

Performing Arts Alliance – Ben Cameron Key Note Address – November 3, 2010.

Thank you for that lovely introduction and for your kindness in inviting me to be with you. The foundation where I work has always supported the work of your counterparts in the United States, recognizing that a hundred strong orchestras, for example, may not be the same thing as a strong dance field—and that it is in the work you do that much of that difference lies. Having led a service organization for more than eight years, I understand the tightrope you walk between leadership and service to your respective fields—a metaphoric tension of balancing time scrubbing the decks with being in the crow’s nest to discern what can’t be seen when consumed with the day to day—and I am delighted to see this group convening to discuss your collective future. Collaboration and cooperation can be difficult to promote within a single field, and becomes dramatically more complex when reaching across disciplines. Yet I think the premise of this meeting is a far-sighted and important one, and I congratulate you for your part in making this happen.

We gather in a time in which the arts community in the United States, at least, finds itself under enormous stress. In the wake of the global financial crisis—a crisis which, as our constantly yo-yoing stock market tells us, may be far from over-- philanthropy at every level has been deeply shaken: individual donations to the arts trended rapidly southwards in 2008 and have yet to recover; government support—depending on where you live in our country—followed suit in 2009 and continues to decline—often precipitously--, and corporate giving entered free fall. Every foundation I know experienced dramatic losses in its investment portfolio, with a field wide average loss in excess of 30% (including the loss of \$800 million from our portfolio at Doris Duke), and few have been able to maintain pre-2008 giving levels.

Earned revenues have been comparably affected. Those groups fortunate enough to have endowments now find them “below water”—a decline that places current value below original invested corpus and (in some areas) makes it illegal to take any endowment earnings at all. General consumer anxiety, coupled with declines in discretionary income and unemployment,

has impacted earned as well as continued revenues, and audiences in the performing arts continue to decline.

For those of you who are service organizations, this may well be feeling this double pinch—decline in the philanthropic dollars you are able to raise, at the same time your members are pressed more than ever for every dollar, finding membership or services funds hard to spare if not impossible to find, even as they need your services more than ever. In the United States, your counterparts are caught in a terrible squeeze, and even while some are willing to work with delayed payment schedules, the pressures to balance their own budgets are now enormous, and their own deficits growing.

For arts organizations, the litany of strategies in this context is well known: downscaling or eliminating programs and convenings; hiring freezes, staff furloughs, layoffs, elimination of retirement or health benefits, emergency fundraising appeals all to stave off the worst case—closure—strategies that to many often seem futile. It is a “new normal,” as a recent report indicated—a time of newly limited resources without significant growth in sight for most groups—and with that acceptance comes the evaporation of that special will to “dig deep,” to go that extra mile in giving—all of which made budgeting and planning for the current year the hardest and ugliest exercise yet.

As overwhelming as this can seem, I would humbly suggest we disserve ourselves if we define our challenges primarily in terms of the financial crisis. Indeed, to be even bolder, while our collective financial fortunes—as meager as they are—are under assault, the crisis that nonprofit arts organizations and artists face is not financial.

To explain; at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation where I work, our late benefactress charged us in her will with the care of “actors, singers, dancers and musicians in the presentation and performance of their work”—a directive that, in intersection with her lifelong

passions, has led us to dedicate our resources to artists working in jazz, contemporary dance, and theatre, and the organizations who nurture, present and produce them.

As we entered our 10th year of grantmaking in 2007, we convened more than 700 artists, managers, administrators and board members in 22 meetings to explore the issues they faced in the new millennium.

We heard three kinds of issues in these conversations. We heard idiosyncratic issues—issues particular to one field but not to others—issues of career transition for dancers, who train in many cases foregoing college and other vocational training and at the age of 35 find themselves at the end of the careers with no clear alternatives about how now to spend their lives—a powerful, hugely challenging issue but one that does not resonate for jazz artists—artists who play often into their 70's, 80's and 90's but who now face the disintegration of the road and the collapse of the traditional recorded music industry—an issue that means little to the theatre artist, and so on.

We heard chronic issues—issues of under- undercapitalization for arts groups, only a fraction of whom have—or perhaps I should say had—ample reserves, significant fixed assets, and endowments—and issues of under-compensation, not only of artists, but of managers, administrators and technicians. Indeed, when we talk about the philanthropic support for the arts—the donations of individuals, corporations, government and foundations—too often we forget that we are an industry predicated on discounted labor and that the single largest philanthropic sector of all is the artists, administrators and technicians whose lives the work is made.

While these issues are hugely critical—and indeed, we must continue to work to overcoming them-- we called them chronic because, quite frankly, those of us old enough to remember heard the same issues in comparable conversations 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago and more.

Four issues, however, emerged as especially powerful in all fields, and as especially particular to our 21st Century.

First, we heard concerns about the increasing dysfunctionality of the 501(c)3 model—the breakdown of old fundraising strategies, the difficulties of managing boards, and the hunger for new models, as arts leaders, increasingly overwhelmed said “I went into this business, not from desire to manage a large organization, but because of a love for the arts. Now my life is about fundraising, board cultivation, school board policy, advocacy and the like. Weeks go by without my setting foot in a rehearsal hall, artists come and go in our building whose names I don’t even know. Something is wrong with this picture: isn’t there another way for us to finance and support the work we are called to do?”

Second, we heard concern about an impending generational transfer of leadership—an especially apt topic for today. While much of similar past conversation focused on where we might find these new leaders, especially given different expectations from young people around higher compensation, shorter hours—in essence less patience for the sacrificed lives of dignity and the financial masochism that were the givens for so many in my own generation—the conversation was revealing in a new way. “There are plenty of us eager to give ourselves to the arts, but we don’t want to be the mere custodians of those institutions you have already made,” the young people in the room said. “Unless we are given the same authority to reinvent and reshape organizations as you yourselves were given, we are not interested”—a point of view that focuses the issue, not on the identities of heirs apparent, but on organizational capacity for flexibility and change.

We heard about the erosion of audiences in every field—declining subscription renewals, difficulties in attracting single ticket buyers, increased “churn”—a term reflecting the high percentage—typically 70-75%—of audience members who attend a single event in a season and do not return—the collapse in the window of social planning post 9/11, when seemingly

overnight audiences shifted from committing, not two to four weeks in advance, but more typically purchasing on the day of or, if you're lucky, 24-48 hours in advance—a disorienting shift that continues to plague box office and marketing departments who struggle to understand the implications on a Tuesday for a sparsely sold Saturday performance. Even before the economic collapse, we faced a populace characterized by over-scheduling and exhaustion—a time in which 42% of men and 55% of women say they are too tired to do the things they truly want to do, and where the #1 answer to the question of most eagerly anticipated use of a free evening is no longer dinner with friends or a movie or a performing arts event, but is instead “a good night’s sleep.” After decades of growth, our audiences are shrinking and that our own financial needs, driven in many cases by escalating fixed costs of facilities, insurance, health care and more, in tandem with negative shifts in funding mean escalating ticket prices that threaten to place attendance beyond so many in our communities we wish to reach and serve.

Finally, we heard the struggle to understand more fully the impact of technology on the live performing arts. While many of us greeted the internet as a potential new force in marketing, its realized potential is, if anything, too effective: in trying to attract the attention of potential ticket buyers, we now compete with (depending on who you read) between 3-5,000 different marketing messages a typical American sees every single day. In fact, technology has emerged as our biggest competitor for leisure time: the average American spends 25.7 hours of leisure watching television or online each week—the majority of that online, with internet consumption having grown from 8.9 hours per week to 14.2 hours in the last three years alone. And by the time Net-geners reach their twenties, they will have spent more than 20,000 hours on the Internet and an additional 10,000 hours playing video games, a trend producing a radical redefinition of a cultural market in which computer games now outsell movie and music recordings combined.

Most profoundly, perhaps, technology is altering the very assumptions of consumption: thanks to the internet, we believe we can get anything we want, whenever we want it, customized to

our own personal specifications. We can shop at three in the morning or ten o'clock at night, expectations of convenience and personalization that live performing arts organizations—organizations who depend on set curtain times, specific geographic venues, and attendant inconveniences of parking, travel and the like—simply cannot meet. And in an age where young people especially access culture on demand through YouTube and iTunes any time they want it and for little or no apparent cost, what will it mean in the future when we ask a potential audience member to pay \$100 for a symphony, opera or dance ticket, when that consumer has been accustomed to downloading on the internet for .99 a song or for free?

However particular these issues feel to us in the arts, we are not alone: we are essentially in the midst of a realignment of cultural expression and communication—a realignment that is shaking the newspaper and television industries, the publishing and book industries, and (in an indication of what may be yet to come) has left the recorded music and music distribution industries in disarray. And so I say, the crisis the arts face today is not financial. The crisis we face is one of urgency and relevance: the financial merely redefines the resources we bring to bear in confronting the crisis.

Surely we see ourselves in the words of poet Adrienne Rich in *The Dream of a Common Language XIII*: “We’re out in a country that has no language, no laws...Whatever we do together is pure invention. The maps they gave us were out of date by years...”

And aren't you glad you invited me here to brighten your day?

In looking to the future, I find inspiration in the words of two different thinkers: our 19th Century American President Abraham Lincoln, who in his second inaugural address said, “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. As our case is new, so must we think anew and act anew.”

And Wayne Gretzky, the Canadian ice hockey player, who when asked to account for his greatness said simply, “I skate to where the puck will be.”

In a time when the world economy is hitting the reset button and the mantra in economic circles now is less “economic recovery” than “economic reinvention,” how do we see the present as an invitation in the arts to fundamentally reinvent what we do and how we operate?

At the 2009 ISPA Conference in New York, someone asked, “What would it mean if we recognized our current moment as the arts equivalent to the Religious Reformation of the 15th Century?”

That image has been a rich one for me to consider. The religious reformation was spurred in large by technological breakthrough--the invention of the printing press and the subsequent wide spread public access to both scripture and to religious tracts—and the current Art Reformation is being deeply shaped by a redistribution of knowledge and practice with the invention of the internet.

Both the past religious and the current reformations decimated old business structures. National Arts Strategies CEO Russell Willis Taylor has waggishly said, “The reformation was a great time to be a land buyer and an awful time to be a monastery”—an observation that begs the question of whether the ultimate fate for today’s major arts institutions will be akin to the monastic.

But perhaps most significantly, both reformations essentially challenged the notions of the necessity of intermediation in a spiritual relationship.

Chris Anderson, editor of *Wired* magazine and author of a book entitled *The Long Tail*, for example, sees in technology the unleashing of a veritable tsunami of creative energy. With the invention and now affordability of cell phones, mini cams, computer software and more, he

notes, the means of artistic production have been democratized for the first time in human history. In the 1930's, people who wished to make a movie had to work for Warner Brothers or RKO, for who could afford cameras, lighting equipment, editing equipment and more? Now who among us does not know a 14 year old hard at work on her second, third or fourth film?

Furthermore, the means of artistic distribution have been democratized. Again, in the 30's, the major studios played that role; now upload your film onto YouTube or Facebook, and you have instant world-wide distribution with the click of a button.

This double impact is occasioning a massive redefinition of authorship and the cultural market. Today everyone is a potential author—and while the market for traditional arts audiences may be eroding, the market for arts participants—those citizens who dance or write poetry, who paint or sing, who make their own films is exploding as indeed the arts market paradigm shifts from consumption to broader participation in which attendance is only one option. We are witnessing an exponential growth in the number of amateurs doing work at a professional level—a group dubbed elsewhere as the Pro-Ams—a group whose work populates YouTube, Film festivals, dance competitions and more, a group who are expanding our aesthetic vocabulary, even as they assault our traditional notions of cultural authority and undermine the assumed ability of traditional arts organizations to set the cultural agenda. Indeed, at a debate I witnessed in Montreal three years ago culminated in a government minister essentially saying, “You people”—(never my favorite phrase)—“should just declare victory and move on. Virtually everyone in my district writes poetry or reads fiction, paints pictures or listens to music, plays an instrument or acts in the local community theatre. You professional artists could disappear tomorrow and no one would even notice the difference”—a stunning rebuke of the entire nonprofit sector and the professional artist that the assembled found themselves unable to adequately counter and one likely to have significant implications, not only for the work we need to undertake to be able to articulate the value added by the arts professional, but for the longer term implications of what shifting notions of amateur/professional are likely to mean for our fields.

It is in embracing rather than denying this shift from consumption to participation that the possibilities—the necessities—for a new chapter in the arts and in our arts practices arises.

Clearly maximizing resources will be critical—the second highest priority in your own recent survey—especially at a time when your own surveys indicate that your members need you to do more and more.

Organizations everywhere are increasingly thoughtful about partnerships, collaborations, shared services, reduction of duplicated efforts, and the possibilities of mergers— including potentially mergers across discipline lines or involving complementary organizations, e.g. a playwright development program with a producing theatre. Pricing structures, collaborative use of facilities, partnerships with those outside the arts—all are seriously on the table as we examine our future in new, expansive ways.

In a time when scarcity of resources heightens the competitive urge and can make it so easy to turn on one another, we are elevating the discourse to a vision of an arts ecology, realizing that praising theatre while disparaging dance or opera, arguing for the avant-garde while denigrating the mainstream, pleading the case of the smaller at the expense of the larger ultimately advantages no one and harms us all. We are discovering the power of bypassing competition in favor of co-opetition, as Yale author Barry Nailbuff urges—cooperating to grow the pie for us all, even as we continue to inevitably compete for a piece of it—an approach that has obvious appeal in advocacy circles, for example, if we are able to come together to make a fully articulated, cross-disciplinary, single message case for the arts—the single highest priority you identified in your recent survey.

Working across disciplines was more complex. Our work at the American Arts Alliance required us to have hard conversations to agree on a common agenda that we could pursue together—an agenda comprised of three priorities (arts education, immigration law reform, and increased

federal subsidy). It required us to be clear about when we would act as a full alliance—no harm done to any member and collective action pursued even when there was no apparent interest (for example rallying the theatre field to lobby for tax deductibility at market value for visual artists donating paintings, even though it brought no advantage to the theatre field) or acting individually if the activity threatened one field.

Indeed, what we realized slowly and painfully was that our ability to truly collaborate grew from deep mutual understanding on four planes: infrastructural capacity, motives, values, and field/organizational cultures. Where these things were truly understood, the logistics became easy to manage and the unforeseen easy to negotiate: where they were not understood, the collaborations were tortured, protracted, frustrating and doomed in large part to fail.

Our individual organizational cultures were, we realized, a reflection of our own field practices. In planning the first ever National Performing Arts Convention—a collaborative planning by eleven different performing arts fields—we ran into immense difficulty in planning programming. Those of us in theatre prided ourselves on the field's ability to turn on a dime, to program in response to contemporary events, to pull together evenings with amazing speed. We booked out keynote speakers at our own conferences typically three or four months in advance, precisely to exploit the current political climate of the moment—a habit which drove the opera and orchestra fields—fields who secure artist services four or five years in advance in order to get a Renee Fleming or Gustavo Dudamel—insane and anxious when the keynote speaker had yet to be selected with more than two years to go.

AS a result, we found our work was a roller coaster of sorts, requiring each of us to embrace the full range of what cooperation can mean—each of us experiencing at times resignation (where you care neither about the people or the task very strongly); accommodation (less driven by task than by people); compromise (where both are valued although not deeply so); and collaboration, where both are prized highly—and indeed collabetition may be a better goal for the times in which we live—and the range of options is a broad one.

Many service organizations conduct ongoing research among the members—research which often overtaxes a single staff, which is limited in how much it can undertake, and which often is structured in idiosyncratic ways that prevent a larger roll-up to make an aggregate case for the importance of the arts. Can we standardize our research formats if indeed you have yet to do so to make the common case quantifiable? Can we engage in coordinated, focused research—what might we all learn if we focused deeply on compensation in 2011 for example, or audiences in 2012? If our various staffs have different strengths and weaknesses, might different staffs lead the charges on different issues, letting the staff with the strongest capacity for financial analysis lead those efforts, while those most skilled at analyzing human behavior be charged with those, regardless of discipline? Indeed, to be really bold, do we all need individual research departments, for example, or might the departments be consolidated in some way?

We could cooperate around our programming, enhancing our geographic reach—charging one organization to convene artists in Vancouver—a meeting that all artists attend regardless of discipline—while another organization convenes the artists in Nova Scotia. Or we could collaborate around objective—artistic leadership training led by one organization while board training is led by another. The possibilities go on and on.

But it will succeed only to the degree that you are individually and collectively willing to entertain fundamental change.

During my time at Target Stores, I participated in an executive leadership training sequence where Target uses a simple exercise to help create a first-hand “sense memory” experience around change.

The exercise begins with finding a partner. “Look deeply at your partner in silence for 60 seconds,” the exercise begins. Tension in the room escalates instantly: there’s a smattering of

giggling, usually, some under the breath comments, a real sense of embarrassment and self-consciousness as well: for some the 60 seconds fly by, while for others they drag into eternity. “Now turn your back to your partner and change five things about your appearance.” Typically, men loosen their ties, women remove an earring, people move wristwatches to different arms or remove shoes. “Now turn back and find the five things your partner changed.” Most folks are pretty successful on finding at least three or four, and a few astute folks spot all five.

“Now turn your backs again and change 10 more” (and you can’t undo a change from before and count it a new change). A sense of alarm in the room, some more laughter, inevitably someone saying, “I didn’t dress for this; do you want me to strip?” Not everyone even finds 10 things, but once again, you’re instructed to turn back to your partner and identify the changes—with a lower success rate over all.

“Now turn your backs and change 20 more.” Instantly the room revolts: we can’t do this, there aren’t 20, you’re kidding me, etc. (and this happens in EVERY room that I’ve ever seen the exercise conducted in.) “OK, OK,” the facilitator says. “Let’s return to our seats and talk about why this is a metaphor for change.” Men put ties back on, women put those spike heels back on, and once we’ve comfortably restored ourselves and the room stills, we learn why this is a perfect metaphor for change.

First of all, when I told you to look deeply at your partner or didn’t tell you why or what was coming next, the anxiety in the room went up. Change always provokes anxiety: in fact, if you’re not anxious, you’re not really confronting change. Anxiety is not necessarily a sign that something is wrong or that you need to shift direction; anxiety simply needs to be managed.

Second, time is elastic and works differently for different people. Certainly, change is ever accelerating. We went from 5 to 10 to 20, and the next would have been 40. In this world especially, change is operating in exponential, rather than incremental, scales. More important, we must be sensitive to the different rhythms with which our employees and our fields react.

Leaders often work together to create a plan—a plan that inevitably involves loss to someone and spring the plan on employees or fields, mystified by their inability to sign on board instantly. Frankly, those leaders have already had four or five months to grieve the loss of old programs and accommodate themselves to the new: certainly we cannot expect our fields to require less.

Third, when confronted with change, people tend to react in a competitive, rather than a cooperative mode. No one in the room typically in making those first five changes said, “What are the five most obvious changes I can make that my partner will most easily find?” No one put a shoe on top of her head. Instead, everyone instantly tried to make the five smallest, subtlest changes (which may also be worth noting) that her partner would not find. People caught in change default instantly to competition, not cooperation.

Fourth, in a time of change, people typically focus on what they must give up. People started taking things off; remember that “I didn’t dress for this; do you want me to strip?” Few go back to their chairs and put things back on—hats, jackets, etc.

The next two for me are perhaps the most powerful of all. Lesson Five: during change, people typically only focus on what is already theirs. If this woman in the front row and I had been partners, and had I then turned to the gentleman beside her and said, “Sir, take my tie; can you let me have your shoe?”—essentially if I had been able to turn my focus from what was mine to what was ours—we could have done 20, 40, 80, we could have gone on for hours.

And finally, when the pressure to change is removed, people revert to old behavior, even if it is a less comfortable place to be. Participants are much more comfortable at the end of the exercise at the end than they had been at the beginning, but as soon as the official exercise was over, those ties go back on, those spike heels back on, etc.— in essence reverted to old behavior because of its familiarity, even when the end result was a far more comfortable place to be.

Especially if you lead an organization or a marketing staff, let me urge you to consider these lessons—and especially to free yourself of the burden of the solution by enlisting the partnership of a broader sphere of employees and board members in deriving the solutions that will help you move forward.

These lessons have huge implications for much of the work your members have asked you to do. The cry for a public awareness campaign-- is a case in point. While the theatre field clamored for us to do the “Got Milk” equivalent campaign for theatre in the United States (a call echoed in your own survey with more than 50% of you rating it a “1” or a “2”), such an effort was beyond our means—the more than \$90 million the dairy industry spends on that campaign each year—a campaign, incidentally that has not grown the milk consumer audience but has merely arrested its decline—was a resource base we did not have. How is it, we asked, that we can leverage the resources we already control for the benefit of all—turning our collective attention from what may be mine to what it ours? After much wrangling and planning, we launched the first Free Night of Theatre—a dedicated evening where any citizen could attend a nonprofit theatre they had never attended before for free. (The very description reveals perhaps how complex these negotiations had grown—if people equate paying with value, should people pay something vs. free? How could we increase access without inadvertently cannibalizing our ongoing audiences and subscriber bases? What happened if your theatre was dark that night? What should the tag line be? The image that could serve the diversity of the kinds of theatre the membership comprised? Could some group substitute a free open house for a full performance? And more and more...). We moved cautiously—three major cities launching the pilot in the first year. But even in just those three cities, we distributed more than 60,000 tickets, received enormous media coverage, were given unasked for a free Sunday supplement describing every nonprofit theatre in the bay area by the largest newspaper in San Francisco, and were declared the cultural event of the year there, with more than 80% of those using free tickets being true first time attendees. Might we think together about a Free Night for all art forms, working together?

Redirecting the attention from what is mine to what is ours.

The work ahead will invite you to test your own risk tolerance and to push past your individual comfort zones. But the learning will be directly proportionate to the risk—a risk I urge you to embrace—and will pave the way to a larger agenda that cannot help but benefit you and that may well pave the way for the biggest and scariest issue of all—the possibilities of your own collective mergers as the arts move increasingly towards an interdisciplinary orientation where discipline discreet organizations make less and less sense, especially to a rising generation of artists. Indeed, the uber question may be whether there is value in a collective organization for the arts—an organization that may have a specific desk for theatre or for dance or for union negotiations—but that binds the arts together rather than perpetuating the divisions that have limited us in the past.

I for one am optimistic about the future of the arts, although I have not sounded it until now. Two years ago, I decided to plunge myself into the belly of the proverbial beast and attended Pop Tech, an annual conference in Camden ME for 500 high tech folks, bringing them together to listen to—and interact with—high level thinkers of every stripe and description. Contrary to my expectations, this was not a conference designed to talk about startups or financing: it was—and is—a conference where we listened to world thinkers about the human brain. Global warming. International warfare and terrorism. AIDS research. And the arts, with many artists participating on panels and each session followed by a live performance—Vanessa German, a spoken word artist who blew the roof off with her raw evocation of feeling, a hip hop dancer on crutches, a Gospel Choir of HIV+ singers from the African continent.

While arts conferences are often dominated increasingly by prospects for survival—how will we compete in a market-driven world? How will we keep ourselves on the funding agenda? What will it take to raise an endowment?—the issue of survivability was never raised at PopTech. The assumption is that many will not—and perhaps should not—survive. Instead, here the

issues were not how we will survive financially, but how we will change the world. How we will solve global warming. How we will solve AIDS. How we will leave the world a healthier, ecologically balanced, less poverty ridden place. Indeed, the unspoken agenda was that there is nothing that we cannot do, and in the world of high tech, truly anything is possible.

You might call this arrogance.

You may call it hubris.

But what became clear to me is that within this world of infinite possibilities, there are new possibilities for us in the arts.

On the one hand, I was encouraged that this group fought to get there. Camden, ME is not an easy place to access, and if any community can convene virtually, this one can. Yet through PopTech and TED and more, this community insists on coming together because of the unique value of live, face to face, collective experience, to conspiring—meaning to breathe together, to breathing the same air. And throughout PopTech, a minor chord, a palpable hunger throbbed in the background. This group was desperate to slow down, to lead less frenetic lives, to find the courage to live for their passions. More and more, they placed premium on contemplation, on captivation, on focus and extended surrender to single experience—experiences that would captivate, resonate emotionally, at its best enhance spiritual value—to the very things that we in the arts do.

They recognized the ultimate irony of their own success—that prosperity without spiritual enrichment does not bring fulfillment, and in the face of a growing culture dedicated to convenience—to no-iron shirts and microwave meals, to hands free parking and more, all striving to convince us that ease is good and effort is bad, there is value—irreplaceable value in the difficult, in the complex, in the ambiguous and the real.

Especially now, in an age of demonization and fear of difference, of intolerant social policies and politicians who encourage us to view our fellow human beings with fear and hostility and suspicion—an age of announcements to report suspicious behavior to the authorities nearest us—we must seize our role in the formation of our national characters, remembering that we gather audiences to look at our fellow human beings with curiosity and generosity. However dramatically our business models will change, the urgency of this quest will remain the same. I salute you all as social activists pledged and dedicated to a world of understanding, of tolerance, of compassion, of hope.

I thank you for everything you do—for your artists, your arts organizations, for your communities, for your nation—and not only for what you have been for what you can be—a force for change and a voice for you all, in direct proportion to how strongly you use and support it.

And I thank you for your kindness and generosity in listening to me this morning. Thank you and God speed.