

***My Reflections on the National Arts Marketing Project Conference
Providence, Rhode Island, October 29 – November 2, 2009
By: Roy Hirabayashi, Executive Director, San Jose Taiko***



Thanks to an Arts Council Silicon Valley (ACSV) scholarship, I had the opportunity to attend the 2009 National Arts Marketing Project (NAMP) Conference, a program of Americans for the Arts, held in Providence, Rhode Island from October 29 to November 2. Compared to the annual Americans for the Arts general conference, the NAMP conference (<http://www.artsmarketing.org/>) is much smaller and focuses on marketing and fundraising. I began my arts career as a musician and composer, but as I moved into administrative roles for San Jose Taiko, I have had to learn about marketing and fundraising to help lead our organization through the many economic challenges and obstacles we have faced over the past 36 years. All arts groups are interested in hearing about better ways to be successful in fundraising in our current challenging times. In this regard, attending the NAMP conference was very valuable as I learned about the most current trends in marketing and fundraising in the arts.

About 500 people attended the conference from across the country and included people from small to large budget organizations, fundraisers, marketing and development directors, grant writers, middle and upper management staff, media experts, social networking experts, organizational consultants and individual artists. There were several engaging speakers and many expert panelists presenting a variety of topics at the conference. One major thread seemed to be the influence and the need to understand how the social online networking systems can work in both marketing and fundraising. MySpace is going out and Facebook is in. Friendsters is gone and Twitter is the new platform.

I elected to go to Providence a day early to attend one of the three preconference classes, the Sponsorship Boot Camp taught by Alice Sachs Zimet of Arts and Business Partners. This all day class provided many tips and insights on how corporations are now looking at sponsorship opportunities. The other two preconference classes included the Pricing Institute and Marketing for the Independent Artist. The advantage of attending one of these preconference workshops at NAMP is the wealth of experience that is also provided by the participants who represent major performing arts organizations across the country.

The conference featured many excellent speakers for everyone to hear. Arthur Cohen, CEO of LaPlaca Cohen, spoke about the changes happening with corporations and corporate sponsorships. David Court, Global marketing Knowledge Leader at the McKinsey & Company gave the opening keynote address of how consumers buy products and how organizations can use the corporate methods of understanding consumer trends while keeping track of the important return-on-investment. Rich Minz, Vice President of Strategy at Blue State Digital talked about the power of online fundraising through examples of the past presidential election. David McIntosh, President of Creative Business Breakthroughs and the co-author of the book "The Art of Business" talked about the importance of understanding the needs of our audiences in order to provide a fuller experience at arts events. The closing keynote speaker was John Maeda, President of the Rhode Island

School of Design (RISD). John Maeda was truly an inspiration as he talked about the importance of creative leadership and the entrepreneurial artists to create a 21st-century synthesis of creativity and innovation.

With so many interesting discussion sessions to choose from it was difficult to choose just seven to participate in. All of the sessions had excellent speakers and provided very current information regarding best practices for each specific topic. Some interesting topics included "Beyond the Blast: E-mail Marketing Well-Done", "A Glimpse Behind the Curtain: How Corporate Sponsors Think, Decide, and Execute", "Every Dollar Counts: Using ROI to Prove Marketing Effectiveness" and "Quick, Cheap, and Dirty: Developing an Inexpensive Marketing Plan." There was a lot to see, hear and learn at the conference and it was especially good to hear about some of the latest trends and methods around the online approach. Here are some of my take-aways from the conference:

- New methods, tactics, electronic systems may come into place, but the basic concepts of marketing and fundraising remain the same. Be direct, be concise, and be creative in writing your message.
- Marketing an event, fundraising from individual donors and seeking sponsorships all require research and patience. There are many new systems that can help in all of those areas.
- Email donor solicitations will soon become the standard way to contact donors. Staying in tune with how that bests works and the changing platforms (Facebook or Twitter or whatever is the next newest social network system) will be the challenge.
- The attention span or tolerance to the amount of information for any one person to take in is decreasing because the amount of information is increasing. It is now the norm to have high impact messages in very few words.
- Never make assumptions that your audience will not change or is changing. You may be surprised at what is really happening.
- Small, mid-size or large budget organizations can now be working on the same level of fundraising impact with an online fundraising strategy. Targeted audiences can create a larger donor income base if nurtured properly.

Next year's NAMP conference "*New Tech. New Tools. New Times,*" will be held in San Jose, November 12-15, 2010. There is no excuse for any arts administrator in the Bay Area to not attend this conference. The City of Providence hosted a very dynamic conference. The Silicon Valley region needs to show that we can be a better host. Please join us at the NAMP Conference here in San Jose next year!

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About Roy Hirabayashi:

Roy Hirabayashi is a founder and the Executive Director of San Jose Taiko. San Jose Taiko began in 1973 and is the third oldest taiko group in the North America. Roy has taught, composed and performed with San Jose Taiko nationally and internationally. He has toured with Kodo and Ondekoza and has performed with various other taiko artists, jazz musicians, dance companies and various theater productions. He is currently on the board for First Voice, Artsopolis, Japantown Community Congress of San Jose, and is chair of the Executive Committee of the North American Taiko Conference Advisory Board. He is a founding member of 1stACT, and the Multicultural Arts Leadership Initiative (MALI). Roy is a senior fellow with the American Leadership Forum of Silicon Valley (ALFSV) and the Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute (APALI).

About San Jose Taiko:

San Jose Taiko (SJT) started in San Jose Japantown in 1973 and is the third oldest taiko group in North America. Taiko is the Japanese drum and SJT has developed a signature style that is both traditionally rooted yet contemporary in sound and movement. SJT performs locally at many different festivals and community events, offers classes for both children and adults and supports an active educational outreach program in the schools. The core program for SJT is the professional ensemble that annually tours nationally and internationally and has traveled to 42 states and 5 countries. Website: www.taiko.org

For local bookings, contact San Jose Taiko at 408 293-9344, taiko@taiko.org

For national bookings, contact Michael Holden at Holden & Arts Associates, 512-477-1859