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New Orleans Opera Association: An Internship Report

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New Orleans Opera Association

An Internship Report

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Arts Administration

by

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Abstract

As one of the requirements to complete a Master of Arts in Arts Administration, this internship report presents a thorough discussion and analysis of my experience as an intern with the New Orleans Opera Association between May 2015 and August 2015. The focus of the internship was production, and the report reflects this emphasis. In addition, the report presents an overview of the organization, a SWOT analysis, and a discussion of best practices with recommendations for the organization's improvement.

Chapter 1

New Orleans Opera Association

History

While the New Orleans Opera Association did not come into its current form until 1943, opera itself has a long history in New Orleans. The first documented staging of an opera in New Orleans took place on May 22, 1796 at the Théâtre St. Pierre, located between Royal and Bourbon. The opera was André Ernest Grétry's *Sylvain*.¹ New Orleans, in fact, may very well have been the location of the first opera ever performed in North America, a claim which has earned New Orleans the title of America's "First City of Opera."² In the more than one hundred years between this first opera performance and the formation of the New Orleans Opera Association, New Orleans hosted touring opera companies and, for a period of time, was even home to multiple rival opera companies.³

One prominent opera theater, the Théâtre d'Orléans, first opened in October 1815 but was soon lost to a fire. It reopened in November 1819. The Théâtre d'Orléans brought in singers from Europe to perform in fall and winter. During the hot summer months, the theater toured in northern United States cities, such as New York and Philadelphia. The Théâtre d'Orléans continued producing operas until the opening of the French Opera House in 1859 and the outbreak of the Civil War.⁴

The French Opera House opened on December 1, 1859, and the Civil War soon followed. By the 1870s, however, the French Opera House was bustling once again. Many of the city's

¹ Jack Belsom, "A History of Opera in New Orleans," *New Orleans Opera Association*, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://neworleansopera.org/a-history-of-opera-in-new-orleans>.

² Maria Muro, "New Orleans: America's First City of Opera," *New Orleans Living Magazine*, October 9, 2012, accessed June 28, 2015, <http://www.livingneworleans.com/?p=7892>.

³ Belsom, "A History of Opera in New Orleans."

⁴ *Ibid.*

other theaters fell victim to fire in the second half of the 19th Century, leaving the French Opera House as the dominant opera venue. On more than one occasion, it hosted the Metropolitan Opera Company's touring productions. The French Opera House flourished until the outbreak of World War I, which made it nearly impossible to bring in soloists from Europe. After the war ended, the French Opera House planned to begin regular performances again in November 1919. On December 4, 1919, however, the French Opera House, like so many of its predecessors, was destroyed by a fire.⁵ Touring companies visited New Orleans in the 1920s and 1930s, but there would be no local opera company in the city for more than two decades.⁶

The New Orleans Opera House Association ("New Orleans Opera") was created in 1943 and had its inaugural season outdoors in June at City Park. This "Opera Under the Stars" was a success, but due to the high likelihood of rain in New Orleans in June, the New Orleans Opera moved to the Municipal Auditorium in the fall of 1943. The New Orleans Opera stayed in the Municipal Auditorium until 1973, when it moved to the Theater of Performing Arts (now known as the Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts).⁷ The Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts ("Mahalia Jackson Theater") is located in Louis Armstrong Park and seats 2,243.⁸ It has been the home of the New Orleans Opera continuously since 1973, with the exception of a brief period when the New Orleans Opera moved to McAlister Auditorium at Tulane University while the Mahalia Jackson Theater underwent repairs following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.⁹

⁵ Belsom, "A History of Opera in New Orleans."

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts," *Arts Center Enterprises-New Orleans, LLC*, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://www.mahaliajacksontheater.com>.

⁹ Phil Wahba, "New Orleans Opera dusts itself off, keeps on going," *The Houston Chronicle*, May 14, 2006, accessed June 28, 2015, <http://www.chron.com/entertainment/article/NewOrleansOperadustsitseloffkeepsongoing1903134.php>.

Hurricane Katrina forced the New Orleans Opera to cancel its performances scheduled for fall 2005. In March 2006, the New Orleans Opera held a gala at the New Orleans Arena to relaunch the New Orleans arts scene. The event, entitled “Night for New Orleans,” featured world-famous tenor Plácido Domingo. The gala was a huge success—the largest opera event ever held in the City of New Orleans.¹⁰ On March 23, 2006, the New Orleans Opera opened its spring season with the *Barber of Seville* at McAlister Auditorium. Both performances of the *Barber of Seville* were nearly sold out, as were both performances of *Madama Butterfly*, which opened in April.¹¹ The New Orleans Opera returned to the Mahalia Jackson Theater in the spring of 2009.¹²

Currently, the New Orleans Opera produces four operas per season, two in the fall and two in the spring. Each opera is performed twice, once on Friday night and once on Sunday afternoon. In addition, the New Orleans Opera produces a number of small concerts throughout the year. Opera in the Piazza takes place during the summer in partnership with the American Italian Cultural Center. It is an evening of arias that takes place outside on the Italian Piazza.¹³ In Opera on Tap, a franchise that began in New York City, the “New Orleans Opera presents the finest young local and regional singers in casual, 90-minute concerts of opera, Broadway and more” at local bars and pubs.¹⁴

¹⁰ Robert Lyall, interview with Craig Kraemer, *NewOrleansPodCasting, LLC*, December 19, 2007, accessed June 28, 2015, neworleanspodcasting.com/RobertLyall.

¹¹ Wahba, “New Orleans Opera dusts itself off, keeps on going.”

¹² Keith I. Marszalek, “New Orleans Opera announces 2008-2009 season, return to Mahalia Jackson Theatre,” *NOLA.com*, July 21, 2008, updated July 23, 2008, accessed June 28, 2015, http://blog.nola.com/arts/2008/07/new_orleans_opera_announces_20.html.

¹³ “Concerto a Piazza,” *American Italian Cultural Center*, accessed July 22, 2015, http://www.americanitalianculturalcenter.com/events/concerto_piazza.

¹⁴ “Opera on Tap,” *New Orleans Opera Association*, accessed July 22, 2015, <http://neworleansopera.org/opera-on-tap>.

Mission

Since its formation in 1943, the New Orleans Opera has strived to bring world-class opera to a local audience. As stated on its website, the mission of the New Orleans Opera is as follows:

to provide the finest possible operatic performances within its means to the New Orleans Metropolitan Area, the State of Louisiana, and the River and Gulf Regions. Grand Opera comprises broad historical, social and geographical events. It is the purpose of New Orleans Opera in producing opera to provide for the cultural enrichment of people of all ages without regard to their racial or ethnic make-up, or their physical or economic circumstances.

The goals of the organization are to plan, produce and present opera of the highest musical and artistic caliber, especially by drawing on Louisiana's abundant artistic talent to reach out to a broad public, educating them and developing in them a greater awareness of opera; to provide a statewide education program that includes live performance in the schools, a local student matinee of a mainstage operatic production, free public performances, and opera education lectures; to facilitate the attendance and comfort of individuals with physical and mental impairments; and to maintain the H. Lloyd Hawkins Scenic Studio as a local, national and international opera resource.¹⁵

The New Orleans Opera achieves its mission through its performances and educational outreach.

Community outreach and educational activities are key aspects of the New Orleans Opera's mission. At the final dress rehearsal for each performance, the New Orleans Opera invites student groups to attend free of charge. The staff prepares study guides for the students at

¹⁵ "Company," *New Orleans Opera Association*, accessed July 5, 2015, <http://neworleansopera.org/about-us>.

these “Preview Performances” containing information about the composer, the opera, and the history of opera in New Orleans. In addition, the New Orleans Opera invites patrons to attend “Nuts and Bolts” lectures prior to each performance.¹⁶ In the fall of 2015, the New Orleans Opera will host, in collaboration with Loyola University of New Orleans College of Music and Fine Arts and Preparatory Program, Newcomb Department of Music, Tulane University, and the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, a Youth Vocal Competition open to any high school sophomore, junior, or senior in Louisiana.¹⁷

Organizational Structure

The New Orleans Opera Association is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. It has an administrative staff of ten employees. The Board of Directors has forty members.¹⁸ In addition to its staff and Board of Directors, the New Orleans Opera is assisted by a number of support groups. These support groups, discussed in more detail below, raise funds for the New Orleans Opera through various galas and special events throughout the year.

Staff

The New Orleans Opera has an administrative staff of ten employees. The General and Artistic Director is the chief executive of the organization, and he reports directly to the Board of Directors. In his role as General Director, he hires staff as needed and oversees the organization’s day-to-day operations. In his role as Artistic Director, he chooses artists and repertoire for the production season. Under the General and Artistic Director, there are two basic

¹⁶ Belsom, “A History of Opera in New Orleans.”

¹⁷ “Youth Vocal Competition,” *New Orleans Opera Association*, accessed July 5, 2015, <http://neworleansopera.org/youth-vocal-competition>.

¹⁸ “Board,” *New Orleans Opera Association*, accessed July 24, 2015, <http://neworleansopera.org/board>.

components to the administrative offices of the New Orleans Opera Association: production and business.

Generally speaking, the production component involves the creation of the opera productions while the business component involves the management and procurement of the finances needed to create those productions. Employees that make up the production component of the office report directly to the General and Artistic Director and include the Director of Production, the Technical Director, and the Chorus Master. The Executive Director oversees the business component of the office. He reports directly to the General and Artistic Director as well as the Board of Directors. Other employees that make up the business component of the office include the Director of Audience Development, the Director of Development, the Business Manager, the Box Office Manager, and the Assistant Box Office Manager. The business employees and the production employees combine their efforts to ensure a successful production season.

The New Orleans Opera hires independent contractors as needed throughout the production season. These independent contractors include stage directors, scenic designers, lighting designers, choreographers, opera singers, carpenters, seamstresses, and stage crew. The New Orleans Opera is an “AGMA” organization, meaning that it maintains a contract with the American Guild of Musical Artists (“AGMA”), the labor union that represents opera singers, stage directors, and stage managers. In addition, stagehands and technical crew are generally members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (“IATSE”). As it does with AGMA, the New Orleans Opera must also abide by IATSE agreements when employing its members. Another union the New Orleans Opera often works with is the United Scenic Artists

which represents scenic designers and lighting designers. Throughout the season, the New Orleans Opera can employ nearly 200 individuals in one form or another.¹⁹

The current General and Artistic Director, Robert Lyall, joined the New Orleans Opera in the fall of 1998.²⁰ He is widely known as a conductor of both symphony orchestras and operas. Until 2015, Lyall also served as the Artistic Director of Opera Grand Rapids in Michigan, a position he had held since 1989. Other positions he has held include: Music Director of the Victoria Symphony Orchestra, Music Director of the Oak Ridge Symphony Orchestra, General Director of the Knoxville Opera, and Artistic Director of the Mississippi Opera. He has also worked with the Istanbul State Opera in Turkey, the New England Symphony, Italy's Arena of Verona, and the Bulgarian State Opera. Lyall played a crucial role in saving the New Orleans Opera after Hurricane Katrina. The Night for New Orleans Gala earned him a Creative Achievement Award from the City of New Orleans. Lyall holds a Ph.D. from the University of North Texas in Composition and Musicology.²¹

Board of Directors

As stated above, the Board of Directors of the New Orleans Opera has forty members. Members of the Board include local businessmen and businesswomen, attorneys, and doctors among others. The Board of Directors is united by their common love and appreciation of opera. Within the Board of Directors there are several committees including, but not limited to, the Finance Committee, Development Committee, and Production Committee. Each committee works closely with its corresponding staff member throughout the year.

¹⁹ These statements are based on personal knowledge I gained during my internship through undocumented discussions with the staff.

²⁰ Belsom, "A History of Opera in New Orleans."

²¹ "Robert Lyall Conductor," *Price Rubin & Partners*, accessed June 23, 2015, pricerubin.com/classical/dossiers.lyalldos.pdf.

R. Ranney Mize, Ph.D. is the current President of the Board of Directors of the New Orleans Opera. Mize:

is Professor Emeritus of Cell Biology and Anatomy and Co-Director Emeritus of the interdisciplinary Training Program in Neuroscience at LSU Health Sciences Center, New Orleans. He served as the Department Head of Cell Biology and Anatomy at LSUHSC from 1992-2003 and continues to teach neuroscience on a part-time basis. Dr. Mize has been a community leader for the performing arts since his arrival in New Orleans. In addition to serving on the Board and Executive Committee of Southern Rep, he serves on the Board of Trustees of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, is Vice Chair of the Arts Council of New Orleans, on the Board of Directors of the New Orleans Friends of Music (President from 2009-2012), and on the Visiting Committee of the Loyola University School of Music.²²

Mize has served as President since 2014.

Support Groups

In addition to the staff and Board of Directors, three support groups offer assistance to the New Orleans Opera throughout the year. The first support group is the Opera Club. As it describes itself:

[t]he Opera Club is a social organization which supports the New Orleans Opera. It is composed of people who love the opera and attend our performances. The club also contributes financially to the operation of the Opera, with approximately half of the membership dues going directly to the Association.

The club is known for its social events. Three times each season, we have a party to enjoy each other's company and meet the stars of the opera about to be performed. The

²² "Our Board," *Southern Rep*, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://southernrep.com/people/our-board>.

dinners are held at the beautiful Opera Guild home on Prytania Street and are formal affairs with a catered menu and open bar. Maestro Lyall introduces the stars and speaks about the upcoming performances. In addition to dinner and cocktails, each party includes entertainment related to the upcoming performances.²³

The Opera Club offers its members a look behind the scenes while supporting the New Orleans Opera financially.

Another support group is the Women's Guild. The Women's Guild was formed in 1947. Its members plan and organize two fundraising events during the year: Opera Ball and the Mad Hatter's Luncheon. These events do much to market the New Orleans Opera, and this is one of the main functions of the Women's Guild.²⁴

The third support group is the Junior Committee. "The Junior Committee of the New Orleans Opera Association inspires, educates and encourages young women to strengthen the local arts community through the opera."²⁵ It supports the New Orleans Opera through educational programs and fundraising events including a masquerade party.²⁶

H. Lloyd Hawkins Scenic Studio

While many opera companies around the country rely on set rentals in producing operas, the New Orleans Opera Association has the luxury of owning its own scenic studio to construct grand opera sets. The H. Lloyd Hawkins Scenic Studio ("Scenic Studio"), located in Metairie, "is one of the foremost rental studios of opera scenery and properties in the country, maintaining an

²³ "Opera Club," *New Orleans Opera Association*, accessed July 14, 2015, <http://neworleansopera.org/get-involved/opera-club>.

²⁴ "Women's Guild," *New Orleans Opera Association*, accessed July 14, 2015, <http://neworleansopera.org/get-involved/womens-guild>.

²⁵ "Junior Committee," *New Orleans Opera Association*, accessed July 14, 2015, <http://neworleansopera.org/get-involved/junior-committee>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

inventory of 32 opera productions for both large and small venues.”²⁷ The Scenic Studio provides an important source of income for the New Orleans Opera, as it rents its sets and props to opera companies throughout North America. It houses a 30,000 square foot design studio including full carpentry and metal shops, a 6,400 square foot paint deck, and a fully equipped sewing room. The staff is available throughout the year for construction and refurbishing.²⁸ This allows the Scenic Studio to be available for what are known as “outside jobs.” Outside jobs are where another opera company or organization contracts with the Scenic Studio to build a set for them, rather than renting one of the sets already in existence. It is the job of the Technical Director to oversee operations at the Scenic Studio.

Opera Guild Home

In 1996, what had formerly been known as the Davis/Seebold Residence became the home of the Women’s Guild. The mansion was built in 1865 and is located on the corner of Prytanian Street and Second Street in the New Orleans Garden District. The Opera Guild Home generates income for the New Orleans Opera through rentals and tours. It is available for functions such as weddings and other social events.²⁹ Ralph Brennan Catering is the exclusive caterer for the Opera Guild Home.³⁰

Budget

Income

The New Orleans Opera Association has an annual budget of nearly \$3,000,000. Sources of income include ticket income, fund development income, support group income, Scenic

²⁷ “H. Lloyd Hawkins Scenic Studio,” *New Orleans Opera Association*, accessed July 14, 2015, <http://scenicstudio.neworleansopera.org>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Opera Guild Home*, accessed July 14, 2015, <http://operaguildhome.org>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Studio income, and Opera Guild Home income. A breakdown of the income sources is as follows:

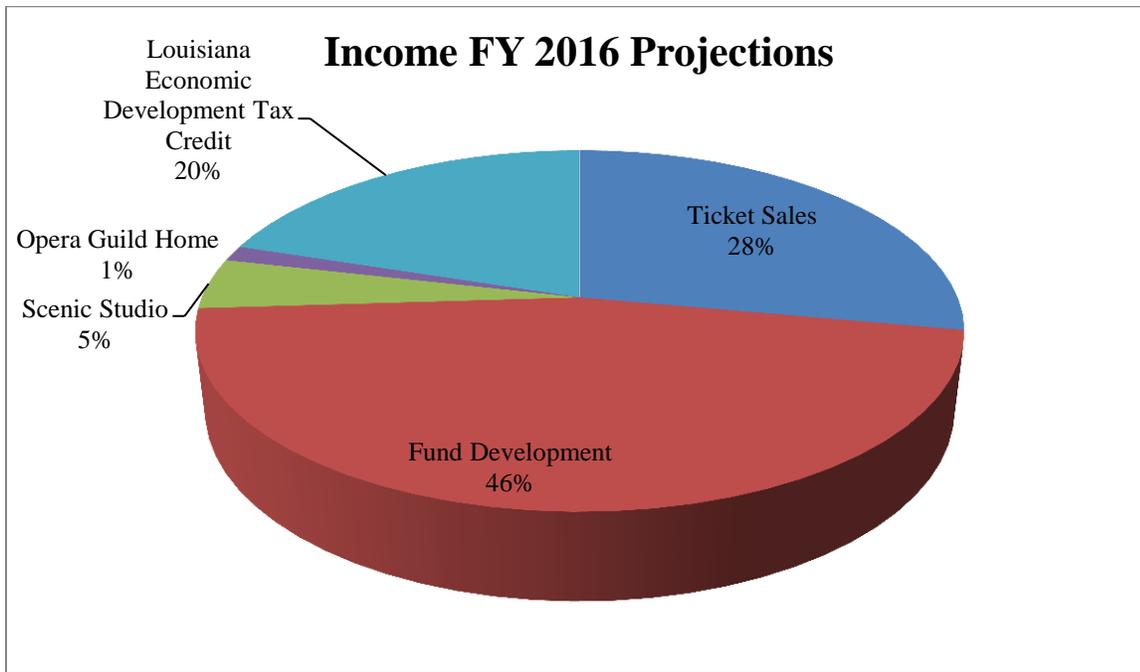


Figure 1. Income FY 2016 Projections

As Figure 1 shows, the largest source of income for the New Orleans Opera is fund development. Fund development income can be broken down further as follows:

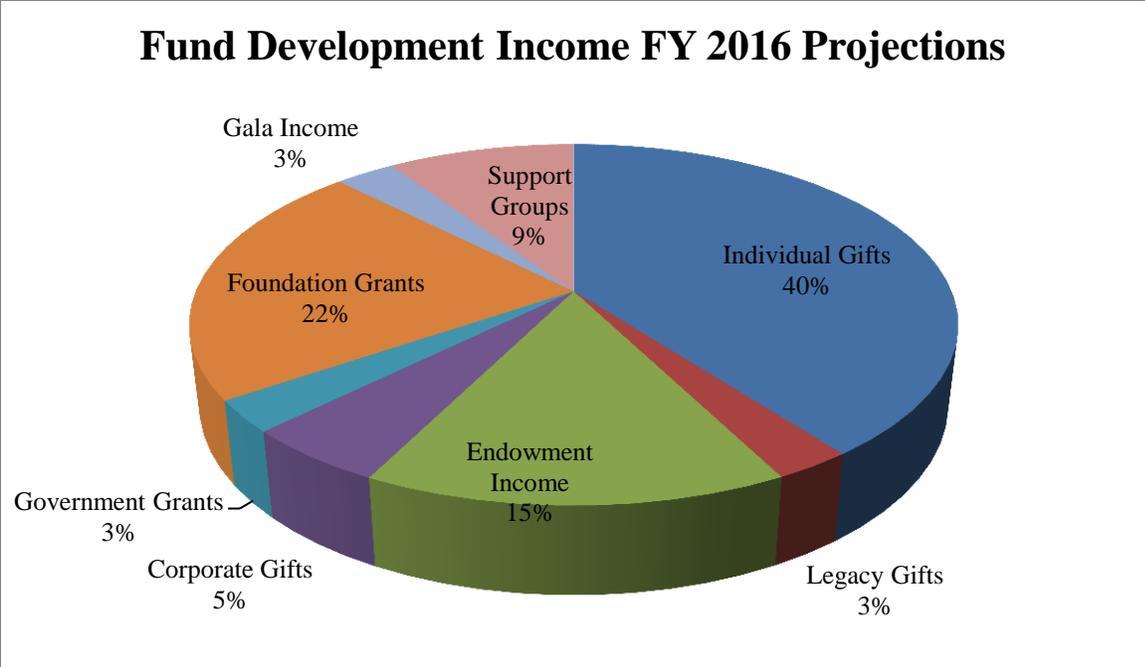


Figure 2. Fund Development Income FY 2016 Projections

As Figure 2 shows, funds from development come from a wide variety of sources. The largest source is individuals, representing forty percent of fund development income, followed by foundation grants, endowment income, funds from support groups, corporate donations, government grants, legacy gifts, and gala income.

Another major source of income for the New Orleans Opera comes in the form of Louisiana Economic Development (“LED”) tax credits. These credits are available to musical and theatrical productions that “originate in the state of Louisiana.”³¹ Because this incentive is so great, the New Orleans Opera plans its season to include the creation of new productions that will qualify under the statute. The LED tax credits assist the New Orleans Opera in being able to create brand new productions every season while supporting the state economy.

³¹ “Musical and Theatrical Production Tax Incentive,” *Louisiana Economic Development*, accessed July 14, 2015, <http://www.opportunitylouisiana.com/page/musical-and-theatrical-production-tax-incentive>.

Expenses

The New Orleans Opera's expenses include production expenses, gala expenses, box office expenses, marketing expenses, fund development expenses, education expenses, Scenic Studio expenses, and Opera Guild Home expenses. A breakdown of expenses is as follows:

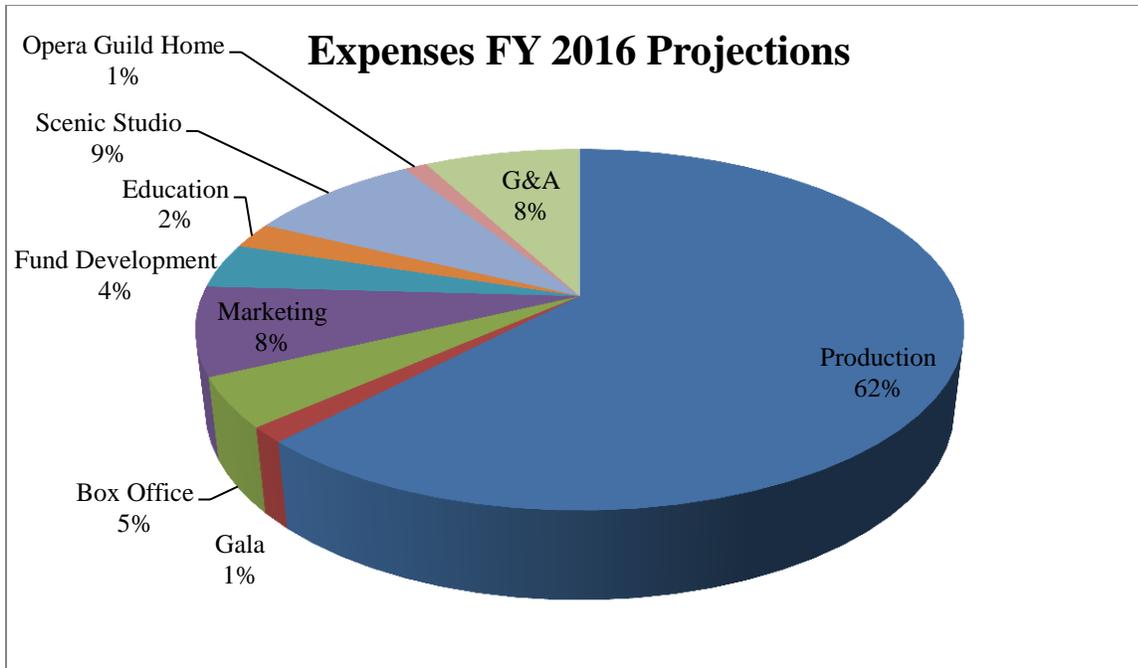


Figure 3. Expenses FY 2016 Projections

Production expenses are, by far, the New Orleans Opera's largest expense. Production expenses include such items as artist fees, artist housing and travel, set construction materials, set construction labor, and the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra's contract fee. The large production expenses make the LED credits essential in creating new productions. The New Orleans Opera generally ends each fiscal year with a slight surplus.

Chapter 2

Internship

During my internship with the New Orleans Opera, I worked exclusively in the production office. I reported directly to the General and Artistic Director, Robert Lyall. We worked closely together on many of the tasks and responsibilities discussed below. The “production side” of the New Orleans Opera does not involve much overlap with the “business side,” which includes business, development, and marketing. For this reason, my internship did not require projects with the other departments. In addition, as my internship took place during the summer months when the New Orleans Opera is not in production mode, the work I did focused on laying the groundwork for the coming 2015-2016 Season.

Artist Contracts

One of my first responsibilities was the preparation and processing of artist contracts. For simplicity, the term “artist contract” refers not only to contracts with vocalists, but also contracts with stage directors, stage managers, lighting designers, scenic designers, choreographers, wig and makeup artists, and other miscellaneous staff employed during productions. Preparation of the contracts involved much attention to detail, as different types of artists required different contract terms such as whether they were paid weekly or per performance, or whether a car rental was included in their contract. The General and Artistic Director contacted artists or their agents to negotiate the terms of their contracts. After the terms were set, I prepared the contract for review by the General and Artistic Director. Once approved, I circulated the contract to the appropriate parties for signatures. When the fully executed contract returned to me, I scanned a PDF copy to save on the New Orleans Opera server. This was a new practice that I began in

order to decrease the amount of paper files in the production office. Prior to this, the production office only maintained hard copies of fully executed contracts. In addition to eliminating the need for hard copies, any other individual who may need a copy of a contract, such as the Business Manager, can simply find it on the server.

Production Budget

Another important duty I had was monitoring and reviewing the production budget. When my internship began, the budget for the 2015-2016 fiscal year had already been approved. During my internship, however, figures that had been an estimate in the approved budget became concrete. I had the task of continuously updating the production budget with those adjusted figures. This required a firm grasp on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, something I acquired during my coursework in the Arts Administration program.

Set Rentals

The Scenic Studio generates income through set rentals to other opera companies throughout North America. Like artist contracts, I prepared set rental contracts once the renting company and the New Orleans Opera reached an agreed rental price. These contracts were a bit more complicated than artist contracts, as they required the creation of a payment schedule.

Visa Application

The New Orleans Opera has one foreign vocalist scheduled to perform in its 2015-2016 Season. It was my responsibility to complete an application for a visa on her behalf. In preparing

the application, Form I-129, I used past applications as a model. In addition to completing the form, I also had to contact Opera America, the service organization for the field of opera, and AGMA in order to obtain letters of support from those organizations to include with the application. Other attachments to the application included her travel itinerary, recent performance reviews, and copies of past visas granted for performers appearing with the New Orleans Opera. The visa application was one of my top priorities from the time I began my internship, as these applications can sometimes take weeks to process. Furthermore, the smallest error or omission on the application can cause the entire petition to be rejected. Attention to detail was crucial.

Production Planning

One of the more exciting aspects of my internship was being part of the production planning process. I was able to attend production meetings with stage directors, scenic designers, venues, and the Board of Directors. It was inspiring to work with artists behind the scenes and to witness firsthand the process of constructing an opera season.

Artist Travel and Housing Arrangements

When artists are visiting from outside the New Orleans area, the New Orleans Opera pays for their roundtrip flight to New Orleans as well as their housing during the three week production period. I researched various housing possibilities, from hotels to vacation rentals, to find the best option for the New Orleans Opera and the artists, keeping budget restraints in mind. I then booked the appropriate housing for visiting artists. Booking flights involved contacting the

artists or their agents for flight preferences and sending viable options to them. Once the artist chose a flight, I purchased the ticket.

Costume Procurement

When choosing costumes for a production, the stage director and the General and Artistic Director review as many options as possible. As such, I contacted various costume houses and opera companies in order to request rental information. These rental packets generally involved sketches of the costumes, pictures of the costumes from past productions, and pricing options.

Supertitles Procurement

For opera productions that are sung in a language other than English, the New Orleans Opera projects English translations to a screen above the stage during performances. These projected translations are called supertitles. I contacted the company that provides supertitles to the New Orleans Opera most seasons and procured a contract for the 2015-2016 Season.

Chapter 3

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis examines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing an organization. Strengths and weaknesses originate within the organization, while opportunities and threats come from outside the organization. Opportunities and threats can include anything from local to national politics, changing demographics, or shifts in popular culture. An environmental scan assists in defining opportunities and threats. A thorough SWOT analysis can reveal much about an organization's current health and future growth.

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality productions • Partnership with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra • Loyal group of subscribers • Active support groups • Opera Guild Home income from tours and venue rentals • Scenic Studio income from outside jobs and set rentals • Professional and effective administrative staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical significance of opera in New Orleans • Only grand opera company in New Orleans • Large number of newly renovated small venues for nontraditional productions • Influx of young professionals following Hurricane Katrina • Large seating capacity of the Mahalia Jackson Theater and ticket sales • Potential income from Opera Guild Home and Scenic Studio
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional and older patrons expect to hear traditional repertoire • Traditional support groups do not appeal to a large number of contemporary young professionals • Grand opera productions are expensive • New Orleans Opera only produces four major productions per season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain future of the Louisiana state budget and LED tax credits • Funding cuts to arts organizations nationally • Current instability in the U.S. and world stock markets • Waning popularity of classical performing arts

Strengths

One of the main strengths of the New Orleans Opera is the high quality of its productions. The New Orleans Opera brings in talented performers and directors from around the world and also highlights local talent whenever possible. The scenes and costumes are far from minimalist, but rather grand and elegant. The Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra is the official orchestra of the New Orleans Opera, providing high caliber musical support. The New Orleans Opera receives regular praise for its productions. During the 2014-2015 Season, Dean M. Shapiro of *The New Orleans Advocate* proclaimed *Carmen* to be “the best of the company’s recent stagings of the familiar work,” citing “impassioned singing of the principals, plus a seasoned chorus, colorful costumes, excellent sets and stellar work by the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra...”³² Shapiro offered more praise for another production in the same season, *Lucia de Lamermoor*.³³ Also that season, the New Orleans Opera received two Big Easy Foundation awards, one for Best Opera Production and another for Best Creative Achievement in Opera, for *Rusalka* in 2015.³⁴ The New Orleans Opera’s attention to detail results in something quite impressive, not to mention magnificent and beautiful.

With such high quality performances, it is no surprise that the New Orleans Opera has a loyal group of followers. The 2014-2015 Season had nearly 1,400 subscribers.³⁵ In addition to a large number of subscribers, the New Orleans Opera also has an active and engaged Board of Directors. The support groups discussed above, the Opera Club, the Women’s Guild, and the

³² Dean M. Shapiro, “Review: Passionate, lively ‘Carmen’ opens New Orleans opera season,” *The New Orleans Advocate*, October 14, 2014, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.theneworleansadvocate.com/news/10487068-93/review-passionate-lively-carmen-opens>.

³³ Dean M. Shapiro, “Soprano, tenor shine in N.O. Opera’s ‘Lucia’ production,” *The New Orleans Advocate*, April 15, 2015, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.theneworleansadvocate.com/news/11848018-123/soprano-tenor-shine-in-no>.

³⁴ Jeanie Riess, “Tribute to the Classical Arts 2015: The Big Easy Foundations salutes New Orleans’ best in opera, dance and classical music,” *Gambit*, February 9, 2015, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://www.bestofneworleans.com/gambit/tribute-to-the-classical-arts-2015/Content?oid=2579421>.

³⁵ John Fink (Box Office Manager) in discussion with the author, August 18, 2015.

Junior Committee, also provide much needed assistance to the New Orleans Opera. The patrons, Board of Directors, and support groups combine to create a very strong support network for the New Orleans Opera.

Other strengths of the New Orleans Opera are two of its assets, the Opera Guild Home and the Scenic Studio. The Opera Guild Home, as mentioned above, hosts both tours and social events. Income from the Opera Guild Home, as shown in Figure 1, accounts for one percent of the New Orleans Opera's annual income. Likewise, the Scenic Studio provides a source of income for the New Orleans Opera through set rentals and outside jobs. Income from the Scenic Studio, as shown in Figure 1, makes up five percent of the New Orleans Opera's annual income. In addition, having an in-house scenic studio obviates the need for the New Orleans Opera to spend money renting sets. Instead, it can build its own sets and then rent them out to other opera companies. The New Orleans Opera is very fortunate to have these assets.

Finally, the staff of the New Orleans Opera is a great strength of the organization. Each member of the staff is highly skilled and professional. During my internship, I got the sense that they all truly enjoy their jobs, and I was impressed with the comradery among them. Robert Lyall, the General and Artistic Director, is not only a well-respected conductor, but also a creative artistic director, an effective fundraiser, and an outspoken advocate of the New Orleans Opera. It was my experience that the organization is run efficiently and cleanly.

Weaknesses

While the patrons are indeed a strength, they are also a weakness. They are extremely traditional and expect seasons filled with traditional operas. This leaves little room for new productions, although Robert Lyall is very dedicated to producing at least one contemporary

opera per season. In addition, many of the patrons are elderly. Unless the New Orleans Opera can cultivate new patrons, their audience may literally become extinct.

Like its patrons, the New Orleans Opera itself sometimes comes across as rather traditional and outdated. Support groups, such as the Women's Guild and the Junior Committee, provide much needed fundraising and marketing for the New Orleans Opera. These groups carry with them a sense of nostalgia for the high society surrounding opera during its glory days in New Orleans. In order to attract a more contemporary audience, the New Orleans Opera will need to find ways either to update these social clubs or to create different social clubs with more modern appeal.

Production, as demonstrated in Figure 3 above, is very costly. It is the largest expense in the New Orleans Opera's annual budget. Building an opera set costs tens of thousands of dollars. It requires designers, carpenters, materials, and labor. This is reflected in the high price of a ticket to the opera productions. High ticket prices can be prohibitive in recruiting a new and younger audience.

Due to the expense and complexity of producing grand opera, the New Orleans Opera is only able to produce four major productions per season. This is primarily due to budgetary restraints, as increasing the number of productions would also require a drastic increase in the New Orleans Opera's annual budget. As shown in Figure 1 above, only twenty-eight percent of the annual income comes from ticket sales. Nonetheless, having so few major productions per season can be a detriment to the organization in two ways. First, this limits the amount of potential earned income from ticket sales. Second, this limits the number of opportunities to market the organization's product in any given season. While the New Orleans Opera hosts

many smaller events throughout the year like those discussed in Chapter 1, those events do not provide the same opportunity for marketing and advertising as its major productions provide.

Opportunities

New Orleans is a city that is proud of its heritage and history. Opera has been a part of the city for over two hundred years. It is where the first documented opera performance took place in North America in the late 18th Century. The New Orleans Opera has a great opportunity to remind the residents of the city of their important historic connection to opera and to instill a sense of duty to protect the art form as part of the local culture.

The New Orleans Opera is the only performance organization in New Orleans that is exclusively dedicated to opera. As such, it has no competition in producing grand opera productions. Furthermore, since the productions utilize members of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, the two organizations' performance schedules do not overlap. Lovers of classical music can attend both symphony concerts and opera productions without having to choose.

While the Mahalia Jackson Theater is an excellent venue for large opera productions, the many newly renovated venues throughout the city provide interesting opportunities for alternative productions. These smaller venues, such as the Marigny Opera House or the Carver Theater, might be well-suited for smaller productions or new, experimental productions. While these types of venues and productions might not appeal to the more traditional opera patrons, they might be an excellent way to reach out to new and younger audiences.

Since Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans has earned much publicity as a center for innovation.³⁶ Bright minds have flocked to the city to take advantage of the many opportunities offered here. With this influx of young, creative, and educated individuals, the New Orleans Opera has an opportunity to reach out to them. One means of adding them to its list of patrons could be through the smaller, more contemporary productions mentioned above that might appeal to a younger audience. This audience is easily accessible through social media, so marketing smaller, casual events around the city would be easy and inexpensive. The New Orleans Opera could offer this audience something that its traditional productions might not.

The home of the New Orleans Opera, the Mahalia Jackson Theater, has a seating capacity of 2,243.³⁷ For comparison, the home of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orpheum Theater, seats only between 1,500 and 1,800.³⁸ With so many seats available at the Mahalia Jackson Theater, the New Orleans Opera has the potential to generate a large amount of income through ticket sales.

In addition to being strengths of the New Orleans Opera, the Opera Guild Home and Scenic Studio are also opportunities. Each of these has the potential to generate much revenue for the New Orleans Opera. The Opera Guild Home, with its location in the Garden District and its historic elegance, is a very desirable location for weddings and events. Likewise, the Scenic Studio also has the potential to earn income for the New Orleans Opera through set rentals and outside jobs. Through stronger marketing of the Opera Guild Home and the Scenic Studio, the opportunity for increased income from these assets would grow.

³⁶ Derek Thompson, "The Big Comeback: Is New Orleans America's Next Great Innovation Hub?" *The Atlantic*, April 8, 2013, accessed July 15, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/04/the-big-comeback-is-new-orleans-americas-next-great-innovation-hub/274591>.

³⁷ "Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts," *Arts Center Enterprises-New Orleans, LLC*, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://www.mahaliajacksontheater.com>.

³⁸ "Details," *The Orpheum Theater*, accessed September 1, 2015, <http://orpheumnola.com/#details>.

Threats

The New Orleans Opera, as discussed above, receives a large amount of income through Louisiana Economic Development tax credits. These tax credits are far from guaranteed to continue in perpetuity. The LED credits are the same ones relied upon by the film industry. As we saw recently, the LED credits faced elimination during the state legislature's contentious budget negotiations earlier this year.³⁹ With no end in sight to the state's budget problems, the LED credits' future is uncertain, and the current state leadership is less than friendly to the idea of funding arts organizations through state funds. Elimination of the tax credits would require drastic cuts in the New Orleans Opera's budget, likely from the production budget.

Budget problems are not limited to the State of Louisiana. Performance organizations around the country have been forced to slash their budgets due to lack of funding.⁴⁰ Others had to close their doors permanently.⁴¹ Cuts in funding and the slow recovery from the recent recession are threats that face arts organizations all over the United States, including the New Orleans Opera.

In addition to lack of funding from foundations and the government, current uncertainty in the stock market may have a negative effect on the amount of gifts from corporations and individual donors. On August 24, 2015, the United States stock market experienced its worst drop since 2008.⁴² In the weeks that followed, the turbulence in the global economy has only

³⁹ Julia O'Donoghue, "Louisiana film tax credits facing significant limitations," *NOLA.com*, June 6, 2015, accessed July 16, 2015, http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/louisiana_film_tax_credit_back.html.

⁴⁰ Anne Midgette, "Minnesota Orchestra lockout is over," *The Washington Post*, January 14, 2014, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/style/wp/2014/01/14/minnesota-orchestra-lockout-is-over>.

⁴¹ Jeff Lunden, "Chronicle Of A Death Foretold: New York City Opera Shuts Its Doors," *NPR*, October 1, 2013, Accessed July 17, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2013/10/02/228171680/chronicle-of-a-death-foretold-new-york-city-opera-shuts-its-doors>.

⁴² Heather Long, "The stock market drop... by the numbers," *CNNMoney*, August 24, 2015, accessed September 1, 2015, <http://money.cnn.com/2015/08/24/investing/stocks-market-crash-by-the-numbers>.

continued.⁴³ As a result of this uncertainty, individuals and companies who normally give freely to the New Orleans Opera may decide to halt their donations until the market is once again stable.

Another threat facing the New Orleans Opera is the low popularity of classical music, especially opera. While consumers are willing to pay exorbitant ticket prices for Broadway shows, large stadium and arena concerts, and music festivals, they are not willing to do so for classical music performances. Classical performing arts, such as the opera, symphony, and ballet, simply do not appeal to the vast majority of the population. Whatever the reason, whether intimidation, lack of interest, or lack of understanding, classical performance organizations must find a way to appeal to larger and more diverse audiences.

⁴³ Peter Eavis and David Jolly, "Stock Market Falls as Worries About Global Issues Persist," *The New York Times*, September 1, 2015, accessed September 1, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/02/business/dealbook/daily-stock-market-activity.html?_r=0.

Chapter 4

Best Practices

Michael M. Kaiser and the Art of the Turnaround

Michael M. Kaiser has made a career out of saving and revitalizing failing or troubled arts organizations. He is credited with turning around such organizations as the Kansas City Ballet, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater Foundation, the American Ballet Theatre, the Royal Opera House in London, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In his book *The Art of the Turnaround: Creating and Maintaining Health Arts Organizations*, Kaiser sets forth a set of guiding principles for managing successful arts organizations. While he wrote these rules with troubled organizations in mind, most if not all performing arts organizations could benefit from his experience.

Leadership

Kaiser firmly believes in having one strong leader. He notes that healthy arts organizations tend to follow a model where a “strong volunteer chairperson” supports a “dynamic and committed staff head” rather than one with non-localized leadership with many individuals trying to help.⁴⁴ If board members come to believe that an organization does not have a competent leader or competent staff, then they often scramble to fill in the gaps. This creates tension and waste within the organization. A strong leader should have “a single unified vision for the organization, have the courage to make difficult decisions in the face of controversy, possess strong negotiating skills, respect all parties including artists, work incredibly hard, and have an obsessive focus on solving problems. This person must also understand marketing,

⁴⁴ Michael M. Kaiser, *The Art of the Turnaround: Creating and Maintaining Health Arts Organizations* (Waltham, Massachusetts: University Press of New England, 2008), 1.

fundraising, and financial management.”⁴⁵ One person should fill this role, not many, and that person should have a clearly defined plan for the organization.

Marketing

The leader’s plan should include a strong marketing strategy. Kaiser notes that when it comes to arts organizations, it is a buyer’s market. The public have any number of events to choose from and organizations to donate time and money to. Strong buyers must be weakened. The best way to do so is by “creating unique and exciting programming and marketing this programming very aggressively.”⁴⁶ Organizations that are able to generate excitement about the organization itself and the events it hosts will sell tickets and receive funding.⁴⁷ Kaiser’s mantra for running successful arts organizations is, “Good art, well marketed.”⁴⁸

Just as important as programmatic marketing, however, is institutional marketing or public relations. Institutional marketing is “the marketing of the entire institutional image that gets people excited about supporting the company.”⁴⁹ Kaiser recommends that organizations boost their institutional visibility in several ways. First, organizations should host galas and lectures featuring celebrity guests. Second, organizations should include interesting performance and educational programming. Third, they should make appearances in various media outlets including television, radio, and print. Finally, organizations should stay involved with public functions that draw a large amount of press.⁵⁰ To prevent confusion in what the organization’s institutional image should be, the organization should have only one spokesperson. Everything that spokesperson conveys to the public must be positive and focus on the organization’s

⁴⁵ Kaiser, *Art of the Turnaround*, 2.

⁴⁶ Kaiser, *Art of the Turnaround*, 4

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Kaiser, *Art of the Turnaround*, 8-9.

⁵⁰ Kaiser, *Art of the Turnaround*, 9.

mission.⁵¹ Institutional marketing is an important way for organizations to gain public support and receive funding.

Spending and Revenue

As for the financial health of an arts organization, Kaiser does not believe that cutting spending is the best option. In fact, he notes that “[i]n only the rarest instances is excessive spending the true root of the problems of arts organizations.”⁵² While making cuts in non-strategic areas is a good thing, cutting costs in areas that generate revenue can be detrimental to the organization. The main reason most organizations face financial hardship is due to lack of revenue, not to overspending. “Organizations focused simply on reducing costs will continue to get smaller and smaller and will never create the economic engine that is required for long-term stability and growth.”⁵³

Planning Ahead

Kaiser recommends that arts organizations plan their performance calendar as far into the future as possible. Failure to do so makes it extremely difficult for an organization to plan the large and exciting events that will attract patrons and raise funds. Planning the performance calendar years in advance has many advantages. It helps to ensure that artists the organization wants to work with are available, and it allows the organization ample time to secure funding and get advance press for their seasons.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Kaiser, *Art of the Turnaround*, 10-11.

⁵² Kaiser, *Art of the Turnaround*, 5.

⁵³ Kaiser, *Art of the Turnaround*, 6.

⁵⁴ Kaiser, *Art of the Turnaround*, 7.

Best Practices and the New Orleans Opera Association

The New Orleans Opera does not stray too far from Kaiser's recommendations discussed above. As for having one strong leader, the New Orleans Opera achieves this through its General and Artistic Director, Robert Lyall. I worked closely with Lyall throughout my internship and observed him as a leader. Outside of the organization, he is the voice of the New Orleans Opera. Within the organization, he is the leader. In his role as General Director, he makes all of the major decisions affecting the New Orleans Opera. He makes staff hiring decisions, leads staff meetings, and provides guidance to everyone in the office. He works cooperatively with the Board of Directors and its President while advocating for what is best for the organization. As Artistic Director, Lyall puts together seasons of performances appropriate for the company and pursues high quality vocalists to appear in its productions. The New Orleans Opera definitely follows Kaiser's preferred model where a strong volunteer chairperson, the President of the Board of Directors, supports a dynamic and committed staff head, Robert Lyall.

As for programmatic and institutional marketing, the New Orleans Opera's strategy seems adequate, although it is difficult for me to speak specifically in this area as my internship took place before aggressive marketing for the coming season began. On its website, visitors can easily see the program for the upcoming season and its theme, "A Blockbuster Season!"⁵⁵ The accompanying artwork is catchy—like something that would appear in a comic book. This artwork appears on promotional fans and season brochures. Once the season gets underway, programmatic marketing will increase dramatically. The programming for the season is strong, with three traditional classics, *La traviata*, *Die Fledermaus*, and *Tosca*, and one contemporary opera that is sure to generate excitement around New Orleans, *Dead Man Walking*. *Dead Man*

⁵⁵ "2015-2016 Season," *New Orleans Opera Association*, accessed August 3, 2015, <http://neworleansopera.org/2015-2016-season>.

Walking is based on the book of the same name by Sister Helen Prejean, discussing her experience working with a death row inmate at Angola State Prison in Louisiana.

The New Orleans Opera does engage in a fair amount of institutional marketing. Kaiser recommends that organizations, among other things, hold special gala performances with celebrities, incorporate programs that are educational or catch the interest of the press, and involve themselves in public functions. The New Orleans Opera holds a gala every few years, not annually, with some big name opera celebrities. The world-famous tenor Plácido Domingo has been a part of these galas on more than one occasion. When possible, the New Orleans Opera incorporates educational lectures that relate to current productions. One example is a medical lecture discussing an ailment or health issue that one of the main characters faces in the current opera production such as depression or tuberculosis. The New Orleans Opera maintains a presence at public events in the art community. One such event is Culture Collision, a networking and informational event in the fall where the public is invited to meet and learn about arts organizations from around the city. In addition, the New Orleans Opera will co-host a youth vocal competition in the fall of 2015. All of these activities do much to promote and market the New Orleans Opera as an institution.

In a time when opera companies are facing cuts in funding and ticket sales, many of those operas have decided to cut back on their production budgets by creating smaller productions or productions with minimalist sets. According to Kaiser, however, spending cuts are not the best way to achieve financial stability. The New Orleans Opera continues to create grand opera sets. These opera sets, while expensive, are one of the main reasons so many people love attending its productions. It makes the opera special, and based on my observations during my internship, the New Orleans Opera has no intention of downsizing productions in the foreseeable future.

The New Orleans Opera does plan several seasons in advance, though not the five years in advance that Kaiser recommends. Rather, the New Orleans Opera plans three seasons in advance, which is still ample time to ensure that artists and venues are available. It would be difficult for the New Orleans Opera to plan much further in advance. First, it must coordinate its season with that of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. Second, changing political and economic circumstances are subject to change when looking five years into the future. The New Orleans Opera could make plans for a season five years in advance, but if the economy deteriorates or if the LED credits are no longer available, it would have to drastically change those plans.

Best Practices and the Nashville Opera

The Nashville Opera is similar to the New Orleans Opera in several ways. First, both companies are located in the southern United States. Second, both cities are known for their rich musical heritage, though classical music is not generally associated with either city. Third, both companies are in the business of renting sets to other opera companies. Finally, Opera America groups both companies in the same category based on their annual budgets. All of these factors make the Nashville Opera an appropriate organization for comparison.

The Nashville Opera's mission is to make "a difference by creating legendary productions and programs and providing exceptional service."⁵⁶ Its vision is "[t]o be a vibrant, thriving, fiscally sound company whose exceptional innovative productions, programs and events, supported by a passionately dedicated opera community, achieve local and national recognition

⁵⁶ "Leadership," *Nashville Opera*, accessed July 21, 2015, www.nashvilleopera.org/leadership.

for excellence.”⁵⁷ Like the New Orleans Opera, the Nashville Opera places its leadership one General and Artistic Director, John Hoomes. The General and Artistic Director, along with the Chief Operating Officer, share their own page on the company’s website, setting them apart from the rest of the staff.

The Nashville Opera’s website does a good job of marketing the upcoming season, “It ain’t over ‘til the HOT lady sings!” The season will feature four productions starring “fiery divas.” The marketing campaign for the season includes beautiful and enticing photographs of opera divas. Like the New Orleans Opera’s season, the Nashville Opera’s season will include three traditional operas, *Turandot*, *Così fan Tutte*, and *Die Fledermaus*, and one contemporary opera, Philip Glass’s *Hydrogen Jukebox*.⁵⁸ The three traditional operas are sure to be popular with the traditional opera audience, while the Philip Glass opera is likely to stir up excitement among the more adventurous crowd. As for institutional marketing, the Nashville Opera has a very exciting community project on its website—Music City Opera Project.⁵⁹ For this project, members of the community will write their own songs about famous opera characters, and those songs will be performed in various locations around the city. Involving the community in a fun, adventurous project is a great way to market the institution.

Similar challenges face both the Nashville Opera and the New Orleans Opera, and both companies have taken similar approaches to overcoming those challenges. These approaches align with Kaiser’s recommendations. Both companies have strong leadership, compelling programming, and enticing marketing. By following the best practices outlined above, the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “2015.16 Season,” *Nashville Opera*, accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www.nashvilleopera.org/season1516>.

⁵⁹ “Music City Opera Project,” *Nashville Opera*, accessed July 21, 2015, <http://www.nashvilleopera.org/music-city-opera-project>.

Nashville Opera and the New Orleans Opera can ensure their continued growth and development for many years to come.

Chapter 5

Recommendations

Management

The New Orleans Opera is a well-managed organization. The management structure is clear, and every staff member knows his or her role in the organization. From my experience as an intern, I did not witness any internal strife or management problems. With one person, the General and Artistic Director, overseeing operations in the office, there is little chance of the staff receiving mixed messages from management as sometimes happens in organizations with a large number of managers. Weekly staff meetings offer everyone the chance to address any issues they may be having and to ask for help when needed. Each staff member maintains a calendar on Microsoft Outlook, and these calendars are available to everyone in the office. The Board of Directors does not work against the staff, but rather supports them and trusts in their professional knowledge and abilities. Overall, I saw little room for improvement in management at the New Orleans Opera.

One recommendation I would make concerns the production office. While the general duties of the Director of Production are clear, a description of the particular tasks that must be completed prior to a production along with a timeline for those tasks would be helpful. This position has experienced much turnover in the past few years, and each Director of Production had his or her own method for organizing and executing production duties. In order to maintain consistency, enhance the learning curve for new hires, and decrease the likelihood of incomplete or forgotten tasks, I recommend that the New Orleans Opera create a manual or handbook specifically for the Director of Production.

Marketing

Given the difficulty in marketing classical performing arts, especially opera, the New Orleans Opera does an admirable job in both programmatic and institutional marketing. Each season, the marketing department designs a coherent marketing campaign, with catchy and visually pleasing graphic designs. The organization as a whole does its part to participate in community outreach to maintain a positive image. While the New Orleans Opera already produces fun, casual events such as Opera on the Piazza and Opera on Tap, I would recommend that it find more ways to market itself to a younger audience.

In order for the New Orleans Opera to reach a younger audience, I first recommend that it increase the number of small-scale performances or recitals in alternative venues around the city. One possibility could be lunch hour vocal performances for the young professional crowd in the New Orleans's Central Business District. These performances could take place outside during the fall and spring production season, when the weather is pleasant. The vocalists could sing excerpts from upcoming productions to promote the season. This would be an excellent way to draw young professionals to the New Orleans Opera productions.

Second, the New Orleans Opera should consider organizing a social group for young professionals. The New Orleans Opera already has a Junior Committee for young women. A less formal social group, open to both men and women, that focuses more on networking opportunities than marketing and fundraising, however, might draw more young professionals. This could be as simple as designating a bar or restaurant where the group could meet prior to attending opera performances. The Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra already has such an

organization known as Prelude.⁶⁰ Creating a group for young professionals would promote the idea of going to the opera as a social event as well as an artistic event.

Third, I recommend that the New Orleans Opera produce at least one small-scale, contemporary, experimental, or multi-disciplinary production each season. New Orleanians love events. If there is a new opera, new play, or new piece of music having its world premiere here in New Orleans, people want to be a part of it. There is a young, creative, and experimental population that flocks to arts events. These types of performances would be well at home in venues like the Marigny Opera House or the Contemporary Arts Center. With proper marketing, these events could be extremely high profile for the New Orleans Opera. High profile events are an excellent means of both institutional marketing and drawing younger audiences to the opera.

Development

The New Orleans Opera is very effective in the area of fund development, which represents forty-six percent of the organization's income as illustrated in Figure 1. As Figure 2 showed above, funds from development come from a wide variety of sources. The largest source is individuals, representing forty percent of fund development income, followed by foundation grants, endowment income, funds from support groups, corporate donations, government grants, legacy gifts, and gala income. Having a diverse group of funding sources is essential for healthy organizations, as too much reliance on one particular source can lead to financial hardship if that source loses its ability to provide funding. The New Orleans Opera should strive to increase, or at the very least maintain, diversity in its funding sources.

⁶⁰ "Prelude Comes to the Orpheum Theater!" *Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra*, accessed September 1, 2015, https://www.lpomusic.com/Online/default.asp?BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::permalink=prelude&BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::context_id=.

Gala income represents only three percent of the New Orleans Opera's fund development income. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 3 above, it represents one percent of the New Orleans Opera's annual expenses. Essentially, the gala brings in as much money as it costs to host. Nonetheless, galas are an effective marketing tool for arts organizations. The New Orleans Opera should continue to host gala events, but it should also explore ways to increase revenue from them by seeking more sponsorships and sources of in-kind donations. This would alleviate some of the expenses associated with hosting gala events.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The New Orleans Opera is a fantastic company with room to grow. It brings an art form to the city like no other organization can. While the New Orleans Opera should continue to bring traditional operatic performances to the stage, it must also find ways to remain relevant in a time where interest in classical performing arts is waning. With proper programming and marketing, I have no doubt that the New Orleans Opera will succeed in doing so.

The internship itself was extremely rewarding and educational. While I believe my coursework in the Arts Administration program gave me a good foundation for administrative issues, my internship allowed me to learn more about the practical and technical aspects of production. My coursework offered guidance on reviewing contracts and understanding budgets, but through my internship I was able to actually create contracts and manage budgets. Over the course of my internship, I came to understand the vast number of moving parts that must progress in unison in order to produce a season at the New Orleans Opera.

I hope I was able to contribute to the New Orleans Operas as much as it contributed to my education. I gave some much needed attention to organizing the production office. The production office no longer keeps hard copies of most of the documents that come into the office. Rather, these documents are now saved in electronic form. I did everything I could to lay the groundwork to ensure a smooth and organized production season down the road. I am thrilled at the prospect of continuing to work in the area of production in the future.

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Vita

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