



## **Curtain Call 2011**

**May 2, 2011**

### **Ginny Loulouides' Address to A.R.T./New York Members**

Good evening. I'm Ginny Loulouides, the Executive Director of the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York (A.R.T./New York) and I want to welcome you – our members, our donors and board, Commissioners Kate Levin and Rob Walsh, and most of all, our Local Heroes, to *Curtain Call 2011*. I would like to give a special welcome to the participants of the TS Eliot US/UK exchange, especially all of the young British actors, producers, writers and directors.

I want to take this moment to thank Todd Haimes, Julia Levy, Harold Wolpert, David Solomon, and the wonderful staff of the Roundabout Theatre Company, for once again hosting *Curtain Call* at the Harold & Mimi Steinberg Center's Laura Pels Theatre. It is a beautiful and a most fitting space for the Pulitzer Prize winning Lynn Nottage to deliver the 2011 Laura Pels Keynote address. Thank you Laura for your continued generosity and support of this important speech; and special thanks to Lynn, for giving what I know will be an inspiring keynote.

I also want to thank all of our members, and my wonderful staff, for continuing to inspire me onstage and off. Despite budget cuts and dips in contributed giving, you have inspired me more than ever – from Pan Asian's *MONSTER*, which brought to light effects of *AGENT ORANGE* and the Vietnam War on this country, to Keen Company's *BENEFACTORS* which described how the battle between preservationists and developers impacted the lives of two couples. This year, our members Theatre for a New Audience and The Public produced two different, but excellent productions of *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*, while the New Group's *BLOOD FROM A STONE* premiered a writer, Tommy Nohilly, who may be this century's Eugene O'Neill. Obviously there were hundreds of wonderful productions, which I couldn't get to see or mention this evening, but please know that I so value and appreciate your work.

Our playwrights are the conscience of our country, and now more than ever we need to encourage them to write, because some segments of this country have lost their moral compass.



This year's Congressional budget battles combined with the outrageous behavior of the Tea Party, had taken their toll and, despite 20 years of advocating on behalf of the arts, I found myself depressed and in need of a break. Fortunately, I have just returned from a two-week respite that included a visit with the wonderful Micki Hobson at her home in Kure Beach, NC. Micki doesn't subscribe to any newspapers and I was officially off e-mail so for a few days, the actions of Congress, the State Legislature, and the challenges facing Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council were not top of mind.

The one urgent e-mail Micki shared with me was an invitation from City Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, inviting me to speak at a Forum at the Museum of the Moving Image on Saturday, May 21 called, "Vision NYC: Envisioning a City Sustained by Culture and the Arts" which will feature three panels. The first panel will ask Executive Directors "What do we want Culture in NYC to Look Like in 2030 and what do we think we need to do to get there?" The second panel explores the Role Artists Play in Creating a Culturally Sustained City, while the final panel, which will feature DCA Commissioner Kate Levin, will discuss the role arts funding plays in government.

I was honored to be asked to participate in this Forum, particularly since A.R.T./New York has been studying our members' health: first with the support of the Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust and subsequently through our Rockefeller NYC Cultural Innovation Grant. Our initial research demonstrated that our theatres' quick response to the fiscal crisis of 2008 and their resilience kept most out of harm's way. However, given the NEW NORMAL and the overall drop in expendable income, it became clear to us that many of our theatres could no longer produce on the same scale as they had prior to the crash. What is more, our research indicated that the recession could last WELL INTO 2013.

Last year, after describing the first component of our Rockefeller Initiative, *Theatres Leading Change*, at *Curtain Call*, dozens of you contacted us and expressed an interest in participating in the program. After surveying interested theatres we selected 19 companies and A.R.T./New York, to work with Nello McDaniel and Anne Dunning of Arts Action Research to explore new ways of producing, structuring and compensating their artists and staff, as well as creating for-profit subsidiaries.

In our continued effort to explore new models and the way change will impact our future, we are proud to present Writer, Activist and Consultant Arlene Goldbard on Friday, May 20<sup>th</sup> for a two part presentation at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Street Project's 5 Angels Theatre. Arlene will begin at 10 am with a 90 minute talk called "Flipping the Script: Putting Art at the Center (Where It Belongs)." This talk invites you into a fresh, long, and deep view of art's public purpose: by asking, "What is the true value of your work? How can it best be understood and communicated? Come prepared to be inspired, challenged, and enlivened.

Arlene's talk will be followed by "Reframing the Arts" a workshop specially designed to



expand our thinking, by creating new frames—new concepts, images, and metaphors—that are big and strong enough to convey the real and awesome power of human creative expression. All A.R.T./New York members are invited to this free, interactive and inspiring talk, which begins at 10 am, and the follow-up workshop which will run from 11:45 am to 3:30 PM. The day’s events are funded by the Rockefeller Foundation NYC Cultural Innovation Fund.

Meanwhile, A.R.T./New York’s component of our Rockefeller Initiative is an examination of how we can adapt our programs and services to respond to the outcomes of this study.

One example of our new ways of approaching theatre producing can be seen in the design and planning that went into A.R.T./New York’s two, 99-seat theatres at Archstone-Clinton, as well as the work we are beginning with respect to the management and financing of these spaces and the work presented in our theatres.

After consulting with dozens of potential users as well as other theatre owners, our architect, Toshiko Mori and our theatrical design team at ARUP have helped us develop two very different spaces that provide the artist with ultimate flexibility in seating and stage configuration. We challenged our design team further by asking that they use durable and sustainable materials and include amenities such as a washer/dryer, props storage, and wi-fi capabilities throughout the building.

Our theatres will have a rehearsal studio as well as public space for events and post-show gatherings. They will be fully equipped with state-of-the-art lighting, sound, and projection equipment – thereby saving renters thousands of dollars! None of this would be possible without the generosity of Mayor Bloomberg, the City Council under Speaker Christine Quinn, Borough President Scott Stringer, the New York Community Trust, the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation and board members Carol Mitchell and Tim Hartzell.

We are now about to launch the second phase of our capital campaign, to raise enough money so help subsidize the cost of theatre rentals, as well as the future maintenance of theatres and our two shared office spaces: Spaces at 520 and South Oxford Space in Brooklyn. Since our theatres will have a 99-year lease, and we will have to start paying real estate taxes in 2026, I hope that by 2030 New York State will pass a bill-exempting landlords' who rent performance space to non-profit theatre and dance companies from paying real estate taxes on these spaces.

What NEA Chair Rocco Landesman describes as a problem of too many theatres given reduced demand, A.R.T./New York views as a structural problem. Through our Rockefeller Initiative, A.R.T./New York is seeking more efficient ways of producing theatre while adapting to the needs of our artists. For example, with the Showcase Code serving as the default contract for most companies producing in theatres with 99-seat or less, and in



particular those theatres who develop new work, the four week, 42 hour per week rehearsal period makes no sense.

Perhaps in return for a longer developmental process we can find a way to increase the fees we pay artists. This year, while A.R.T./New York was meeting with Directors and AEA Stage Managers in an effort to better understand our artists' wants and needs, Ralph Lewis and actor/playwrights Lisa Kron and, David Greenspan, as well as producers Susan Bernfield and Maria Striar were meeting with the Dramatist Guild to discuss the same topic. Between us, I believe that a compromise can hopefully be found --well before the year 2030.

For theatre to remain healthy well into the year 2030, we must challenge every producing assumption: from 8 PM curtains, to season subscriptions, to the requirement that every company produce a SEASON OF WORK.

Consider just two of this season's biggest hits: Elevator Repair Service's GATZ and The Civilian's *IN THE FOOTPRINT: the Battle Over Atlantic Yards*. Both shows were produced by ensemble-based companies, who had decided that they could no longer develop AND produce their work. Instead both ERS and the Civilians accept commissions and develop plays and musicals that interest them.

*IN THE FOOTPRINT* was initially presented under the title *Brooklyn at Eye Level* at the Brooklyn Lyceum in 2008. It finally received its World Premiere at the Irondale Center in January 2011. The company has since commissioned Lynn Nottage and composer Kirsten Childs to write a musical based on early interviews with local residents and other key stakeholders in this long, drawn-out battle. This summer, The Williamstown Theatre Festival will present the World Premiere of another Civilian piece: "You Better Sit Down: Tales From My Parents' Divorce".

Meanwhile, Elevator Repair Service's GATZ ended its highly successful run at the PUBLIC last fall after having undergone an equally long developmental process. First produced in Brussels in May 2006, GATZ played throughout Europe before arriving in the US. This fall their co-production with New York Theatre Workshop of *The Select (The Sun Also Rises)* will launch the Workshop's 2011 - 2012 season. Several companies in Philadelphia, New York, Florida and Boston as well as Theaterformen Hannover/Braunschweig commissioned *The Select*.

Elevator Repair Service and the Civilians have clearly benefited from their decision to focus on developing BUT not producing their work. One of the things we will be exploring through our Rockefeller Initiative is whether more companies can adopt this model.

Now imagine taking this idea a step further and developing a structure, which allows artists to produce work without having the encumbrances that come with having a COMPANY!



Rather than have 140 companies, with annual operating budgets below \$100,000, perhaps we should encourage these groups to operate as artistic micro-businesses. These artists would come together when they have work they want to create: work that could eventually be produced by a company in or beyond New York City.

This model (which I must thank The Chocolate Factory, PS 122 and the Field for initially exploring) could replace the current situation, which limits rehearsal hours and performance weeks in such a way that make it all but impossible to break even on one Showcase Production, let alone the second production that most funders require. Imagine, if funding could be provided to a group of artists to create a new play or musical, as opposed to a theatre company or a presenter? Rather than have an overabundance of theatre companies, we might find ourselves with fewer new works, but works that have had the necessary development period to make them attractive to the national and international theater market.

Some companies, like Nature Theatre of Oklahoma, might come together occasionally – under the fiscal sponsorship of The Field or Fractured Atlas, in order to secure grants without having to create a stand-alone not-for-profit.

Finally, as part of our Rockefeller Initiative A.R.T./New York is also exploring various staff combinations-- from staff sharing (such as a marketing director who works for several companies) to outsourcing functions such as financial management.

By 2030 I want New York City's culture to reflect the demographics of this City. I want every resident to feel that going to the theatre is her right and privilege as a citizen of this great City. I want the theatre to be affordable, and at the same time, I want those who work in the theater, to be able to afford to do so, with benefits such as health care and - dare I dream - a pension.

According to Dr. Joseph Salvo, Director of Population for NYC's office of City Planning, by the year 2030, every member of the large baby-boom cohort will be at least 65 years old. As a result, the share of the population that is elderly will increase from 11.7 percent in 2000 to 14.8 percent in 2030. I will be 74 and I hope that some of the outcomes of our Rockefeller Initiative result in better theatre and a better life for those in the theatre. As for me, I intend to remain active, using my TDF vouchers to see as much of your work as possible. THANK YOU.

Before I close, I just want to give additional thanks to Jetaun Dobbs, Bobby Wolf, Sweet Concessions, Chuck Prescott and Irene St. Onge; the A.R.T./New York staff, especially our Dynamic Duo – Taylor Gramps and Zach Hollwedel, and this evening's generous sponsors: The Laura Pels International Foundation for Theatre, TheaterMania and DeWitt Stern.



And now I'd like to invite our Cultural Affairs' Commissioner, Kate Levin, who was kind enough to stop by on one of her busiest evenings, to say a few words.

Thank you Kate.

And now it gives me great pleasure to introduce Joylon Stern, the heart and soul behind the DeWitt Stern Local Hero Award!