LEADING FROM THE CENTER
THE STORY OF A.R.T./NEW YORK’S NANCY QUINN & THEATRE
LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS
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About the Special Report Series
ARTS Action Research compiles and issues Special Reports as a means to analyze and understand special bodies of work and share insights, experiences and reflections that inform all of our work going forward. All current Special Reports are available for download on our website www.artsaction.com.
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About ARTS Action Research

ARTS Action Research is an arts consulting group widely recognized for its seminal work in redefining the role, relationships, and operation of arts organizations in today's challenging arts environment. The ARTS Action Research team has served hundreds of arts organizations of all sizes, disciplines and working formats nationally and internationally for more than 20 years. AAR has been at the forefront of rethinking and restructuring organizational structures and behaviors that supports artists, their work and audiences. Throughout, one of our principal partners has been the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York.

About the Theatre Leadership Program & the Nancy Quinn Program

The Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York (A.R.T./New York) is the service and trade association representing and serving the thriving theatre community of the five boroughs of New York City. Amongst the many programs that A.R.T./New York delivers, are two long-term programs serving the membership:

**The Harold & Miriam Steinberg Theatre Leadership Program (TLP)** provides individualized consulting support for A.R.T./New York's mid-sized theatres helping them address challenges facing their organizations and supporting their work as they traverse critical junctures in their development. Each theatre is paired with a lead consultant with whom they meet regularly for a period of up to three years, in order to analyze the challenges they face and develop effective responses. Each consultant has a long-term commitment to participating organizations and, by working one-on-one with the core leadership of each company, is invested to such a degree that upon completing the program, the participating theatres emerge stronger, more focused, and have the tools necessary for future evolution. The TLP was initiated in 1994.

**The Nancy Quinn Program (NQP)** was created in honor of Nancy Quinn, one time A.R.T./New York board member and former Artistic Director of Young Playwrights, Inc. Ms. Quinn strongly believed in the importance of giving young talent an opportunity to “have their say.” She showed tremendous respect for the voices of the next generation of
artists and was committed to fostering the work of new, emerging, and small theatre companies. After she passed away in 1993, A.R.T./New York launched the Nancy Quinn Program to assist its largest and most rapidly growing sector of member theatres – those with annual cash budgets under $100,000 – by providing management seminars, annual grants, and other services designed to help companies facing the challenges of producing in New York City. The NQP provides information, networking and developmental resources to theatres with annual operating budgets under $100,000 through workshops and individual follow up session with lead consultants. The Nancy Quinn Technical Assistance program provides practical advice, access to information and training on topics such as planning, leadership development, boards, audience development, financial management, fundraising, individual giving, press and publicity, and special events, through workshops and one-on-one consultations. Participation in the program is a turning point for many companies and the workshops generate a plethora of ideas about how professional leadership can run their organizations more effectively and better achieve their goals. In order to help companies execute some of their goals, a companion program, The Nancy Quinn Fund, offers competitive cash grants. The NQP was initiated in 1993.

The Theatre Leadership Program and the Nancy Quinn Program have been sustained over many years by the generous support of A.R.T./New York’s visionary funding partners, identified in an appendix to this report.
Setting the Stage

New York City’s not-for-profit theatre community has arguably grown into one of the leading theatre centers in the world, ranking in size, diversity and productivity with such centers as London and Berlin. Today London alone compares with New York City in combined size and activity of both non-profit and commercial theatre.

The ascendance and explosion of the not-for-profit theatre in New York can be traced to the early 1990’s with the vision, activism and programming of the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York (A.R.T./New York). At that time under the new executive leadership of Virginia (Ginny) Louloudes, A.R.T./New York, assumed a new and different role as a trade and service organization for its member theatres.

Today, A.R.T./New York’s membership numbers 342, made up of theatres ranging in budget size from a few thousand dollars to multi-millions of dollars, operating out of all five boroughs of New York City. In a given year the work ranges from classical African, Asian and European dramas to contemporary American drama and musicals to newly devised work, even improvised offerings. In 2013, the membership collectively produced 1,961 full productions, 2,287 works-in-progress, 1,490 World Premieres and 1,463 NY premieres. New York City sources the country and the commercial theatre with artists and product that has placed an indelible thumbprint of New York City on the nation’s live theatre.

Important to note is that the rise of New York’s non-profit theatre sector is by almost any standard a fairly recent phenomenon. And it didn’t occur by happenstance, it developed in a studied and deliberate way, and was lead from the inside out by the theatres themselves. All carefully and systematically fueled by A.R.T./New York. This Special Report recounts and explicates some of the critical thinking and actions behind the profound change in theatre driven by A.R.T./New York and its partners.

The Answer is ‘Institution’ – Now What was the Question?

In the hey-day of the National Endowment for the Arts, the 1970’s and 80’s, the regional theatre movement was the primary interest and focus of the NEA Theatre Program and a number of major national funders led by MacNeil Lowry and the Ford Foundation. ‘Regional theatre’ was a politically correct way of saying ‘not-New-York-theatre’. The ‘New-York-theatre’ that this implied was largely the commercial Broadway and Off Broadway theatre. There were no shades of ‘commercial’ – all New York theatre was painted with the same broad brush in spite of the fact
that there was a budding off-off Broadway and contemporary downtown not-for-profit theatre community that might as well have been thousands of miles from Broadway.

In the early days of public funding, building a strong rationale for funding meant portraying commercial interests in theatre as a vulgar and distracting influence corrupting otherwise pure creative expressions. The future of theatre in the U.S. envisioned by the funders at that time was distinctly non-commercial, not-for-profit, and Regional, with a capital ‘R’. The gospel of the Regional not-for-profit drew clear lines between the sanctity of not-for-profit and the unholy specter of commercial interests. Regional theatres were the new temples, institutions in perpetuity that would assure purity in purpose and product. The theatre as community institution would not only protect the art and public from commercial contamination but from the inevitable ambition and human frailty of any one individual artist. In the Regional theatre movement, whatever the question, ‘institution’ was the answer.

In the early 1990’s, there were two contrasting views of the role that A.R.T./New York should play in supporting and advancing the not-for-profit theatre in the city. One view aligned with the Regional theatre movement philosophy focusing on building institutions, thus attracting greater support from the NEA and major funders. This view promoted regulating the size and scale of the theatre community so as to avoid dividing the proverbial ‘resource pie’ too thinly exceeding resources and diluting the quality of the art produced. This position was strongly represented by the very influential NEA Challenge and Institutional Advancement Programs, which sought to further codify and consolidate the broad adoption of not-for-profit institutional model. New York theatre and dance were particular targets for these NEA programs due to the perceived lack of stability in artists run organizations.

The contrasting view to this was that A.R.T./New York should invest more deeply in the theatre artists themselves, the organizations they were creating and their work. Accompanying this view was not only a profound belief in the artists but also a belief that there were significant potential audiences who would embrace and support the work of these artists in this most culturally rich and diverse city in the U.S. In this way of thinking, ‘resource pie’ was far more than simply money and couldn’t be exceeded if a lively and expanding theatre community was the resource pie. The history of New York City served as ample proof of this phenomenon as wave after wave of new immigrants and populations always added value, richness and resources to the pool rather than depleting it.
With these contrasting theatre world views as backdrop, Ginny Louloudes found a number of notable theatre institutions, but also a lively collection of theatre artists largely interested in two things: making work and connecting that work to an audience. To these artists a mind numbing debate about the relative virtues of for-profit versus not-for-profit theatre was irrelevant at best and a ridiculous distraction at worst. What Ginny heard from her member theatres was a call for resources to make the work they felt compelled to make and an audience that awaited.

**Vision Trumps Convention**

In the Spring of 1993 Ginny Louloudes invited the ARTS Action Research (AAR) team – Nello McDaniel and George Thorn – to a series of meetings with her, members of her staff and consultant Micki Hobson. Ginny began to describe her concerns, interests and ambitions for how A.R.T./New York could best unlock a theatre community demonstrating more potential than productivity and struggling in the wake of the recession. She also laid out the two main components of her personal vision for A.R.T./New York. First, A.R.T./New York needed to help create and facilitate an overall environment in the city that was not just supportive of theatre creatively but also economically, politically, structurally and socially. Theatre must become deeply interwoven into the fiber and fabric of every borough, indeed every neighborhood, of New York City. A.R.T./New York needed to see itself as a trade association providing leadership, advancing the interests of theatre at least as much as a service provider to its theatre membership. Second, A.R.T./New York must assume the responsibility of developing a generation of smart, resourceful and self-reliant theatre professionals as proficient in running their theatre operations as making their work. This was not just a call to train theatre professionals about how to run a theatre but how to envision, develop, structure and operate a theatre in service to the work and an audience.

Ginny’s observations and inclinations were in lock-step with AAR’s beliefs about the changing nature of the field, what a healthy and productive theatre community needed and might look like, and what priorities should dictate support and growth. None of us realized at the time that this meeting was helping lay the groundwork for such profound change in the New York City and national theatre landscape.

This was the beginning of A.R.T./New York’s Nancy Quinn Program and the Theatre Leadership Program and AAR’s twenty-plus year collaboration with A.R.T./New York and a theatre community that is unprecedented in its growth, productivity and impact. Few communities in the world are more volatile and unpredictable than New York City. Making theatre in New York
demands no less than the most agile, adaptable and resilient theatre professionals and theatres possible if the work is to thrive and survive. Claiming a \textit{place at the table} means earning and occupying a place at the table and not waiting for an invitation.

\textbf{Theory of Change}

With the stage set for the development of these new programs, ARTS Action Research adopted a theory of change aligned both with our experiences in the field and with the values that we shared with Ginny and team to shape our work with A.R.T./New York members. Our overall working processes were informed by five key concepts. First, and particularly integral, was developing strong, confident and resourceful individual theatre leadership; second, building community not only as a noun but a verb; third, facilitating a broad based, diverse theatre community that was a true reflection of New York City; fourth, focusing intervention around key transition moments; and fifth, committing to an ongoing engagement with participant theatres.

The writings and influence of Czech Republic President, playwright and Velvet Revolution leader Vaclav Havel had a very strong influence on AAR’s work in the early 1990’s. Havel’s observations on how otherwise powerless or marginalized people find within themselves the will and force to step out of the margins and claim power, or a place at the table, strongly resonated. In his collection of essays entitled \textit{The Power of the Powerless} Havel observes (paraphrased) that true grassroots movements never organize around ideology or big global ideas; rather they organize around values that are meaningful individually then more broadly. True value based movements can’t be declared or imposed and can’t long be resisted by force.

In tandem with A.R.T./New York’s informed activism on behalf of theatre in the city and through implementation of the Theatre Leadership Program and the Nancy Quinn Program a values based theatre ‘movement’ was put in motion. Over the course of almost two decades, the programs have evolved and the principles underlying the work have emerged from our original theory of change based on what we have learned from the theatre leaders with whom we have worked and those with whom we continue to partner.

As we develop each of the five key concepts below we have included reflections, written by TLP and NQP participants, illustrating how the conceptual framework of the programs has impacted the work we have done together. For more reflections on the program and participant experience, see also the accompanying document ‘\textit{Reflections on A.R.T./New York’s Nancy Quinn \\& Theatre Leadership Programs}’. 
Leading From the Center

Many times in the planning stages of the Theatre Leadership Program (TLP) and Nancy Quinn Program (NQP), Ginny would assert, “Not everyone wants to be a major institutional theatre. And they shouldn’t have to be in order to make the work they want to make.” AAR’s charge in the TLP and NQP was clearly not about building more institutions, but rather to empower the theatre professionals and trust that they will create and maintain operating structures appropriate to and reflective of their work. AAR’s core values helped to guide this process. Particularly our profound belief in the artists and arts professionals who must be at the center of a theatre’s programming and operating life, assuring that the organization is serving the work and intended audiences. From the outset, The TLP and NQP have been extraordinary opportunities for AAR to connect what we believe with how we work.

Rather than protecting the organization from the artist the TLP and NQP have sought to achieve artist and organization consilience, literally the jumping together of the two. The roles, relationships and success of the artist and organization are inextricably linked. Artists don’t need to be taught how to lead – mostly they need to be supported to apply what they already know as artists and directors to the entire organization. As different artists have different styles, each must concentrate on identifying and positioning her/himself to lead the organization in her/his own style. For some arts professionals, this simply confirms something they have always believed, so they quickly and confidently step into the leadership role. For others, fully assuming an overt leadership role requires time and reminders, sometimes permission and sometimes a process of changing behavior, especially for those educated and steeped in the institutional gospel.

New Georges was in the first group in the 1993/94 pilot year of the Nancy Quinn Program. My work with ARTS Action Research through that program came at exactly the right time. If I hadn’t been there, and they hadn’t told us that some things (and people) might not be a fit with our organization, that it was okay to let them go, my theater company might not have lasted that season, let alone twenty more years. Along the way, our work together has continued to be extremely beneficial. But what’s meant almost as much has been the way they’ve used their experience with our sector of the field in their broader research and consulting, the fact that our small companies could be a model for new practices, something they pointed to in work with companies larger and more established than ours. That our crazy, skin-of-our-teeth organizational style had merit, was something to be encouraged and not tamped out with more conventional work styles, has lent tremendous validation to our work over the years. It has provided me
with the confidence not only to follow my organizational instincts, but to create an effective organization that reflects my values, my priorities, dare I say my personality, every single day.

**Whatever the Question, the Answer is ‘Community’**

In theatre, *community* is neither fixed nor static – it is ever changing and elastic, and ever rich in possibilities. A core value of AAR’s from the beginning has been our belief that all of us know more than any of us; and a community can do more than any single artist or theatre working alone. That is why consortia, or bringing arts professionals together to meet, interact and exchange information, has been integral to all our work from the beginning.

While each artist may be unique in vision and working process, virtually none of the needs, issues or problems are unique. Theatres have a lot in common when it comes to their need for resources and the various challenges confronting them in making work, connecting to an audience and maintaining a healthy and balanced organizational equation. Over the decades this has led to the erroneous belief that the need for resources alone is enough to serve as a basis for arts organizations sharing resources (e.g. cluster managements of the 1970’s, arts service bureaus of the 1980’s, etc.) In our experience sharing, lateral learning or exchange are all rich resources but they are never driven by need alone.

The fact is the same qualities that create community among theatres also serves as the basis for sharing hard or soft resources of any kind. Those qualities – shared values, empathy and trust – have to be achieved through personal contact, interaction and exchange among individuals, not institutions. Competitive attitudes and positions dissipate when artists understand that their differences are artistic and not the challenges all share in making and connecting work. For this reason the TLP and NQP concentrate on creating opportunities for personal connection, interaction, exchange and especially deeper understanding and lateral learning among theatre professionals in Roundtable and workshop sessions. Consequently, no small part of the explosion in New York City theatre can be directly attributable to the extraordinary amount of collaboration, interaction and sharing of resources that occurs on a regular and ongoing basis within this community of theatre artists.

Just last month we closed our first solo production, a festival of three new plays workshopped for a few weeks each over the course of two years. We still have a relatively meager budget of under $50,000. But we were able to pull off something that looked easily twice that large because of support we garnered from grants and in-kind donations. I feel very strongly that our ability to successfully
apply for grants in large part is due to the language we created through the guidance of the Organizational Planning and Process trainings. I now attend trainings whenever I can. The knowledge shared is always pertinent to what Noor Theatre is up to. Case in point, relational fundraising. We are actually shifting the way we think about fundraising. We were definitely chasing dollars in the past, and now, I am shifting my attention towards chasing relationships. And that is a very different approach, one that is shifting how we do a lot of things from outreach, to audience development, to engaging with our board.

Overall, one of the most important things this program has given me is confidence. I came into this game feeling a little like I was just flying by the seat of my pants. All I had to go on were my instincts, the mistakes I had made in the past, and the advice of my more esteemed colleagues. What this program provided me was a structured curriculum around specific topics pertinent to a theatre of my size. Absolutely invaluable. Further, being in a room and being able to share experiences also boosted my confidence enormously. Learning that others are sharing the same struggles, or that the weird thing I was doing that I thought was maybe shady was something EVERYONE did-- all of that went a long way towards boosting my confidence in myself, in our team, and in Noor Theatre.

**The Law of Requisite Variety**

One of the great flaws in the **Institution-centric** approach is the notion that one entity can be all things to all people simply by adding diverse representation to the institution. In our experience, any organization attempting to be meaningful to all usually ends up being meaningful to none.

In the study of biological eco-systems the **law of requisite variety** states, the survival of any system depends on its capacity to cultivate, not just tolerate, variety in its environment. A healthy arts ecology, like any healthy organic system, is not characterized by a linear series of relatively few entities getting ever larger; rather, it is like a tree branching, diversifying, and expanding in many directions and expressions. A healthy arts ecology is as active and diverse in forms, expressions and ideas as the community in which it exists. A complex, diverse and expanding arts community is the key to long-term growth, creativity, sustainability and artistic opportunity.

New York City has long been, and continues to be, the most diverse city in the western hemisphere. It would be unconscionable that the theatre community that emerges from such a city would be any less diverse. A.R.T./New York and AAR share a belief in the value and strength that comes from a truly diverse community of artists and theatres expressing their individual visions, cultures, experiences and work in the full richness, range and diversity that exists within the community. The TLP and NQP have long reflected these beliefs. A significant strength of an arts community is the depth, breadth and diversity of artists, work and entities that emerge.
When Teatro Círculo was barely a few months old we became a member of A.R.T./New York and an immediate beneficiary of the Theatre Leadership Program and The Nancy Quinn Fund. Twenty years later we can categorically say that was one of the best decisions we ever made. TLP was instrumental in giving us the necessary context of NYC’s non-for-profit theatre world and made us understand that as long as we stay faithful to a clearly defined artistic mission, our work would become an important part of the cultural environment of the city. There is no doubt in our minds that A.R.T./New York’s influence since our early development eventually led us to become the first Latino theatre company in Manhattan to acquire and renovate its own building. For some, it is hard to comprehend how it is possible for a small theatre company with an average annual budget of $250,000 to embark on a capital campaign and effectively raise $5 million dollars. This are the kind of miracles that are perfectly possible when creative artists are provided with the right technical assistance and training.

Engaging in Transition Moments

Given the significant number of theatres in the A.R.T./New York community and the limited resources to support the many needs, it was imperative that we focus the TLP and the NQP resources effectively and efficiently. The NQP afforded us the opportunity to provide intervention and support very early in the lifecycle of many emerging theatre organizations. The ability to engage the leaders of these nascent organizations in articulating their core philosophy, values and intentions at such an early stage of development was incalculably valuable and efficient. No resources were expended correcting course or undoing past mistakes before beginning our work. We believe that this early intervention in the organizational development of so many has been critical to the successful structuring, resourcing and connecting of emerging theatres in New York City the last 20 years.

With the TLP, we wanted to identify key moments in which the consulting support of the program could most effectively support the healthy development of the organization and its leadership. While we recognize that there are ‘crisis’ moments at which this kind of support can be meaningful and should be engaged, we did not want to center the program on saving troubled organizations but rather on supporting organizations at all kinds of critical junctures. In moments of transition organizations are especially open to change and these moments present opportunities to support leaders to advance themselves and their organizations. The development of the TLP as a customized, one-on-one engagement with theatre leaders at transition moments for their organizations and themselves has proven pivotal in accomplishing the considerable amount of
growth, restructuring, leadership change, new approaches and learning that the program has supported.

Tectonic Theater Project is a developmental theater company founded and directed by Moisés Kaufman. For 20 years the excellence of Tectonic’s art has garnered awards, press and accolades. However, as with many small companies, the administrative side lagged behind that excellence and finding a sustainable business model seemed elusive.

As a new ED, in a new arts arena (I’d come from music) in September 2012 – this was a daunting challenge to take on, and the TLP has had direct value and impact on finding solutions and building the foundation to address the strategic priorities. Our guiding question has been, “How do you build an institutional framework that is reflective, responsible and responsive to the vision and the body of work?” In 18 months, we have:

- Crafted a clearer understanding of the core work of Tectonic (and the logical expansion of the work)
- Developed a new staffing model that is designed to be as adaptable and agile as the art itself. The admin structure will emerge from this core based on the art project needs and opportunities.
- Developed a revenue model to sustain the core with key board, individual, and foundation donors.
- Developed language and structure with our board around relational fundraising, and begun to grow that culture within our board.
- Piloted new producing/licensing/touring model that keeps Tectonic connected to the works we spend years developing as they move through the production phases with both artistic/brand and small revenue participation.

In it for the Long Haul

An important corollary to the commitment to engage at transition moments is the recognition that, to support real and sustained change and develop leaders, these programs needed to extend over time. A one-time or short-term intervention cannot fully address organizational change and growth because the environment in which organizations are working is volatile and constantly changing. We recognized early on the need to build ongoing relationships with each of the organizations involved in these programs and to be prepared to stick with them over time. Thus, the NQP was developed with a series of workshops, which can be explored through various paths and timelines of participation. Further, each program cycle is made up of a sequence of connected, multi-part workshops and/or individual follow-up sessions that allow participants to not only gain information and knowledge but also receive help in integrating this into their own organizational systems.
The TLP took the idea of an ongoing arc of work further. In this program, after an initial course of consulting (which generally lasts from six months to a year), participating organizations have access to the consulting resources for a three to five year period. After the initial work has been completed, consultants continue to check in at least once a year to see how the organization has progressed and to offer additional support as needed to address any changes or challenges. Even beyond the complete cycle of consulting work, we have seen organizations re-enter the TLP as they navigate new transition moments. We have also had leaders who, having left the original organization with which they participated in the program, re-engage in the program with another A.R.T./New York member organization.

In Elevator Repair Service’s growth as an organization over the last 23 years, The Nancy Quinn Fund and The Theatre Leadership Program each played a critical role at a critical moment. For a young company, The Nancy Quinn process was liberating. As a budding company, it’s very easy to succumb to the idea that there’s a single right way and lots of wrong ways to organize. To be told that we should look to our strengths as artists as we tried to institutionalize set us on the best possible path. We learned through that process to trust our impulses and have faith in our own model.

Several years later, we needed to grow to accommodate demand for our work. We knew we needed to expand the staff and we were only able to do that with the sensitive yet determined guidance of ARTS Action Research’s Anne Dunning. She not only helped us go through our budget and find money and resources we already had, but also instilled in us the courage to actively grow ourselves to a level that had seemed beyond our capacity.

ARTS Action Research helped us in our early years by reassuring us that we didn’t need to grow too fast; later, they gave us the courage and showed us the means for investing more when our work needed a higher level of support and growth was the right next step.

**Values Undergird the Theory**

There are a couple of AAR’s core values that have been integral to the success of our theory of change and the delivery of these programs.

First is AAR’s profound belief in the artistic process as the most effective framework and process for informing all aspects of a theatre’s life and work, not just the aspects related to making and producing art. The artistic process is a remarkable combination of vision, creativity, inspiration, intuition, and collaboration balanced with craft, technique, accountability, discipline, and use of time and resources. The challenging thing about the artistic process is that it is specific
to each artist and therefore each theatre, and applicable to that theatre alone. It is the very
definition of elegance applied to organizational behavior – and completely confounding to those
seeking institutional uniformity and practice.

Second, the bond of mutual trust that AAR develops with each theatre is immeasurably
vital to our working processes. Trust is grounded in shared values, expectations and understanding, built over time and person-to-person. Part of this trust for us is a clear understanding of not only with whom but for whom we are working. In a sector in which the expectations and desires of funders, boards and policy makers are sometimes at odds or misaligned with the expectations and desires of practicing professionals, arts professionals are keenly aware of whose agenda is being served. That the TLP and NQP are benefits of A.R.T./New York membership means unconflicted ground to stand on – the arts professionals themselves drive the expectations of the work. Further, theatres who access the TLP and NQP do so entirely motivated by what they may gain from the programs since there is no potential funding or funder expectation tied to participation in these programs.

The Chocolate Factory Theater's mission and continued practice is to support the development and public presentation of new work in dance, theater, music and multimedia with a focus on artists whose work challenges each of these forms. In 1999 the group had a budget of just $10,000 and no paid staff. In 2014 the budget is almost $700,000, there are 3 full-time and 8 regular part-time employees, and the theater pays all resident and visiting artists as employees bringing the annual employee number to around 100. The group has raised almost $5,000,000 toward the acquisition of a permanent home in Long Island City and is active negotiations with three different sites. None of this would have been possible without the continued assistance of A.R.T./New York and the very committed and effective consultants they work with. There are many consultants for nonprofits available, but the quality of the people working with A.R.T./New York is very high and because of the affiliation through A.R.T./New York these consultants do not pander to the groups to get new work. They are wonderfully tough on us and because of that groups like The Chocolate Factory Theater are thriving.

Change: Not Only a Fact of Life, But a Sign of Life
The TLP and NQP have changed and evolved just as the dynamic New York City theatre community has over these two decades. And ARTS Action Research has likewise changed and
evolved because we never lost sight of the fact that the listening, learning and exchange so integral to the effectiveness of these programs are things we share rather than impart.

It is gratifying and affirming to recognize that the core values and aspirations that set the stage for these programs early on have been so richly expressed in the growth, breadth and diversity of the New York City theater community. Today this city boasts some of the most exceptional theatre leaders anywhere, in which the names of the theatres and those of the professional leaders are virtually synonymous. There are no faceless theatre institutions in New York City. Nowhere else in the world is there a more diverse and variegated community of theatres interacting, collaborating or just simply co-existing. The manufactured schism between not for profit and commercial interests has been exposed and systematically erased as New York City theatre professionals learned and demonstrated that theatre of quality and integrity can embrace and serve a wide range of ideas and expressions as well as broad economic interests.

As stated at the beginning of this report, this has been two decades of unprecedented change and growth in theatre in America and the world. Unaddressed in this report but hardly insignificant is the extraordinary tenacity and resilience of A.R.T./New York and its theatre membership. Because, during this same period of time unprecedented human and natural disasters – the attacks of 9/11, Super Storm Sandy, the Great Recession – brought New York City and this theatre community to its knees, but only temporarily. Perhaps more than anything, A.R.T./New York and these programs helped the theatre community reflect this city in all respects. We believe that they will continue to do so in ever evolving ways as the next decade of theatre work in New York unfolds.

The changes, processes and growth cited in this report are the result of the vision, passion and hard work of so many at A.R.T./New York and within the New York City theatre community. The AAR team, Anne Dunning, Mary Giudici, Nello McDaniel and George Thorn, feel enormously proud and humble to have been an integral part of the narrative each step of the way.

The ARTS Action Research team wishes to thank Ginny Louloudes, the staff and board of A.R.T./New York for the opportunity to join them in this amazing and transforming journey in theatre of the last twenty-two years. Along with Ginny and A.R.T./New York we want to express gratitude to a number of courageous funders who embraced the vision of a great and singular theatre community of, by and for the theatre professionals who make it up.
Most importantly we wish to thank the many theatre professionals who we have worked with, inspired and been inspired by for more than twenty years. You have welcomed us into your lives, trusted us and yourselves and have made, and continue to make, New York City the remarkable and defining theatre center that it is.

ARTS Action Research works with performing, visual, literary, presenting and service arts organizations in both single and cross discipline configurations. AAR’s Team of Associates address a range of needs from the most basic developmental to complex restructuring and repositioning of veteran arts organizations. Regardless of working format, AAR works with organizations on individually tailored planning processes and strategies that extend directly from each organization’s artistic process. For more information about ARTS Action Research’s work, services, publications and team of Associates please check our website at www.artsaction.com.
APPENDIX: Funding Partners 1992 to present

Adolph and Ruth Schnurmacher Fdn
Altria
Capital One
Charles and Mildred Schnurmacher Fdn
Con Edison
Emma A. Sheafer Charitable Trust
Heymann Wolf Foundation
IBM Corporation
Joyce-Mertz Gilmore Foundation
Mary Duke Biddle Foundation
Mental Insight Foundation
Merrill Lynch & Co. Foundation, Inc.
New York State Council on the Arts
Pfizer Inc.
Puffin Foundation
Robert Sterling Clark Foundation
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
The Chase Manhattan Foundation
The Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation
The Greenwall Foundation
The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust
The J.M. Kaplan Fund
The J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation
The Katherine Dalglish Foundation
The National Endowment for the Arts
The New York City Council, Peter F. Vallone, Speaker, through the NYC Dept. of Cultural Affairs
The New York Community Trust
The New York State Assembly Under the request of Assemblywoman Deborah Glick
The New York State Council on the Arts
The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
The O’Grady Family Foundation
The Peter J. Sharp Foundation
The Prospect Hill Foundation
U.S. Trust Corporation
This supplement accompanies ARTS Action Research’s Special Report, *Leading from the Center: The Story of A.R.T./New York’s Nancy Quinn & Theatre Leadership Programs*. In this document, we are happy to share, in their own words, reflections from some of the many theatre organizations who have participated in these pivotal programs over the past twenty-two years.

**The Harold & Miriam Steinberg Theatre Leadership Program (TLP)** provides individualized consulting support for A.R.T./New York’s mid-sized theatres helping them address challenges facing their organizations and supporting their work as they traverse critical junctures in their development. Each theatre is paired with a lead consultant with whom they meet regularly for a period of up to three years, in order to analyze the challenges they face and develop effective responses. Each consultant has a long-term commitment to participating organizations and, by working one-on-one with the core leadership of each company, is invested to such a degree that upon completing the program, the participating theatres emerge stronger, more focused, and have the tools necessary for future evolution. The TLP was initiated in 1994.

**The Nancy Quinn Program (NQP)** was created in honor of Nancy Quinn, one time A.R.T./New York board member and former Artistic Director of Young Playwrights, Inc. Ms. Quinn strongly believed in the importance of giving young talent an opportunity to “have their say.” She showed tremendous respect for the voices of the next generation of artists and was committed to fostering the work of new, emerging, and small theatre companies. After she passed away in 1993, A.R.T./New York launched the Nancy Quinn Program to assist its largest and most rapidly growing sector of member theatres – those with annual cash budgets under $100,000 – by providing management seminars, annual grants, and other services designed to help companies facing the challenges of producing in New York City. The NQP provides information, networking and developmental resources to theatres with annual operating budgets under $100,000 through workshops and individual follow up session with lead consultants. The Nancy Quinn Technical Assistance program provides practical advice, access to information and training on topics such as planning, leadership development, boards, audience development, financial management, fundraising, individual giving, press and publicity, and special events, through workshops and one-on-one consultations. Participation in the program is a turning point for many companies and the workshops generate a plethora of ideas about how professional leadership can run their
organizations more effectively and better achieve their goals. In order to help companies execute some of their goals, a companion program, The Nancy Quinn Fund, offers competitive cash grants. The NQP was initiated in 1993.

**Atlantic Theater Company, Neil Pepe, Artistic Director**

Atlantic Theater Company has been an active participant in ART/New York’s Theater Leadership Program for many years and has benefitted greatly from this essential support and consultation. The program has been an invaluable part of our growth as a theater company. Working closely with Nello McDaniel, he helped us not only evaluate our goals and mission, but also to create a detailed ‘positioning statement’ which became a guiding document for our staff, Board and Ensemble. Nello’s wide experience consulting arts organization around the country and his ground-breaking ideas about not-for-profit structure and management made him an essential partner in creating a healthy future for the Atlantic. Over the years I came to affectionately refer to Nello as the company ‘therapist’.

Our core philosophy at Atlantic has been that every aspect of the organization work toward serving the story of the play. From marketing, fundraising and audience development to the role of directors, actors, designers and leadership, the story of the play and how best to serve and represent that story is our guiding force. Nello’s work not only complimented this approach, but allowed us to formalize and strengthen our way of working in way that truly revolutionized how we ran our theatre. Together we created a healthy and productive relationship between the Board, staff and artistic ensemble in which the mission was clear and we had a common goal that was simple and practical. Nello affirmed that our mission and artistic approach was actually a viable business model for a healthy and vital arts organization. For this we will always be grateful. And, of course, it is no surprise that all this came through A.R.T./New York: under the leadership of Ginny Louloudes it is simply one of the most essential and important organizations in keeping New York theater alive and vibrant.

**The Chocolate Factory Theater, Sheila Lewandowski & Brian Rogers, Founders**

The Chocolate Factory Theater's mission and continued practice is to support the development and public presentation of new work in dance, theater, music and multimedia with a focus on artists whose work challenges each of these forms.

Theater et al, Inc. the company from which The Chocolate Factory emerged, was founded in 1999 and functioned as an itinerant producing collective run by founders and collaborative
artists Brian Rogers and Sheila Lewandowski. One of the first things the founders did at the recommendation of many peers was to join the Alliance of Resident Theaters/New York (A.R.T./New York). Like many young groups the founders were unaware of the help they needed and joined more to access possible funding and for the extensive lists A.R.T./New York.

Fortunately for theater et al and for many other informal and formal theater collectives, A.R.T./New York mandated capacity building as part of membership. So, Brian and Sheila began the first step of the membership process of working with Nello McDaniel, George Thorn, Ruby Lerner and other icons of arts management to define their purpose. This year-long process of ‘defining the center’ was the most valuable training theater et al received and it was not easy. The consultants paid by A.R.T./New York to work with the idealist founders never let up as they forced the duo to define and clarify the purpose of starting a group versus working as individual artists first for themselves and then for public use.

The groundwork was then laid for what later became The Chocolate Factory Theater, now an award-winning incubator and presenter of experimental performance in Long Island City, Queens. Over the years the founders participated in roundtables, workshops and received customized capacity building help in marketing & publicity, board development, strategic & financial planning and more.

In 1999 the group had a budget of just $10,000 and no paid staff. By 2004-05 the organization had two paid staff members (the founders) at a salary of $500 a year each, a budget of $50,000 and produced-presented approximately six shows. By 2007 The Chocolate Factory’s budget had grown to just over $100,000 and the demand for services by artists, the local community and audiences was apparent. In 2014 the budget is almost $700,000, there are 3 full-time and 8 regular part-time employees, and the theater pays all resident and visiting artists as employees bringing the annual employee number to around 100. The group has raised almost $5,000,000 toward the acquisition of a permanent home in Long Island City and is active negotiations with three different sites. None of this would have been possible without the continued assistance of A.R.T./New York and the very committed and effective consultants they work with. There are many consultants for nonprofits available, but the quality of the people working with A.R.T./New York is very high and because of the affiliation through A.R.T./New York these consultants do not pander to the groups to get new work. They are wonderfully tough on us and because of that groups like theater et al, Inc. dba The Chocolate Factory Theater are thriving.
Dixon Place, Ellie Covan, Artistic Director
As a mid-size NYC theater organization, Dixon Place (DP) has been through quite a few complex changes in recent years. At the conclusion of a six-year capital campaign to build a brand new state-of-the-art theater facility, the economic crisis hit and DP was confronted with serious challenges. During this critical time, we were very fortunate to be included in A.R.T./New York’s Theatre Leadership Program (TLP). Through the TLP, ARTS Action Research appeared on the scene at the perfect moment. The guidance and support we received from Nello and Anne have proven invaluable. Their one-on-one sessions were instrumental in the growth and evolution of the organization -- analyzing our financial position, revamping our infrastructure and board development and management, as well as personal encouragement and support, are having a lasting impact on Dixon Place.

Elevator Repair Service, John Collins, Artistic Director
In Elevator Repair Service’s growth as an organization over the last 23 years, The Nancy Quinn Fund and The Theatre Leadership Program each played a critical role at a critical moment.
For a young company, The Nancy Quinn process was liberating. As a budding company, it’s very easy to succumb to the idea that there’s a single right way and lots of wrong ways to organize. To be told that we should look to our strengths as artists as we tried to institutionalize set us on the best possible path. We learned through that process to trust our impulses and have faith in our own model.

Several years later, we needed to grow to accommodate demand for our work. We needed to provide a small number of employees with health insurance and salaries. We knew we needed to expand the staff and we were only able to do that with the sensitive yet determined guidance of ARTS Action Research’s Anne Dunning. She not only helped us go through our budget and find money and resources we already had, but also instilled in us the courage to actively grow ourselves to a level that had seemed beyond our capacity.

ARTS Action Research helped us in our early years by reassuring us that we didn’t need to grow too fast; later, they gave us the courage and showed us the means for investing more when our work needed a higher level of support and growth was the right next step.

The Flea Theatre, Jim Simpson, Artistic Director
Thanks to A.R.T./New York’s Theatre Leadership Program, I’ve had the good fortune to work with Arts Action Research on numerous occasions for much of the seventeen years I’ve helmed the
Flea. The Producing Director at the Flea, Carol Ostrow, describes Mr. McDaniel as our “shrink”. Mostly because we’re able to describe our practice, outline our challenges and get invaluable feedback on a remarkably wide range of areas. The feedback and insight is deep, experienced, and I can’t think of any other source that offers the wealth of information that AAR offers. From one-on-one meetings, to full blown Staff retreats, AAR’s approach is thorough and always galvanizes our little institution. Like many Arts organizations, we faced our share of challenges and A.R.T./New York and Arts Action Research have been invaluable partners in our growth, survival and work. Being at the center of an institution, and a practicing artist, it is sometimes impossible to see the forest for all the trees. AAR has given me the gift of seeing clearly what we are actually doing, and how to make it better. The Flea would not be where it is today without the interaction we enjoyed with AAR.

The Movement Theatre Company, Eric Lockley, Producing Artistic Leader

When The Movement Theatre Company became a member of A.R.T./New York in 2009 we were a young theater company with limited experience and very little money, but lots of ambition. We were passionate about creating a space for emerging young artists of color to develop work and to create community. Knowing that sustaining a theater company beyond 3 -5 years is a challenge, (especially in NYC) we looked forward to learning as much as we could from the NQP Workshops. These workshops were so integral to us developing skills in financial management, audience and donor relationships, special event planning, and more. I can say without question, that the insight, the clarity and the care that the professionals bring to these workshops has allowed us to confidently have programming year after year, and has ensured that we’ve become a staple in the Harlem arts community.

Additionally when we needed one on one support TLP delivered. Anne Dunning who knew our organization well, came in to help us with some challenges we were experiencing within organizational structure and decision-making. Anne’s work over two sessions helped us to define the challenges, and she led us in creating an action-plan to move forward. This was a great turning point for our organization, as it helped us to discover a healthier way of working that catered our organization’s needs. This type of specific, individualized, and effective work for a company as “young” and small as ours, is what makes both TLP and NQP so important to the arts community.
National Black Theatre, Sade Lythcote, Executive Director

A.R.T./New York and the Theatre Leadership Program has given the National Black Theatre access to Nello McDaniel and the whole team at ARTS Action Research. Aar has been a huge help for the National Black Theatre as we look at how to ignite the power of our founders vision, Dr. Barbara Ann Teer, in the 21 century to secure our rightful place as a leading voice in the American Theatre. It is through learning AAR best practices that NBT has been able to articulate where we are now with clarity and secure the future of our 45 year old institution. This has been made possible by learning AAR’s unique but holistic approach to the process of establishing and also examining infrastructure, board development, and strategic planning. It has helped us demystify what was once seen as daunting. They are helping us craft a process that meets our immediate needs and because of that this institution can vision-build to 50 with a more confident sound perspective. Thanks you Ginny and A.R.T./New York for giving Nello and AAR the ability to make sure an important institution like NBT has access to such an invaluable tool and mentorship.

New Georges, Susan Bernfield, Artistic Director

New Georges was in the first group ARTS Action Research led at A.R.T./New York, in the 1993/94 pilot year of the Nancy Quinn Program. My work with them came at exactly the right time. If I hadn’t been there, and they hadn’t told us that some things (and people) might not be a fit with our organization, that it was okay to let them go, my theater company might not have lasted that season, let alone twenty more years. Along the way, our work together has continued to be extremely beneficial. But what’s meant almost as much has been the way they’ve used their experience with our sector of the field in their broader research and consulting, the fact that our small companies could be a model for new practices, something they pointed to in work with companies larger and more established than ours. That our crazy, skin-of-our-teeth organizational style had merit, was something to be encouraged and not tamped out with more conventional work styles, has lent tremendous validation to our work over the years. It’s provided me with the confidence not only to follow my organizational instincts, but to create an effective organization that reflects my values, my priorities, dare I say my personality, every single day.

Noor Theatre, Maha Chehlaoui, Executive Director

The Theatre Leadership Program has been hugely impactful on the development of Noor Theatre. We joined A.R.T./New York about a year after we formed as a company. The Organizational Planning and Process workshop was a requirement for applying for the Nancy Quinn grant, so we
dutifully took the course. There was a sense of, "well, we already did this exercise in the planning of our company’s launch, but, a requirement is a requirement." I am so glad we went and so grateful to the course! While our company leadership had gone through a very thoughtful exercise in why we were forming, who we wanted to reach, and how we wanted to do it, the clarity provided by the workshop actually helped us notice spots of inconsistency, or places where leadership had not come to a true agreement, but that there were a number of assumptions we were all operating on, and they were not identical! This workshop really helped us solidify our language. In turn, that got us on the same page so we could have a deeper conversation about our goals as they pertained to our mission, and more importantly our vision. We were also challenged to simplify our language so we could communicate it clearly to our board and other supporters.

We now find ourselves approaching the five year mark.

Just last month we closed our first solo production, a festival of three new plays workshopped for a few weeks each over the course of two years. We still have a relatively meager budget of under $50,000. But we were able to pull off something that looked easily twice that large because of support we garnered from grants and in-kind donations. I feel very strongly that our ability to successfully apply for grants in large part is due to the language we created through the guidance of the Organizational Planning and Process trainings.

I now attend trainings whenever I can. The knowledge shared is always pertinent to what Noor Theatre is up to. Case in point, relational fundraising. We are on the verge of embarking on large scale fundraising campaigns in order to transition from a volunteer led organization to a staffed institution. We are actually shifting the way we think about fundraising. We were definitely chasing dollars in the past, and now, I am shifting my attention towards chasing relationships. And that is a very different approach, one that is shifting how we do a lot of things from outreach, to audience development, to engaging with our board.

There are so many specifics I could get into. But overall, one of the most important things this program has given me is confidence. I came into this game feeling a little like I was just flying by the seat of my pants. All I had to go on were my instincts, the mistakes I had made in the past, and the advice of my more esteemed colleagues. What this program provided me was a structured curriculum around specific topics pertinent to a theatre of my size. Absolutely invaluable. Further, being in a room and being able to share experiences also boosted my confidence enormously. Learning that others are sharing the same struggles, or that the weird thing I was doing that I thought was maybe shady was something EVERYONE did-- all of that went a long way towards boosting my confidence in myself, in our team, and in Noor Theatre.
Teatro Circulo, Cheo Oliveras, Artistic Director

When Teatro Círculo was barely a few months old we became a member of A.R.T./ New York and an immediate beneficiary of the Theatre Leadership Program and The Nancy Quinn Fund. Twenty years later we can categorically say that was one of the best decisions we ever made. First, TLP was instrumental in giving us the necessary context of NYC's non-for-profit theatre world and made us understand that as long as we stay faithful to a clearly defined artistic mission, our work would become an important part of the cultural environment of the city. Second, our collaboration with TLP helped us immensely to articulate a professional work ethic focused on artistic objectives and based on strategic thinking. There is no doubts in our minds that A.R.T./New York's influence since our early development eventually led us to become the first Latino theatre company in Manhattan to acquire and renovate its own building. For some, it is hard to comprehend how it is possible for a small theatre company with an average annual budget of $250,000 to embark on a capital campaign and effectively raise $5 million dollars. These are the kind of miracles that are perfectly possible when creative artists are provided with the right technical assistance and training. There is no way many of our off-off Broadway theaters would be able to go on stage and do our work without the tremendous work that ART-New York does from backstage to support us.

Tectonic Theater Project, Erika Floreska, Executive Director

A.R.T./New York’s Theatre Leadership Program (TLP) has been an invaluable experience for me and for Tectonic’s effective implementation of a new strategic plan. The TLP support has provided ideas, context, perspective, thought leadership, implementation ideas, and moral support when challenges arose. Tectonic Theater Project is a developmental theater company founded and directed by Moisés Kaufman. For 20 years the excellence of Tectonic’s art has garnered awards, press and accolades. However, as with many small companies, the administrative side lagged behind that excellence and finding a sustainable business model seemed elusive.

As a new ED, in a new arts arena (I’d come from music) in September 2012 – this was a daunting challenge to take on, and the TLP has had direct value and impact on finding solutions and building the foundation to address the strategic priorities. Our guiding question has been, “How do you build an institutional framework that is reflective, responsible and responsive to the vision and the body of work?” In 18 months, we have developed and implemented a number of ideas to address this with the help of TLP:
1) We have crafted a clearer understanding of the core work of Tectonic (laboratory and training) and the logical expansion of the core work

2) A new staffing model that is designed to be as adaptable and agile as the art itself. The admin structure will emerge from this core based on the art project needs and opportunities.

3) Developed a revenue model to sustain the core with key board, individual, and foundation donors.

4) Developed language and structure with our board around relational fundraising, and begun to grow that culture within our board.

5) Piloted new producing/licensing/touring model that keeps Tectonic connected to the works we spend years developing as they move through the production phases with both artistic/brand and small revenue participation.

In addition to the above, I have felt a great deal of personal support from meetings and brain storming with Nello. The role of Executive Director often is a challenging one finding the balancing act of connecting Board, Artistic Director, Staff, Partners, on the same page, and Nello is a great thought partner, offering insights on other theater models, perspectives and ideas from the field, and general support for the work we did.