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RE: The Broad Stage

Dear Len,

I recently had the pleasure of meeting Jane Deknatel for breakfast to discuss the successes and recent challenges at the Broad Stage. I wanted to take a moment to share my thoughts about those challenges and an approach to the Broad's next chapter as it approaches its tenth anniversary and a significant change in leadership.

Obviously, the art is paramount. World-class, engaging, thoughtful programming is the bedrock of the Broad Stage. I trust that all the candidates will begin with the essential primacy of the work on stage. I also trust that should our conversation continue we'll have the opportunity to talk about that work at length and how my two decades in the trenches of Los Angeles' cultural community equip me to uniquely guide that programming and vision. The questions I'd like to propose are whether a programmatic vision *alone* is sufficient in today's artistic climate?

After all, the cultural and philanthropic landscape has evolved since the Broad was conceived and opened. While an 'if you build it, they will come' approach welcomed the Broad (and before it the Geffen) on the westside, we know that the atmosphere has changed. As the cultural landscape of Los Angeles becomes (thankfully) more competitive and crowded; as other presenters either expand (UCLA) or begin to find their voices (The Wallis); as southern California's regional theaters look more like 'presenters' with each season; as museums like the Hammer are not only opening their doors free of charge but also offering programming that competes for time and attention - The Broad has both the challenge and the opportunity to distinguish itself as a leader. I would argue that the art, itself, while *always the origin* must be buttressed by a world-class institution and vision. What I would like to share and focus on is my passion and vision for the work that extends *beyond* the stage: a profound belief that the demands of generating both the audience and the funding require that our work be as inspiring off-stage as on.

How do we create a truly world-class institution? How do we leverage and extend the programming so that the Broad Stage is not simply one of several presenters in Los Angeles, but instead such an integral part of the civic, cultural, and philanthropic fabric of Santa Monica (and Los Angeles) that it is seen as essential, indispensable?

I do not want to suggest that I have all the answers. I have only begun to learn about the specific, though not unique, challenges the Broad faces. Ultimately, it will be the collective answers of audience, neighbor, donor, board member, staff, artists - that will distinguish the Broad. But this is, after-all, a search for a new leader - for a person entrusted with asking those questions and guiding that collaborative to answers. In that spirit, let me offer some of the initial questions and answers (or perhaps said more clearly, strategies) that would guide me.

PRESENCE

In my breakfast with Jane, she shared her belief that the Broad has a remarkable staff but one that has not been effectively managed. The vision for the work onstage has not extended to the work 'backstage': after all, what we are offering our audience to compete with the 24 hour on-demand internet world is the *un-mediated presence of artists on-stage* - a direct connection with the art. Why should a staff deserve anything less? Why should funders? The leadership required to run a three-theatre complex demands daily presence and attention. I would approach the work offstage - whether it be with artists, staff, funders, stakeholders - with the same care and attention that we would expect from our artists onstage.

CONSISTENCY

We are rarely dazzled by a musician who plays *only* the first movement brilliantly; or moved by an actor who was compelling for *only* the first act; or trust a good friend who was only there for us *some of the time*: yet this is too often what we experience in our artistic leaders. Without consistency, presence is empty. I would approach not only management and fundraising with this vision but also programming. Committing to the performing arts in today's world, whether as a funder, an audience member, or a staff member - is an act of courage. We need to support that courage with a consistency that inspires faith that the institution will be there: to either support an audience who's battled traffic, work commitments, and the plethora of easier entertainment options to support the performing arts; or a funder whose generosity is being sought from all corridors. How do we provide programming, leadership and vision that helps that person take the next step (from neighbor to ticket buyer; from ticket buyer to subscriber; from subscriber to donor; from donor to . . .)? That can mean ensuring that a theatergoer feels supported by the institution more than twice a year; or a dance lover finds her passion echoed in the institution's other programming; or a funder feels appreciated and engaged beyond the compulsory thank you and report: and all three feel challenged to make the next step because the institution is *consistently* challenging itself.

We have all heard artistic leaders with grand exciting visions who all too often fail to follow through on those pronouncements. Consistency, when practiced by the leader, embraced by the staff, and shared with the audience and stakeholders - is the tonic that overcomes this all too frequent pitfall.

CONNECTIVITY

It is painfully ironic that in a world where our refrigerators will soon be able to converse on the internet, our cultural organizations still think in outdated silos that create artificial barriers between the arts. We still organize our seasons separately, envisioning a theater program, a music program, a dance series . . .

You can see the unintended consequence of these rigid silos on the Broad's current website. If you look at the website today, as a theatergoer, it would appear that there are no more offerings for the season. Yet, dig a little further and Anna Deavere Smith appears as a 'special event.' As many paradigms as Ms. Smith has broken and tested across her career, I think we can all still agree she's a theater artist.

I point this out not to emphasize the foibles of web design and taxonomy but as a symptom of a deeper problem shared by presenting organizations nationwide. We conceive of our programs separately; we often market them discretely; we identify our donors and prospects in separate affinity groups (or alternately, present everything at once with no breadcrumbs to guide our audience). All the while, we segment our organizations in ways that unintentionally lessen their impact and reach. Our audience is accustomed, mostly through the internet, to "if you enjoyed this you might like" yet we offer none of the curation across art forms that is arguably the *raison d'être* of a performing arts center. Missing is the connective tissue and creativity that we expect of our artists on stage. How do we, as an institution, honor traditional categories and the verticality that is classically familiar and at the same time embrace a horizontality that connects seemingly disparate ideas or disciplines? Or programming that tackles larger themes through the lens of different art forms?

I'd argue it's a challenge of connecting a big vision institutionally with a personal and expansive view of audience (whether that audience be ticket buyers, donors, funders, or stakeholders). I'd suggest it begins with an institutional embrace of connecting ideas and a belief that the cross-pollination between art forms and audience will result in a stronger, more viable institution.

I appreciate, through my work at USC and Center Theatre Group, how entrenched these artistic silos can be: how a need to protect funding and artistic territory foster their creation. I also appreciate that there will be audience members, and funders, who only support *their* art form. I also know that the artistic institutions I respect most profoundly are those that connect me with virtuosity I had never imagined, with works of art that were beyond my *traditional* interests.

Embracing connectivity can begin with existing core programming and extend outward to encompass our partners, our city, our broader region. Jane Deknatel shared that the Broad's relationship with Santa Monica College (SMC) has been perhaps a bit perfunctory. From my time at KCRW (also an SMC tenant/partner), and my time navigating University politics at USC, I can imagine the unique challenges that the SMC partnership presents. Seeking deeper connections with SMC, while certainly challenging, can only be in the institution's best interests. Finding ways to connect to the student population and leveraging SMC as a way of expanding the arts education at the Broad - are logical next steps.

On a personal level, my son has attended a school less than a block away from the Broad for the last three years. When I suggested how exciting it was they were so close to the Broad, the school's director wasn't even clear what kind of work was presented there - nor did she have access to a meaningful way to engage. That's a missed opportunity educationally and for audience development (after all, each of those students has parents and grandparents and . . .).

Thinking regionally, with the completion of the Expo line in 2016, The Broad will enjoy a connection with Los Angeles unlike any other performing arts venue in the city. An embrace of that connectivity coupled with its connection to Santa Monica's urban core set the stage for community engagement and impact that could be unmatched in Southern California.

COLLABORATION

Once we begin thinking deeply and institutionally about connection, the next step is collaboration. As crowded as Los Angeles' cultural landscape is becoming, there is precious little collaboration between cultural institutions. The Broad's partnership with the LA Opera is a promising step but the potential, and I believe the necessity, is far greater. While we all know the challenges and hurdles, they are not excuses for a lack of coordination, at the very least, and citywide leveraging as an achievable goal. Thinking conservatively, a coordination or recognition of schedules would help everyone's marketing and outreach. As a community of arts organizations, we are doing little to nurture the devoted core audience that we all share. Why can't we coordinate openings amongst institutions and articulate 'seasons' to avoid cannibalizing each other's press and focus? Or where schedules unavoidably collide create a critical mass that leverages that accumulation?

Thinking more ambitiously, the Getty's Pacific Standard Time, for all its bumps and stumbles, demonstrated the potential of city-wide artistic collaboration (of course, there's the more cautionary tale of the LA Opera's Ring Cycle attempt). Los Angeles is hungry for a performing arts institution to provide leadership that focuses and excites the city. Obviously these overtures would require both time and caution (one would necessarily need to proceed with an eye to 'first do no harm' to existing initiatives, funding, and audience).

Or thinking opportunistically, the great artistic minds and work of Los Angeles artists, in disciplines ranging from art and architecture to the more commercial arts supported by Hollywood and the web, have not found an intellectual home and forum to share ideas. One needs to harken back to Paul Holdengräber's inspired and cross-cultural conversations at LACMA to find examples of an arts organization serving as interdisciplinary and intellectual forum.

The Broad is uniquely positioned to meet these challenges and assume a leadership that could reinforce its support and strengthen its philanthropic reach. The collaborative opportunities could change The Broad's relationship to the cultural community: adapting from an institution that caters *to* it - to one where the Broad is weaving the civic and cultural fabric that helps enrich the city itself. The possibilities are inspiring . . .

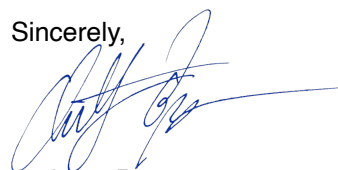
INTEGRITY

I hope through briefly sharing some guiding principles and strategies, you get a sense for my level of engagement. I trust that all viable prospects for the Broad's leadership will argue for the integrity of the art, for the work onstage. While that certainly is job one of any director, I want to argue for integrity institutionally: for integrity that infuses all the programming, management, fundraising, outreach, and civic engagement of the Broad. Given the creative and imaginative leap that's necessary to support the arts in the 21st century, the least we can do as arts organizations is reward that courage with our own steadfast dedication to creating inspired institutions worthy of that support.

I look forward to learning more about the Broad search and an opportunity to engage more deeply in this conversation with you.

Thanks for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Anthony Byrnes