

It's Not
About You...

It's About
Them.

Field Reports

From the Fund For Artists Matching Commissions Program

Commissioned by
San Francisco Foundation and East Bay Community Foundation

THE SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION

The Community Foundation of the Bay Area



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Field Reports from the Fund For Artists Matching Commissions Program: Unlocking the Potential of Individual Donors

The Fund For Artists is a collaborative initiative of The San Francisco Foundation and East Bay Community Foundation working regionally to build individual donor capacity and bring new resources to artists. Since 2004, with support from the William and Flora Hewlett, James Irvine, Ford, Wattis, and Surdna Foundations, Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC) and individual arts donors, the initiative has achieved unqualified success – raising over \$2 million and supporting 300+ artists throughout the Bay Area. In addition to the Matching Commissions program, other aspects of this initiative include artists entrepreneurial and fund development training workshops, collaborative marketing, donor celebration events, and research on the recession's impact on Bay Area artists.

This report captures lessons about successful fundraising efforts by grant recipients of Fund For Artists Matching Commissions program (FFAMC). It is a companion document to *It's Not About You ... It's About Them*, a research study on what motivates Bay Area donors to give to the arts and artists commissioned by The San Francisco Foundation and East Bay Community Foundation. We hope the case studies of successful fundraising by artists that are highlighted here, together with the synopsis of lessons learned by the artists involved in FFAMC program, will inspire other artists and arts organizations in their fundraising efforts, help them tap new communities of donors and increase the funds available for artists' projects for many years to come.

REMEMBER THREE THINGS

1. Values shape people's charitable giving.

It's Not About You ... It's About Them: A Research Report on What Motivates Bay Area Donors to Give to the Arts and Artists, commissioned as part of the Fund For Artists program, reinforces findings from other research and professional fundraisers' experiences: Connecting to the values and interests of potential donors is essential to success in any fundraising effort. Raising money for artists' projects is no different.

Five values are prominent among the Bay Area arts donors who were surveyed as part of the research project. These include:

- **Localism** – a concern for one's community and for artists living in the community; an interest in awakening people's creativity and ensuring community members' access to cultural experiences; and a commitment to programs that serve children.

- **Progressivism** – an interest in being “on the leading edge of art and ideas;” an inclination toward individualism and iconoclastic ideas; and a tendency to value independent thought.
- **Humanism** – a concern for social justice and equal opportunity; appreciation for diverse viewpoints and perspectives; an interest in learning about diverse cultures; and a gratitude for one’s good fortune and desire to “give back” to others.
- **Distinction** – an interest in “great works that have stood the test of time” and artists with national or international reputations; a concern for sustaining the long-term future of key arts institutions; and a desire to see “world class artistic programming” in the Bay Area.
- **Bonding** – an interest in civic affairs and community improvement; appetite for expanding social networks and making new friends; strong family relationships and an active spiritual life; and an interest in arts programs that reflect one’s heritage.

Donors to FFAMC projects are more likely than other arts donors to align with the values of Localism and Progressivism, which are expressed by interest in community, creative outlets, and art and ideas that are on the leading edge.

Key fundraising lesson: A critical first step in attracting individual donors is identifying the values inherent in your project (or organization) and conveying those values effectively to potential contributors.

2. Donors to artists and small arts organizations differ from donors to larger arts institutions in important ways.

The research project found that donors to artists and artists’ projects in the Bay Area are more likely to be:

- Artists themselves (professional or amateur);
- Young adults or mid-life (18-54), without children, and of diverse cultural backgrounds;
- Interested in social justice and environmentalism;
- Interested in diversity of cultures and points of view;
- Giving less than \$5,000 annually to all charitable causes;
- Interested in supporting small projects rather than sustaining institutions;
- Sparked to give by their personal relationship with the artist, passion for the art form, interest in the content or subject matter of the piece, or connection to the culture or community involved.

Key fundraising lesson: Even people of modest incomes can make meaningful financial contributions. Understanding the demographic profile and values of people more likely to support individual artists can increase fundraising success.

3. Donors Respond to Four Connection Points

FFAMC grantees found that connecting on a personal level with donors was a necessary pre-requisite to a gift. Interviews with FFAMC recipients revealed that donors connected with a project or an artist in one of four ways. Connecting with a donor on one of these levels was helpful in soliciting a contribution. Connecting on two or more of these dimensions increased the chances of a donation.

Donors respond to these connection points:

- A **personal relationship** with the artist, someone in the organization or the person making the ask. Requests from a friend, colleague or family member had the greatest influence on the giving practices of Fund For Artists donors.
- A **passion for the art form** or the art medium. Familiarity with and personal involvement in the art form increases potential donors' interest in artists working in that medium.
- An emotional or intellectual **interest in the subject matter** or personal knowledge of the issue being addressed by the project. Even if a prospective donor has little interest in a particular artform or artist, an artistic investigation of a subject or issue they care about can attract their enthusiastic support.
- An **involvement with the culture or community** touched by the project. Artists' projects that honor, sustain or invigorate a cultural tradition, a place, a network of people or an important community story resonates even with people who have little connection to the arts.

Key fundraising lesson: Find the connection point or points that your potential donor will find meaningful and motivating. Identifying more than one connection point will strengthen donor engagement.

FIELD REPORTS

Between January 2004 and March 2010, the FFAMC program awarded \$658,750 to 116 projects involving 181 artists. More than 3,190 donors contributed \$729,254 in matching funds to these projects in sums that ranged from \$2 to \$10,000.

Every one of the FFAMC projects is a compelling story. A list of the projects is attached to the end of this report. The eight profiles sketched here reflect the wonderful variety of the FFAMC projects and fundraising approaches. While each is distinctive, together these field reports capture many of the techniques used by others. They also illustrate the key lessons of the program as a whole – how artists raising money for their FFAMC projects consciously or unconsciously appealed to donors' values, attracted a particular demographic sub-group of arts donors, and made use of the four connection points to secure donations.

These field reports are drawn from interviews with the artists involved in the projects, or the executive directors of the arts organizations that received project grants.

Robert Moses' Kin

The mission of Robert Moses' Kin is to use movement as the medium through which race, class, culture and gender are used to voice the existence of our greater potential and unfulfilled possibilities.

***FFAMC Grant from The San Francisco Foundation:** \$5,000 to commission Robert Moses to create **Redline**. (2004) Inspired by Moses' personal experiences and Harriet Washington's Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present. **Redline** investigates how minority groups are treated as experimental subjects in the name of scientific progress.*

"A few years ago, my sister had a serious medical issue. Family members showed up and tried to make sure she was getting appropriate attention and care in the hospital. We were all upset about the level of care she received, so I decided that I needed to address this in some of my work: Medical care for people who don't have the resources – the disparity of care. About the same time a book came out called *Medical Apartheid*. It was a jumping off place. That was the initial inspiration for the piece.

"Then we applied and received the FFAMC grant. The matching part was really simple. I got on the phone and called everyone that had ever given us money and made a personal appeal to them. It was close to 100 people. You have to understand that this is not the way that I work. I don't reach out to people that way

usually. I don't answer the phone usually. We don't usually ask people directly for money. People did give to this project because I asked them directly.

“Our core audience is very loyal. They will stick with us through any changes we go through. For our donors, the idea of artistic freedom is central. They give because of an issue or an idea we represent – particularly because some of our work is Afro-centric.



Performance of Robert Moses' Kin's ***The President's Daughter***. Photograph: S.Motta.

“I got on the phone and called everyone that had ever given us money and made a personal appeal to them. It was close to 100 people.” – Robert Moses

“Reciprocity is another motivation for giving, particularly for other artists. This is more about loyalty than subject matter. Also we find that the connection to a certain culture or community is a stronger motivator for our community than the connection to the individual artists themselves. I think it is the connection to the culture *and* the artistic form, combined. What you decide you like in artistic work is influenced by your culture. The artistic form gives me *access* to my culture or community. For me personally, I have to be engaged by the personality before I am engaged by the ideas of the work.

“Robert Moses’ Kin asks itself: ‘What do we push?’ We want to make sense to the audience. We often push an *idea*. Modern dance, contemporary art by itself, does not have enough of a base in our community to attract donors or audiences, because contemporary work is seen as poison. That contemporary work can address a pressing social issue surprises and interests people. But the idea has to connect to people’s personal experience. Sadly, a lot of people who gave to our project connected to the piece because of their own very negative personal experiences with the health care system.” – Robert Moses, Robert Moses’ Kin

Takeaways from this story:

- Connect on a personal level.
- Start with the people you know.
- Tell a story people can relate to.

Relevant Resources

<http://www.robertmoseskin.org>

Projects like Robert Moses’ commission are built on a personal story. This is the backbone of successful project fundraising, including online fundraising platforms such as Kickstarter.com.

<http://www.kickstarter.com>

Los Cenzontles

The mission of Los Cenzontles (The Mockingbirds) is to promote Mexican cultural traditions, creative expression, dignity, pride and cultural understanding.

FFAMC Grant from East Bay Community Foundation: \$10,000 to commission musicians associated with Los Cenzontles to work with David Hidalgo to create *Songs of Wood and Steel*, a recording and performance that explores Mexican musical traditions (2007).

“Working with master artists has always been at the heart of our work. We create through the process of passing down traditions. Our FFAMC grant paired Los Cenzontles musicians and singers with a master artist, David Hidalgo (best known for his work with Los Lobos), for a collaborative commission. When we work with folk artists, we learn an incredible amount. To have a grant that specifically supports that type of collaboration is very unusual. Most grants do not focus on that part of our work and we always have to underpay artists. The FFAMC was like candy – wow, we can do it right this time!”



Los Cenzontles in the recording studio. Photograph: Armando Quintero.

“Before applying for the commission we thought about a lot of people we would like to work with. David Hidalgo is a trendsetter in Mexican American music. Odd as it sounds, given his work with Los Lobos, he deeply appreciated getting paid – as opposed to asking him to work for free as often happens with better known musicians. Many people approach him for work, but it is actually rare for him to get paid at an appropriate level so that he can actually carve out time and make music. He was extraordinarily appreciative. The grant also provided Los Cenzontles funding for our musicians to work on the projects as well as to engage a publicist and publicize our work at a professional level for the first time.

“To make the match we reached out to our current donors, and we reached out to Los Lobos band’s base through their band message board. We also used other creative thinking. We focused on folks who don’t donate to us but we thought might donate to him. We built the fundraising into the schedule with him. The recording we did together was unbelievably spiritual and rewarding. It was a real high for us to work with David, and it was kind of contagious – other people were thrilled to be in on the event. Los Lobos is famous as a group, but the individual members are not well known. Hidalgo is shy as a person. It was the first time in his life he performed solo. He was visibly nervous. It kind of opened up a new avenue for him. He is doing more on his own now.

“We scheduled an event on the last night he was here. We invited people into the process of our music making. All the people at the performance were donors to the project. We listed all the donors on our CD. They received a copy of the CD and invitations to the premiere at Yoshi’s jazz club in Oakland. Many did attend the Yoshi’s event. We tried to make them feel as involved as possible. A total of 28 people matched the grant – including nine new donors for Los Cenzontles.

“Our primary connection to our audience is through the connection they seek to community.”
– Eugene Rodriguez

“When Los Cenzontles started, most of our supporters were family members. Now, most people come to hear us because of the community work we do. There is a very strong sense of community here – a cultural community – that people feel strongly about. People like to see the transference of traditional culture from teacher to student. When people are physically here, it cements that relationship. So our primary connection to our audience is through the connection they seek to community. What started as immediate family has become very extended family. And it’s still evolving.” – Eugene Rodriguez, Los Cenzontles

Takeaways from this story:

- Serving culture and community simultaneously increases people’s desire to contribute.
- Many celebrities want to give back to their communities of origin.

- Don't forget the social part -- create events where people will have fun.

Relevant Resources

<http://www.loscenzontles.com>

Los Cenzontles artists, like many others in the Bay Area, pursue crossover careers. This phenomenon is discussed in *Crossover: How Artists Build Careers across Commercial, Nonprofit and Community Work*, by Ann Markusen, Sam Gilmore and others. This report was co-sponsored by the James Irvine Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC).

<http://www.Irvine.org/publications/publications-by-topic/arts>

Shotgun Players

Shotgun Players exists to create fearless, provocative, relevant theatre.

FFAMC Grants from East Bay Community Foundation: \$5,000 to commission a new play by playwright Mark Jackson, called **The Forest War** (2005); \$5,000 to commission playwright John Costello to adapt Alfred Jarry's classic, **Ubu Roi**, into a new work, **Ubu for President** (2008); \$10,000 to support a collaboration between writer/director Jon Tracy and composer/arranger Daniel Bruno, called **Salt in the Wound** (2010).

“When we got our first FFAMC grant from to commission playwright Mark Jackson, in 2005, our fundraising strategy was to ask regular subscribers and people with a history of buying single tickets because Mark had just sold out the Julia Morgan Theater Cal/Berkeley and we thought raising funds for his new would be an easy sell with our base. This didn't actually work very well. We didn't make the match until we focused on audience members who had seen Mark's shows at our theater, and asked Mark to sign the letters of request that we sent to these people. We call that 'the personal connection campaign.'

“We took a different approach with our 2008 FFAMC grant, Jon Costello's adaptation of *Ubu Roi*. We segmented our email list and pulled out the people who had not given to us recently, and those that had a history of valuing our summer show (*Ubu for President* was one of our free summer theater pieces). We told this email list that we were looking for delegates for the 'Ubu for President' campaign. One person wrote in an online donation for \$1,000 and we got several other online contributions that were good sized. Most of our match for that project came online, when I thought that approach would just get us started.

“I think we were successful in this way because, since 2005, we have worked hard to gain a stronger sense of our audiences through email communications and other means. Shotgun now sees between 40% and 50% of the 4,500 people on our mailing list make contributions to the theater. We’ve segmented our ticket buyer list and know more about each person on that list. One way we built this knowledge was by holding a raffle at every performance. The raffle offers a chance to get information from audiences. We always ask one silly question. During our *Rosie the Riveter* show, it was “If you were a power tool, what kind of tool would you be?” And we always ask a serious market research question, such as “How did you find out about our show?” or a question about demographics, values or interests. By doing this Shotgun has captured really useful information on interests of our audience members, and we’ve captured email and mailing address information. About 80-90% of every audience fills out the raffle ticket questionnaire.



The Forest War written and directed by Mark Jackson. Lead actress Caroline Hewitt (bottom center). Photograph: J. Palopoli.

“We now always looks for the ‘hook’ to use in our marketing, the theme or idea that will connect the play to the audience in a meaningful way. We ask ourselves, ‘*How can the nuance of what we are doing be made clear? What is the smart way of getting potential audience members’ attention?*’ Shotgun strives to be just as creative in the process of connecting with potential audiences and donors as we are in developing and producing plays.

“A lot of our supporters support us because we are a small company and they want to support struggling artists. They also say we are having the most impact and they feel a personal connection to what we do. I tell my audiences how much we pay our actors, and people respond to that. They want to live in a community that supports artists. They want to support serious work that takes on issues and upholds their values. And in every way we can, we try to make ourselves relevant to our community. It’s hard to get people to leave their houses unless you connect to what’s important in their lives.” – Patrick Dooley, Shotgun Players

Takeaways from this story:

- Connect with audience members individually and learn their interests and values.
- Make an emotional connection between the audience and the artwork’s subject matter.

Relevant Resources

<http://www.shotgunplayers.org>

Shotgun’s philosophy of getting to know each audience member individually is based in part on lessons they learned from the National Arts Marketing Project: <http://www.artsmarketing.org/>

AXIS Dance Company

The mission of AXIS Dance Company is to create and perform contemporary dance that is developed through the collaboration of dancers with and without disabilities; to teach dance and educate about collaboration and disability through community education and outreach programs; and to promote and support physically integrated dance locally, nationally and internationally.

FFAMC Grants from East Bay Community Foundation: \$4,000 to commission a collaborative piece by choreographer Sonya Dewaide and composer/performer Joan Jeanrenaud, called **Terre Brune** (2004); \$6,000 to commission a piece by choreographer Margaret Jenkins, called **Waypoint** (2005); and \$6,000 to commission performance artist Joe Goode’s piece called **The beauty that was mine, through the middle, without stopping** (2007).

AXIS Dance Company received its first FFAMC grant in 2004, and has been awarded two other matching commissions since then. The first FFAMC commission supported a collaboration between choreographer Sonya Dewaide and composer and musician Joan Jeanrenaud, called *Terre Brune (Brown Earth)*. The inspiration for this quartet came from two talented women artists: composer/performer Joan Jeanrenaud had undertaken with French Canadian writer Marie Savard. “The words and music in that piece evoked

strong images, moving from a personal perspective to a more global point of view,” said Sonya Dewaide. “I worked with Joan to build on that piece, using only four dancers to convey a sense of broad community and deep intimacy.”

This first project was so successful that AXIS exceeded the match requirement. After its second successful matching commission project, AXIS decided to do a new commission each year, with or without FFAMC funding. This has permanently changed the way Axis raises money and supports new work for the company.



Terre Brune choreographed by Sonya Delwaide. Photograph: Trib La Prade.

Each year AXIS determines its commissioning project. The company then creates a template letter to solicit commission funds. The letter outlines the opportunity for the prospective donor: his/her name will be attached to the piece wherever it tours, and listed on the AXIS website and its regular promotional materials. Contributions start at \$150, because the AXIS Board believes this is what a commissioning opportunity is worth. Donors are invited to a sneak preview two months before the piece is finished. At these events, all the donors are called onto the stage and given an opportunity to meet the commissioned artist(s) and the dancers. The preview night is designed to be a very intimate event, without stage lights and costumes, and it is followed by a talkback with the audience. The goal is for the donors to feel acknowledged, and integrally involved in the artistic process.

“Many of our long-time donors are involved in the disability community and believe in the social implications of our work.... Our home season is a gathering place and event that many in this community attend.” – Judith Smith

People have stepped forward to support the AXIS commissions year after year. The first tier of donors is AXIS board members and people that board members solicit. Many of the donors are friends and colleagues of the artistic director, including people she has known since she founded the company 20 years ago. Another cohort of donors includes friends and family of the dancers, and people who believe in the social mission of the company. Says Artistic Director Judith Smith, “Many of our long-time donors are involved in the disability community and believe in the larger social implications of our work. Our audience has become a community in and of itself. Our home season is a gathering place and event that many in this community attend.”

Takeaways from this story:

- Politics is personal and the arts can contribute to social change.
- Involve donors in the creative process.
- It's not charity, it's an exchange -- contributing to an artist's project has real value for donors.

Relevant Resources

<http://www.axisdance.org>

The Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training works specifically with community-based organizations and the connection between fundraising, social justice and movement-building.

<http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org/>

Sangati Community Center for South Asian Music

The mission of the Sangati Community Center for South Asian Music is to provide a venue for chamber music and community center focused on Indian classical music in San Francisco.

FFAMC Grant from The San Francisco Foundation: \$4,000 to commission Gautam Tejas Ganeshan, vocalist, and Anantha R. Krishnan, mridangist, to create and present new music in concerts featuring a traditional Carnatic (South Indian classical instrumentation of voice), mridangam barrel drum, and tanpura drone lutes (2006).

The word sangati in Sanskrit means "coming together" and the term has related musical meanings as well. In South Indian classical music, a sangati is a melodic development or progression, and "sangati" is used in North Indian classical music for the art of accompaniment. The Sangati Center received funding to develop new work for a series of acoustic Indian classical music concerts. The commission helped artists Gautam Tejas Ganeshan and Anantha R. Krishnan create new work that was presented in four concerts at the Sangati Center.

Founded in 2006 by Gautam Tejas Ganeshan, the Sangati Center has hosted over 300 public concerts of Indian classical music, making it an active venue in San Francisco. The Sangati Center has attracted more than 8,000 audience members in its three-year history, many of them new to one of the world's most subtle, rigorous, and beautiful art forms.

The Sangati Center raised the match to the FFAMC by holding three monthly "outreach concerts," in people's homes. Individuals interested in South Asian music, living in the South Bay and the Peninsula, were asked to host these house parties and invite their family members and friends. People from Sangati's mailing list were also invited. Artists volunteered or played at a discounted rate, and attendees were encouraged to donate. Ganeshan estimates that two-thirds of the donors are of South Asian heritage, and that these people's strong feeling for their culture was the strongest motivator for giving. The fact that the project involved commissioning new music based in this ancient musical tradition was also appealing to these donors, who were excited about the idea of the tradition being made new by living artists.



The **Sangati Ensemble** at a house concert. Photograph: Harsal Jawale.

The Sangati Center effectively tapped the interest of older generations of South Asian people in continuing cultural traditions. Their contributions supported the new work, and the series of concerts at the Center in San Francisco which primarily serves younger generations (many of South Asian descent, but some not). The music series has been a catalyst for the overall development of the Sangati Center, which in addition to music programs sponsors other community-building activities such as traditional cooking, greening programs, and neighborhood beautification.

“We found a way to link different generations of South Asians through the creation and presentation of new music based in our ancient cultural tradition. Everyone discovered something unexpected in this project.” – Gautam Tejas Ganeshan

Takeaways from this story:

- Build the community while you’re supporting the art.
- Start with the personal networks of the people you already know.

Relevant Resources

<http://sangaticenter.org>

A guide on how to “party with a purpose” and raise money for your cause: *The Fundraising Houseparty*, by Morrie Warshawski, <http://www.warshawshi.com/books.html>

ODC Theater

ODC Theater is dedicated to the life-cycle of the creative process. Its mission is to empower and develop innovative artists. Its goals are to participate in the creation of new works through commissioning, presenting, mentorship and space access; to develop informed, engaged and committed audiences; and to advocate for the performing arts as an essential component to the economic and cultural development of our community.

FFAMC Grant from The San Francisco Foundation: \$5,000 to commission the third and final work in a series by choreographer Sara Shelton Mann, called **Inspirare** (2007).

Choreographer Sara Shelton Mann came to the attention of Rob Bailis, Director of ODC Theater, as a result of the work of Contraband, her performance ensemble. A decade after Contraband's demise, she was trying to re-establish herself just as Bailis was building a season of performances focused on the values and people of the Bay Area region. He was looking for artists “who help make the Bay Area the Bay Area,” and he thought Sara fit that bill. Mann had a strong interest in dealing with the environment and global well-being and the FFAMC commission offered her a chance for her to do a major work in her own community.

ODC Theater had extensive experience in raising funds for commissions through foundation, government, and private patron/individual sources. Typically, these were sums of \$5,000 or more, awarded on a project by project basis from a variety of regional and national sources. In 2006, the Theater had established a Director's Fund, which was designed to maintain a \$5,000-\$15,000 annual pool of funds for commissions in the range of \$1,000 to \$5,000 that would be offered at the discretion of the Director. The Fund, established with a one-time award from the Hewlett Foundation, was replenished annually through Bailis' fundraising from individual patrons.

The challenge of the FFAMC award was not raising the \$5,000 match for Mann's work. It was the emphasis on new donors and multiple small gifts from patrons. That posed an opportunity for building capacity at ODC Theater and addressed an area where the Theater's fundraising repertoire needed enhancement. At

the start of the project with Mann, Bailis was confident that raising the matching funds would not pose a challenge.

ODC Theater had three months to raise the money. Direct mail was the company's first approach and it "100% bombed," according to Bailis. Next they decided to have a community party, which they calculated would raise \$1,200. They threw the party and lost \$200. At this point, Bailis says, "we were really beginning to sweat." They were two months in and had created a project deficit. "Next we did pass-the-hat at performances during our Project Artaud series, which had an audience similar to the one we hoped to attract for Sara's new piece. We raised \$800 that way. It still wasn't clicking," said Bailis.



Inspirare Created in collaboration with performers: Kathleen Hermesdorf, Maria F. Scaroni. Sound Design: Calvin LL. Jones. Video and Light Design: David Szasa. Text: Sara Shelton Mann. Photograph: Benji Young.

"To other organizations trying to raise funds in this way, I'd say: 'Cross the river where it's narrowest.' Start with the artist's own network and build out from there." – Rob Bailis

Finally Bailis realized that Mann's personal contacts and his own network were the most promising potential donors. With Mann's assistance, Bailis created a list of their personal contacts. They produced a list of 75 names, and determined what amount ODC could ask from each person. Mann approached her potential donors and Bailis wrote handwritten "love letters" to 15 of his close friends, including a demo of the work in progress. Then he called everyone he had written and asked for a specific amount of money based on what he and Mann had determined was appropriate. Most of the gifts were \$100-\$250. That got ODC close to the \$5,000 goal. For the last portion, ODC Theater sent emails with a PayPal arrangement to the other 60+ individuals on their master list, and asked for \$5-15. The organization made the match by trying a variety of strategies.

Takeaways from this story:

- If it is not working, don't try harder, try something different.
- Raising very modest contributions can sometimes be harder than securing larger gifts.
- Artists' own personal networks are important sources of support.

Relevant Resources

<http://www.odcdance.org>

Eight stories of individuals who have commissioned new works of music in different ways are included in *An Individual's Guide to Commissioning New Music*, published by Meet the Composer
<http://www.meetthecomposer.org/publications>

Philip Huang**Oakland Asian Cultural Center, fiscal sponsor**

Oakland Asian Cultural Center builds vibrant communities through Asian and Pacific Islander American (APIA) arts and culture programs that foster intergenerational and cross-cultural dialogue, cultural identity, collaborations, and social justice.

FFAMC Grant from East Bay Community Foundation: \$1,200 for a new work by Philip Huang, a monologue titled **Semen and White Lace**, a 60-minute ode to sex, psychosis, and good tea (2008).

"I didn't ask for a lot of money. I wrote the grant for \$1,200. The grant range was up to \$10,000 but for me, two years ago, even \$1,200 seemed like an insane amount of money to try and match. I learned to manage the freak-out by doing things in a very detailed and systematic way. I made a list of 20 people I knew that had jobs, and I knew had some disposable income. Most of them I knew professionally from my AIDS work,

or I had a former professional relationships with. I thought that most were likely to give me \$75-\$120. I wrote a solicitation letter and I was very specific about what I was asking for. I did all of the asking in person, but I wanted to be sure that when I sat down and talked with someone I also could give them a written proposal in the form of the letter.

“Most of the people I approached didn’t even look at the letter. Most of them just took out their checkbook. I raised the entire match in less than a month. I was surprised about how easy things got once you started asking. I was raising money for a project that I had not created yet, and I had obviously never performed it before so I learned I had to bluff a little bit because the donor needs to have confidence in you that you will deliver the work. One of my donors actually wanted to give me the entire \$1,200. She had a history of investing in queer arts. And she said she hadn’t donated in awhile. It was her investment. She made a lot of money and she was very interested in supporting queer art, and she wasn’t an artist herself. Ultimately she wound up donating \$600.



Philip Huang in a performance funded by EBFA. Photograph: Joshua Lim.

“A lot of the people who donated to *Semen and White Lace* were people from the public health field since that that is my professional background. Because of this connection I brought my piece back to Oakland

Chinatown, and I did it as a fundraiser for the agency. This brought the project full circle – the people who invested in it got some benefit from it.

“I liked the matching requirement very much. I would have never done this project on my own, without the match. I never would have changed artistic direction, or changed medium on my own without the endorsement of the FFAMC grant. I believe that artists should chase things slightly outside of their personal comfort zone. For me, fundraising from individuals was definitely that. Having an externally imposed timeline and an externally imposed mandate was good. I think the match was also a motivator for my donors. Once I got clarity about what I needed and I asked for it, people responded to my sense of propose and vision.

“Everyone who donated to my project got a bottle of sake. I spent about \$400 on the thank you gifts and cards. All tolled, I had 256 donors, including some friends who gave me as little as \$7. They were my friends so it was important to pamper them.

“I think people will invest in a project because of its subject or because they want to be part of a certain community. But the real connection points are about one’s evolution as an artist. You have to start by using your personal connections, and if the work is strong enough and it represents something larger, then people will to connect to that larger theme, not just to you as a person or their friend.” – Philip Huang

Takeaways from this story:

- Confidence in contagious and if the artist is confident, it inspires donors
- Start with the people who know you
- Connect with people who are interested in the subject or are part of your community

Relevant Resources

Philip’s Video Club on Facebook: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=116470580149

Philip Huang attributes much of his professional success to Business of Art training he received from the Center for Cultural Innovation: <http://www.cciarts.org/>. CCI’s publications include: *Business of Art: Entrepreneurial Training for Artists*, and *Business of Art: An Artist’s Guide to Profitable Self-Employment*.

A Few Other Lessons

To be successful securing donations for artists’ projects, artists, arts organization staff, board members and other fundraisers need to understand potential donors’ values and connect with them in authentic ways that are meaningful for the giver. But our case studies of success embody a few other truths worth noting.

- Artists' confidence has kinetic energy that people want to touch. Artists who effectively share their inspiration and ideas find their passion is contagious to others.
- People give to people. This is the fundraisers' mantra. The person with the closest connection to the potential donor should be the person who makes "the ask."
- If it's not working, don't try harder, try different. Many FFAMC artists projects had false starts in fundraising, but the most effective ones learned from disappointment, tried new strategies and kept trying different approaches until they got the right formula.
- Think about the forest while you're raising money for the trees. While raising funds for specific projects, it's important to raise friends for the longer term. Many FFAMC projects not only met their match but also attracted donors who have stayed with the artists/companies long after the project.

CONCLUSION

In 2003, the Urban Institute conducted a national opinion poll on attitudes toward artists. Among other findings, this poll found that 96% of U.S. adults are moved or inspired by art in their daily lives, but only 27% feel that artists contribute a lot to the general good of society. There are many reasons for this startling discrepancy but clearly one of them is that not enough people are invited to participate in the creative life of artists and experience for themselves the positive impacts that artists' work can have on communities. The Fund For Artists Marching Commissions program has helped almost 200 artists in the Bay Area to create new work, and in the process of making that work overcome the disconnect between people's perception of "art" and "artists." While the matching requirement of the FFAMC grants was initially challenging to many, in the end most grantees found it easier to raise the matching funds than they anticipated. And for most, learning how to raise funds from individuals continues to return many benefits – social and psychological as well as financial. The program also demonstrated that raising funds from individuals is not a zero-sum game but rather a catalytic reaction. One artist's success does not diminish another artist's chances. In fact, quite the opposite: one artist's success serves as inspiration to other artists, and to other donors.

APPENDIX

Other Approaches

The Fund For Artists Matching Commissions program is one very successful mechanism to stimulate contributions to new work projects by artists and small arts organizations. Other innovative approaches have also been successful. A few of these models are described here.

Commissioning Clubs

Individual donors pool funds to commission a new work and present it in the community. By joining forces, the donors are able to do what none of them could do individually. Commissioning club members benefit by sponsoring one or several artists, educating themselves about an art form, socializing with others while supporting the artist, and “being in on” the creative process and the premiere. An early example of this which was started in 1991, the Minnesota Commissioning Club, was developed by Linda and Jack Hoeschler, of St. Paul, MN and now operate through American Composers Forum. This approach has been adapted in numerous other communities across the county.

<http://www.composersforum.org>

Commissioning Funds

Arts organizations commission an artist to create a new work and promote this to their existing donor base, inviting people to become “members” of the commissioning fund by contributing donations (or “buying shares”) that will cover the cost of the commission and its public presentation. Most commissioning funds set a minimum contribution (although that minimum can vary from \$5 to \$500 or more). All offer the fund members special invitations to the work’s premiere and opportunities to interact with the commissioned artist(s). Notable examples include Bang on A Can’s People’s Commissioning Fund and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra’s “Sound Investment” commissioning program.

http://www.bangonacan.org/people's_commissioning_fund

<http://www.laco.org/soundinvest/>

Collaborative Commissions

Arts organizations pool resources to commission a new work which each organization then showcases. Typically these are collaborations involving organizations in different communities who do not compete with each other for audiences. If adequate funding is available, the partnering organizations may invite the commissioned artist to present his/her work in progress during the commissioning process as a way to engage audiences and build appetite for the completed work. San Francisco Performances, Cal Performances

and other presenters in the Bay Area, as well as numerous presenters across the country, have collaborated on commissioning projects. The Creation Fund of the National Performance Network is another example in which at least two presenting organizations partner to commission and present new work. American Composers Forum created the “Faith Partners” program, in which three congregations representing different faiths collaborated on commissioning one composer to write one piece for each congregation and a fourth that all three would share.

<http://www.npnweb.org>

Individual Commissioners

Thousands, maybe millions of people have a deep love of the arts and the capacity to commission new work by artists whose work is of interest. Acting individually, many of these people get involved in financing artists' work. There are as many approaches to this kind of patronage as there are individuals involved. One excellent guide for donors exploring the possibilities is *An Individual's Guide to Commissioning New Music*, published by Meet the Composer. This booklet reviews stories of eight individuals who have commissioned new works of music in different ways.

<http://www.meetthecomposer.org/publications>

It's Not
About You...

It's About
Them.

Field Reports

This report was written by Holly Sidford and Marcelle Hinand Cady of Helicon Collaborative, based on interviews and research conducted by Helicon as part of a study on the motivations of arts donors in the Bay Area which was commissioned by East Bay Community Foundation and The San Francisco Community Foundation and conducted by Helicon and WolfBrown. The full research report, "It's Not About You ... It's About Them," and more information about the project partners, is available at

www.ebcf.org

www.tsff.org

www.heliconcollaborative.net

www.wolfbrown.com

**Fund for Artists Matching Commission Awardees
2004 - Early 2010**

Grants by East Bay Community Foundation

Taraneh Hemami, Consuelo Jimenez Underwood & Ann Schnake / Arts Change
Sonya Delwaide & Joan Jeanrenaud / AXIS Dance Company
Rita Moreno / Berkeley Repertory Theatre
Kurt Rhode / Berkeley Symphony
Sean San Jose, Ricky Marshall & Ryan Peters / California Shakespeare Theater
Jon Jang / Eastside Arts Alliance

Nikolai Kabaniaev / Diablo Ballet
Carlos Mena / Dream Dance Company
CK Ladzekpo / East Bay Center for the Performing Arts
Favianna Rodriguez / Eastside Arts Alliance
Daniel David Feinsmith, Amy X Neuburg, John Schott & Paul Dresher / Jewish Music Festival
Jorge Lederman / Pacific Chamber Symphony
Tomye Neal-Madison / Prescott Joseph Center
Mark Jackson / Shotgun Players

Margaret Jenkins / AXIS Dance Company
Carlos Reyes / Dancer Elixir
Dan Cantrell / Jewish Music Festival
Melissa Wortman / KITKA
Shailja Patel / La Pena Cultural Center
David Szlasa / Moving Arts Dance
Daniel David Feinsmith / Pacific Chamber Symphony
Marc Bamuthi Joseph / Youth Speaks

Albert Greenberg & Annie Hallatt / ALICE Arts
Tania Padillia & Emily Butterfly / ArtsChange
Belinda Reynolds / Galax Quartet
Paul Flores / La Pena Cultural Center
Mary Watkins / Oakland Opera Theater
Elinor Armer / Oakland Youth Orchestra

Peter Howkinson / Pro Arts

Joe Goode / AXIS Dance

Mason Bates / California Symphony

Matthew Cmiel / The Crowden Music Center

Christina Agamanolis, Matthew Antaky & Lawrence LaBianca /

Fellow Travelers Performance Group

Eugene Rodriguez & Los Cenzontles / Los Cenzontles Mexican Arts Center

Paige Starling Sorvillo / Noodle Factory Performing Arts Center

Sonal Acharya / Opera Piccola

Atemu Aton / Savage Jazz Dance Company

Laura Elder / ArtsChange

Rigo 23 / Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive

Naomi Kremer & Ariel Parkinson / Berkeley Opera

Octavio Solis / CalShakes

Mirah Moriarty, Rodrigo Esteva, Loren Robertson & Laura Inserra / Dance Monks

Akosua Mireku / Epic Arts

Cheryl Leonard, Rebecca Haseltine, Gilbert Guerrero & Kathleen Quillian / The Illuminated Corridor

Mateen Kemet / Intersection for the Arts

Ambrose Akinmusire / Jazzschool, Inc.

Nomi Talisman / Judah L. Magnes Museum

Anton Patzner / Moving Arts Dance

Philip Huang / Oakland Asian Cultural Center

Josh Costello / Shotgun Players

Larry Batiste & Clayton Richardson / Youth Movement Records

Delina Patrice Brooks / Youth Speaks

Khalil Shaheed / Dimension's Dance Theater

Emiko Saraswati Susilo & Rashidi Omari Byrd / Gamelan Sekar Jaya

Sarah E. Wilson / Intersection for the Arts

Kat Parra / The Jazz School

Dan Plonsey & Eric Kupers / Jewish Music Festival

Francis Wong / Oakland Asian Cultural Center

Scott Oliver, Mark Gergis, Maria Porges & Michael Blodgett / Oakland Museum of CA

Jill Togawa, Ellen Reiko Bepp & Masayuki Koga / Purple Moon Dance Project

Julie Plasencia / Rock Paper Scissors

Tamara Perkins & Jesse Dana / SF Film Society
Shira Kammen & Ben Bernstein / The Singer's Gym
Martha Boesing / Stagebridge

John Santos / Eastside Arts Alliance
Daven Gee / Katahdin Productions
Maston Bates & Benjamin Shwartz / Mercury Soul
Dohee Lee / Oakland Asian Cultural Center
Rebecca Mauleon / Oakland East Bay Symphony
Omid Zoufonoun / Oakland Youth Orchestra
Jon Tracy & Daniel Bruno / Shotgun Players
Kerri Gawryn / Youth Movement Records

Grants by The San Francisco Foundation

Pandit Chitresh Das / Chitresh Das Dance Company
Eva Tam / Door Dog Music Productions
Taraneh Hemami / Intersection for the Arts
Donna Keiko Ozawa, Bob Hsiang & Christine Wong Yap/
Kearny Street Workshop
Eric Myers, Dawei Wang, & Bik Lee / Melody of China
Gyan Riley / Musical Traditions, Inc.
Patrick Makuakāne / Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu
Julio Cesar Morales / New Langton Arts
Robert Moses / Robert Moses' Kin
Meklit Hadero, Prasant Radhakrishnan, Sameer Gupta, Eliyahu Sills,
Gabriel Teodos, & Todd Brown / The Red Poppy Art House

Robert Henry Johnson / African-American Shakespeare Company
Lily Cai / Chinese Cultural Productions
Rhodessa Jones / Cultural Odyssey
Josef Norris / Kid Serve Youth Murals
Sara Shelton Mann / Oberlin Dance Collective (ODC)
Juba Kalamaka, Katastrophe, Robert Karimi, Sean Dorsey & Rhodessa Jones /
Queer Cultural Center
Guillermo Gomez Pena & Pocha Nostra / SF Camerawork

Fred Frith, Patrice Scanlon / SF Electronic Music Festival
Octavio Solis and Larry Reed / ShadowLight Productions
Marcus Gardley / Traveling Jewish Theatre
Eduardo Madril / World Arts West
Chinaka Hodge / Youth Speaks

Frank Fisher/Adventure Out Seniors Productions
Eugenie Chan/Cutting Ball Theater
Joan Jeanrenaud/Del Sol Performing Arts Organization
Hyo-shin Na/Earplay
Sia Amma/Global Women Intact
Benjamin Levy and Mason Bates/LEVYdance, Inc.
Hank Willis Thomas and Ryan Alexiev/Mission 17
Janni Choi, Soo-Kyuny Chor, and Jiyon Son/Northern California Music & Art Culture Center
Guatam Tejas Ganesha and Anantha Krishnam/Sangati Community Center for South Asian Music
Anne Walsh/SF Camerawork
Bay Area writers/Zyzyva

Brian Thorstenson/Alternative Theater Ensemble
Anthony Brown/Fifth Stream Music
Amy Seiwert/im'ij-re
Seng Chen and Allan Manalo/Kearny Street Workshop
Alexis Alrich, Moses Sedler, and Katrina Wreede/Mill Valley Philharmonic
Travis Meinolf/Museum of Craft and Folk Art
Marcus Shelby/Peninsula Ballet Theatre
Ali Liebegott/RADAR Productions
Gail Wight/San Francisco Center for the Book
Gabriela Frank/San Francisco Chamber Orchestra
Beth Custer/San Francisco Cinematheque
Joanna Haigood/Zaccho Dance Theatre