the Arts. (2008). *Alberta Major Performing Arts Companies 2002-2003 Operating Grant Program application*. Government of Alberta.

- Flanagan, G. (2005). Not just about money: Provincial budgets and political ideology. In T. Harrison (Ed.), *The return of the Trojan Horse: Alberta and the new world (dis)order*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Fraser, F. (2003). *Alberta's Camelot: Culture and the arts in the Lougheed years*. Edmonton, Alberta: Lone Pine Publishing.
- Harrison, T. (2005). Introduction. In T. Harrison (Ed.), *The return of the Trojan Horse: Alberta and the new world (dis)order*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Hunt, S. (2009, January 6). Hard times nothing new to city artists. *Calgary Herald*, A1 & A6.
- Melnyk, G. (1995). Culture and the State in Alberta. In T. Harrison, & G. Laxer (Eds.) *The Trojan Horse: Alberta and the future of Canada*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Nikiforuk, A., S. Pratt, & D. Wanagas. (1987). *Running on empty: Alberta after the boom*. Edmonton: NeWest Press.
- Simpson, J. (Ed). (2008). Sustainability. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Retrieved September 12, 2008, from <http://www.askoxford.com/?view=uk> .
- Smith, P.J. (2001). Alberta: Experiments in governance from social credit to the Klein revolution. In K. Brownsey & M. Howlett (Eds.) *The Provincial State in Canada: Politics in the provinces and territories*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press.
- Whitson, D., K. Wall, & D. Cardinal. (2006, May). *Alberta cultural policy. From rags to riches to relics*. Paper presented at the Canadian Studies Association Conference, York University, Toronto, ON.