

**Reflections on the Americans for the Arts Conference  
Seattle, WA, June 18-20, 2009  
By Jess Moreles, Executive Director, Teatro Visión**

Thanks to the generosity of the Arts Council Silicon Valley (ACSV) and a Leadership & Organizational Enhancement Scholarship from Applied Materials, I had the great pleasure of attending this year's annual Americans for the Arts (AFTA) conference held in beautiful Seattle, WA from June 18<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009. My participation was of double significance for me since it was not only my first time attending this conference, but I was doing so as the new executive director of Teatro Visión.

This year's conference, titled *Renewable Resources: Arts in Sustainable Communities*, was focused, by design and intrinsic need, on hope and unity. It emphasized what was being done right now to ensure sustainability and how to prepare for brighter days ahead.

I was but one member of a Silicon Valley posse assembled by the Arts Council. The rest of our entourage included ACSV Executive Director Bruce W. Davis (*I guess that makes him our Ari Gold*), Diem Jones, Director of Programs at ACSV, local artist and beautiful spirit Flo Oy Wong, Jeff Trabucco, Interim Managing Director—Artsopolis; and Jeffery Walker, Executive Director of the Community School of Music and Arts.

The highlights for me were being a representative of the thriving and diverse cultural community of Silicon Valley, the important national networking opportunities, and experiencing the city and art of Seattle itself.

A key highlight was being asked to sit at the ACSV table for the opening general session luncheon and being present to see our own Bruce Davis receive the 2009 Michael Newton Award. In addition to hearing about Bruce's demonstrated commitment, innovation and dedication to the arts as a movement for change, I also learned that he is a singer/songwriter (and once had long hair!). In addition to the SV posse, we were joined at our table by the 2009 AFTA Public Art Award recipient, the entertaining Buster Simpson, as well as Julie Peeler, Vice President of Private-Sector Initiatives at AFTA and the founder of the National Arts Marketing project, which Teatro is proud to be a participant in this year!

The opening session appropriately began with an inspiring tribal blessing bestowed by indigenous artists, The Squamish Canoe Family. The luncheon featured Bill Ivey, former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts and member of President Barack Obama's transition team, and was capped off by President and CEO of Americans for the Arts, Robert L. Lynch's presentation of AFTA's annual report.

Would I recommend attending future AFTA conferences? Absolutely, especially for the chances it provides for networking with prominent national arts leaders and funders alike. I had the pleasure of meeting Yosi Sergeant, the NEA's director of Communications and he spoke of his experiences as part of President Obama's transition team. I also connected with my fellow NALACeros from the National Association of Arts and Culture, met Luis Cancel, the Director of Cultural Affairs at The SF Arts Commission, and visited with the Director of our San Jose's Office of Cultural Affairs, Kerry Adam-Hapner, as well as Moy Eng, the Arts Program Director of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

I was proud to be a part of our deepening cultural community, participate in moments of learning, sharing and enlightenment and again, would like to thank the Arts Council of Silicon Valley for making this possible.

*About Jess Moreles*

Jess joined Teatro Visión in 2004, coming to the Chicano/Latino Theatre Company with no experience in the public sector. A strong desire to reconnect with his heritage and give back to the community inspired him leave his 25-years of management experience with national retailers and take on the role of Operations Manager at Teatro. The opportunity came via a national two-year fellowship/mentorship awarded by Theatre Communications Group courtesy of the Doris Duke Foundation.

Jess previously served four years on the board of directors of Teatro Visión before joining the staff. He also served on the City of San José's Arts Commission. He is a graduate of SJSU/CompassPoint Nonprofit Management Program, the National Association of Arts and Culture (NALAC) Leadership Institute and 1<sup>st</sup>ACT Silicon Valley's Multicultural Arts Leadership Institute (MALI). He currently is on the advisory committee of the MALI project, and is part of the host committee that will be bringing the bi-annual NALAC Conference to San Jose in April 2010.

*About Teatro Visión*

Teatro Visión is the only theater company on the West Coast to deliver a full season of high-quality productions that address issues concerning the Latino community in a 500-seat theater. The company uses a unique artistic approach that involves drawing from the community experience to produce plays that would not otherwise be accessible to people seeking cultural-specific or Spanish-language theater. Teatro Vision is located at 1700 Alum Rock Avenue, Suite 265, San José, CA 95116. For more information go to [www.teatrovision.org](http://www.teatrovision.org) or call 408.272.9926.