

5-2016

## Faux/Real Festival of Arts

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Faux/Real Festival of Arts

An Internship Academic 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

Zoe Cuneo

B.A. The University of New Orleans, 2014

May 2016

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## **Abstract**

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The purpose of this internship report is to analyze the Faux/Real Festival of Arts in regards to my Arts Administration learning experiences. In addition, I will describe my internship involvement with Faux/Real and examine the success of its first year. This report also contains my S.W.O.T. analysis of the festival, highlighting its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Finally, I assert best practices for festival management and programming, and offer recommendations to Faux/Real on how they could incorporate those practices that they have not already implemented to strengthen the festival.

# Introduction

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In the fall of 2015, I had the opportunity to intern for the Faux/Real Festival of Arts. The festival, in transition from what was the New Orleans Fringe Festival, was full of learning opportunities that would challenge and inspire me and the staff of the Faux/Real Festival. Through this internship, I was able to gain insight into running a festival and how vital arts administration is to executing a successful cultural organization.

# **Faux/Real Festival of Arts**

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## **Mission/History**

### **History**

The Faux/Real Festival of Arts is the recent evolution of the New Orleans Fringe Festival (Fringe). The New Orleans Fringe Festival began in 2008 based on the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Inspired by the Edinburgh Fringe, the non-profit's mission was to support "emerging and established performing artists by presenting fun, fearless and affordable theater to the community and creating ties between artists, audiences, businesses and local organizations."<sup>1</sup> The Fringe brought in alternative productions from local and regional producers, as well as acts from other states. For one week each November, the Fringe organized these acts in venues around New Orleans.

In the fall of 2014, the founders of the New Orleans Fringe Festival announced they would be leaving Louisiana, and 2014 would be the final year for the Fringe. The founders of the Fringe festival decided it was time for the Fringe Fest to evolve into a legitimate commercial enterprise that could earn revenue and would contribute to a non-profit foundation, similar to the Jazz and Heritage Festival model. "After consulting our board, key Fringe coordinators and members of the community, we passed the torch to Faux/Real because we recognized that the

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<sup>1</sup> New Orleans Fringe "The Fringe Mission, Vision and Core Principles." *New Orleans Fringe*. 2016. Web. 09 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.nofringe.org/index.php/about-us/our-mission>>

theater environment had changed, and it was time for a new festival...and a new festival needed a new name.”<sup>2</sup>

The Fringe founders sold the festival to Ben Mintz, creator of the online alt-daily New Orleans publication *Nola Defender*, who facilitated the transition from the NOLA Fringe into what is now the Faux/Real Festival of Arts (Faux/Real). The Festival changed from a 501(c)3 non-profit into a commercial festival.

## **Mission**

“Faux/Real is an all-new arts festival in the city of New Orleans that celebrates the creative artists of Theatre, Literature, Food, and Drink. Our mission is to curate three weeks of top-tier performances, readings, tastings, and parties in one of the most thrilling and unique cities on Planet Earth: New Orleans. New Orleans is a city of experiences - a place where the event is the thing and you have to be there to believe it. Faux/Real’s aim is to provide these one-of-a-kind experiences for a wide, diverse, and adventurous audience as well as to provide a wonderful resource for theatre artists, writers, chefs, and bartenders to show off their stuff on an international stage.”<sup>3</sup>

In November of 2015, Faux/Real held its first festival in New Orleans.

## **The Evolution**

Faux/Real expanded the Fringe time frame, spreading events over two and a half weeks. In addition to performing arts events, Faux/Real added a food and drink event category that would involve local and national bars, restaurants, chefs, and mixologists. Faux/Real also added a literature event category for local New Orleans writers and literary groups to share their works.

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<sup>2</sup> New Orleans Fringe “New Orleans Fringe.” Home. Apr. 2016. <<http://nofringe.org/>>.

<sup>3</sup> Faux/Real Festival of Arts. "Our Mission." *Faux Real New Orleans*. 2015. Web. 09 Mar. 2016. <<http://fauxrealnola.com/info-session/>>

The festival acted as a presenter, bringing new and existing shows to the New Orleans community. Faux/Real did not produce the events and was not responsible for venue management, artist hospitality, or any production management. Faux/Real's role as a presenter was limited. Its primary function was organizing the schedule for the registered events, and supplying publicity for those events on the festival's website, in the festival programs, and through social media and press write-ups. Many of the events were pre-existing, such as Michael Burgos' *The Eulogy*, which had previously premiered in the Atlantic Fringe Festival and the IndyFringe Festival. Some events were specifically created for the festival, such as Braden LaGrone's *Diamante X* and Deborah Evans' *Real/Kids*. Although Faux/Real itself did not produce the events, most of the advisory board members were involved as external producers in addition to their governance role. Event admittance was open enrollment with the stipulation that the events had no hazards to venues or individuals, and that they incorporated the 2015 theme "Something Different."<sup>4</sup>

An important change Faux/Real made was the ticket sales policy. Previously, Fringe had set a flat rate of \$8 per ticket for every event, and took a portion of those ticket sales. Faux/Real instilled a new policy wherein the artists set their own ticket prices for their events and retained 100% of the profits. Faux/Real also took efforts to upgrade the festival merchandise, including a festival poster and redesigned t-shirts, sweatshirts, and tote-bags. Faux/Real printed high-quality programs, instead of Fringe's oversized newsprint programs printed by the Gambit. Faux/Real maintained the tradition that requires audience members to purchase a festival button in order to

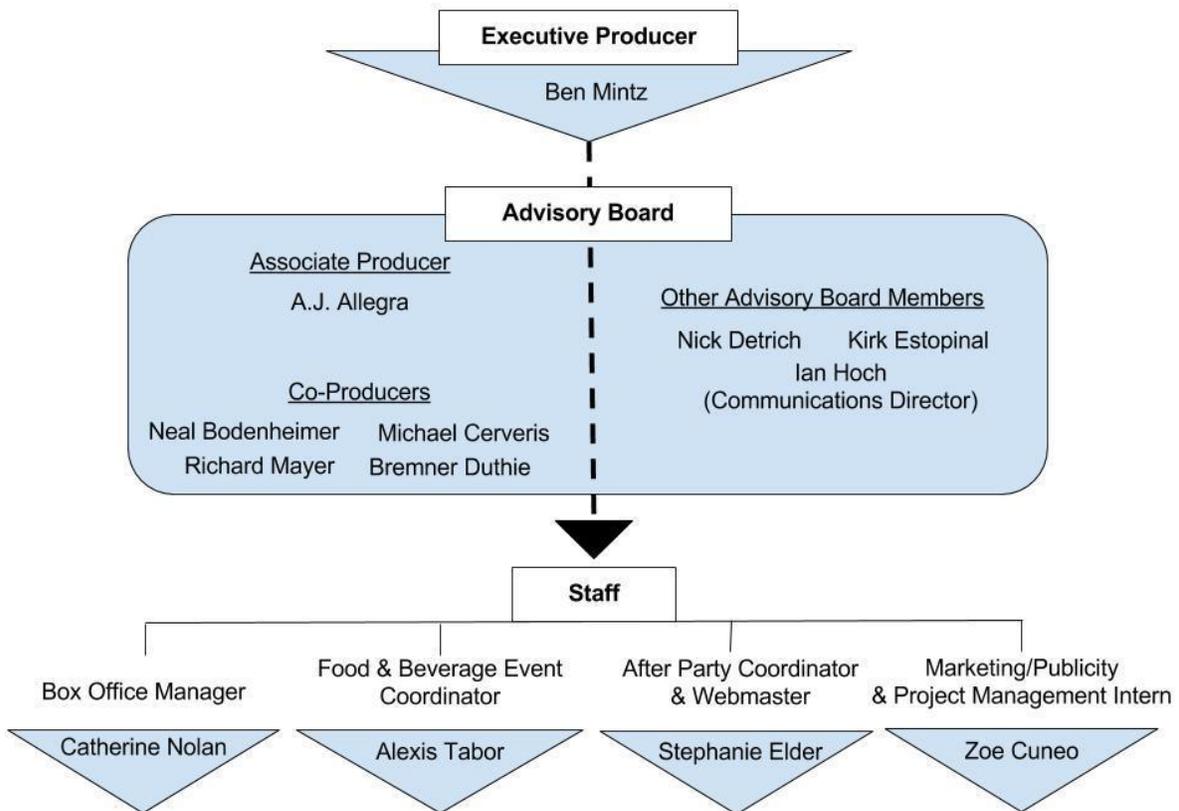
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<sup>4</sup> Faux/Real Festival of Arts. "Theme." *Faux Real New Orleans*. Web. 08 Apr. 2016. <<http://fauxrealnola.com/theme/>>.

see the events, but instead of being handmade, these buttons were outsourced to a company, resulting in a sleek, appealing product and saving a great deal of volunteer time and energy.

Faux/Real adhered to the Fringe’s policy of “Bring Your Own Venue”, a stipulation made in the sale agreement when new executive producer Ben Mintz bought the festival. The “Bring Your Own Venue” policy stated that booking a venue for an event was the responsibility of artists, not the festival. If artists needed help finding a venue for their show, they could contact Faux/Real for assistance and would be directed to the list of participating venues published on the website. Faux/Real was not responsible for booking any of the performing arts or food/beverage events, only the literature events.

## Organizational Structure



## **Executive Producer and Advisory Board**

Ben Mintz is the Faux/Real Festival of Arts Executive Producer. Having invested his own money into the company, Ben had the highest decision-making power and the most control over festival issues.

Ben solicited investment funds and advice from the festival advisory board, composed of performing arts producers, restauranteurs, and bartenders. Having an interest in the fest, most of the advisory board members produced one or more festival events from which either they were or their nonprofit company they represented was able to retain ticket sales revenue. Some members also assisted in coordinating housing for some of the artists from out-of-town, acting as venue liaison for some shows, and giving marketing and publicity advice.

## **Staff**

The Faux/Real staff of the 2015 festival were hired for this year only. Working directly below Ben were Box Office Manager Catherine Nolan; Food & Beverage Event Coordinator, Alexis Tabor; After Party Coordinator & Webmaster, Stephanie Elder; and myself, the Marketing/Publicity & Project Management Intern. Catherine Nolan was responsible for organizing and running the box office, which was located in the lobby of The Healing Center on St. Claude Avenue. Nolan was also responsible for setting up and monitoring the festival participants' Eventbrite accounts. Alexis Tabor reached out to local restaurants and bars inviting them to create food or drink events for the festival. Unfortunately, a number of these events were cancelled at the last minute due to lack of ticket sales. Stephanie Elder organized after-parties held each weekend of the festival in St. Claude venues, and created and maintained the Faux/Real website. Ian Hoch, an advisory board member who developed the Faux/Real publicity

schedule, as well as Catherine, Alexis, and Stephanie were paid a flat fee for their work on the festival. There were also approximately 10 volunteers who helped at the box office and with literary events, who received a free ticket to an event for every three hours they volunteered.

## **Operations and Finances**

### **Operations**

Faux/Real Festival brainstorming began in the fall of 2014, when the Fringe Festival announced its final run and its transition into the Faux/Real Festival. Official board and staff meetings and festival planning began in June of 2015, only five months out from the festival. By mid-June the website was active, and Faux/Real was actively soliciting artists to register their events in the festival through social media, press write-ups, and radio spots. Once events were registered and the artists had secured a venue, the artists sent publicity materials and event information to me, which were then published on social media, the Faux/Real website, and in press releases. Faux/Real then assisted in setting up an Eventbrite account for each event so that tickets could be pre-sold online as well as in the box office or at the event.

The Faux/Real Festival of Arts did not have an office space - instead, Ben and I worked during the week out of a closed coffee shop, operational only on weekends. It was located in a building that also housed the bar Mags 940, and a boarding house. I worked in the coffee shop during my internship hours, and Ben usually joined me at some point later in the day. Even though Faux/Real rented out the space, we were never given a key to the coffee shop, which meant I had to enter every day through the bar into the back entrance of the shop. Aside from Ben, I was the only full-time staff member consistently at the coffee shop. The rest of the staff

and some board members would meet there on Monday nights for staff meetings. This meant I was alone much of the time, corresponding with my boss and coworkers by phone or email.

Ben established partnerships with local New Orleans organizations that would be mutually beneficial. Some examples of these are the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation (NOTMC) and the New Orleans Hotel Collection (NOHC). From the NOTMC, Faux/Real received publicity on their website, in their newsletters, and on their event calendar. From NOHC, Faux/Real was marketed to over 10,000 potential audience members and received discounts on room rentals for out-of-town fest participants. In exchange, we were able to drive traffic to our partners' organizations through links on our website and social media posts, creating more business for them.

## **Finances**

I was not given access to Faux/Real budget reports, and therefore my information about the finances of this festival is taken from conversations with Ben.

Faux/Real revenue was commissioned from personal investments, corporate and nonprofit sponsorships, participant registration fees, and festival button sales. Registration was \$250 for each performing arts and food/beverage event, and \$40 for each literary event. Official festival buttons were sold for \$5 each, and were required to see all Faux/Real events. All of this was earned revenue for the festival. Ben personally invested money into the festival, and Associate Producer A.J. Allegra and Co-Producer Richard Mayer were also investors. Ben reported that the festival overall made a small profit after its first year. That surplus will be rolled over into next year's budget.

In addition to personal investments, Ben solicited a number of sponsors to invest in the festival in exchange for publicity, such as advertising in the festival program and the website. These sponsors included St. Claude Main Street, Gulf Coast Realty, and Uber, among others. Different levels of sponsorship were awarded varying degrees of perks, such as invitations to the Opening Night Gala and VIP tickets.

Expenses included staff, the festival website, the Constant Contact account for the festival email address database, Facebook advertising campaigns, festival programs, expenses associated with parties and lunches, the coffee shop rental, a printer, and box office rental and security fees.

## **Programming**

The Faux/Real Festival of Arts expanded on previous Fringe Festival programming. In addition to performing arts events, the Faux/Real Festival featured two new categories of programming: food/beverage events and literary events. The food and drink events were an obvious choice to add to the festival lineup, since food and drink is such a significant part of New Orleans culture. Faux/Real reached out to local restaurants, bars, pop-ups, and mixologists, encouraging them to participate in the festival and create events that encompassed the wealth of culture and flair New Orleans food and drink has to offer. Popular events included *Barlesque*, a craft cocktail burlesque competition and performance, and *Play With Your Vegetables*, a four-course vegetable-focused event with food provided by local farmers. Most of these events were organized by and held in local restaurants and bars; however, others were housed in more interesting venues, such as *Feed Your Senses: An Old Portage Pop-Up*, an extravagant visual,

musical, and edible dinner event held at Michaelopoulos Studio. Some events sold out and made profits for the artists, some did not sell out or make profits, and other events broke even.

The literature events were the lowest priority and had the fewest number of events, the least amount of publicity, and the weakest attendance. For these events, local writers and literary groups read their own works. Readings were free to the public, so the registration fee for literary events was significantly lower than the registration fee for the food/beverage and performing arts events. All of the literature events were held in the coffee shop where we worked during the day. These events were the least organized: many were added just days before they were to perform, and therefore received the weakest publicity and lowest audience turnout. However, of the literature events that took place, most received great reviews from their audience members.

Some performing arts events maintained “fringe theatre” elements, but others were professional productions, such as the New Orleans Opera Association’s *Die Fledermaus* held at the Mahalia Jackson Theatre for the Performing Arts. Theatre companies such as The NOLA Project, Southern Repertory Theatre, and Exquisite Corpse Company registered existing season productions in the Faux/Real Festival, while other productions were created solely for Faux/Real performances, such as Michael Martin’s *Caffecoppia*. Faux/Real also presented a number of mini-festivals, including Dancing Grounds’ *eDGe Fest*, the *Razor’s Edge Solo Performance Festival*, and the *NOLA Nerdlesque Festival*.

Instead of continuing the Fringe rule of only accepting cash, Faux/Real set up Eventbrite accounts for every event, allowing for pre- and online sales. Faux/Real also instilled a new policy that allowed artists to set their own ticket prices and retain 100% of the ticket sales. This was a complete departure from the Fringe Festival’s policy of charging \$8 per ticket for every show, and then absorbing a portion of the ticket sales. This new method was instated to empower

artists and give them more control over their productions, as well as increase the opportunity for them to generate revenue from the festival.

# **The Internship**

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## **Marketing and Publicity**

My role in terms of marketing was to maintain the festival's social media accounts and gather and publish publicity materials to generate ticket sales. I also regularly wrote and sent out press releases and email blasts, and coordinated interviews with media outlets. I reported directly to Ben, and contacted Ian Hoch for advice concerning the email blasts and publicity plan. Because Faux/Real did not have a project manager, I also became responsible for gathering and updating registration details for each festival event.

### **Social Media**

As the sole Marketing/Publicity Intern, I was tasked with bolstering the Faux/Real social media accounts. This included the Facebook page and Twitter account, as well as creating an Instagram account for the festival. When I began the internship, the Twitter account had seven followers. With my plan to post content daily and re-tweet content from other local New Orleans community organizations such as EaterNOLA and The New Orleans Convention and Visitor's Bureau, I was able to bring the amount of followers up to over 270. This was important because Faux/Real was a new festival that very few members of the public were familiar with. We were able to use the Twitter account to help generate an online social media presence, which would increase overall audience engagement.

Another way we used social media to increase our reach was through the Instagram account. I created an Instagram account for the festival, and posted publicity photos of the events. After just 77 posts, the account then had 200 followers.

Facebook was the primary focus of the Faux/Real social media efforts. Ben's goal was for the page to get one thousand "likes" by the festival. I met this goal, reaching 1,041 "likes" on October 15th, 2015. Because Faux/Real did not have much content to post that far in advance of the festival, I shared posts from other New Orleans organizations and other theatre festivals around the globe. This increased our views and likes, and mutually publicized those pages as well as Faux/Real's. Once we received publicity photos and info from event producers, I was able to use these for original Facebook content.

Through Facebook Insights, we were able to track how we were reaching people through Facebook. We found that during the month of August most of our "likes" came organically through our content and sharing, as opposed to during the month of October during which most of our "likes" came from paid Facebook advertising. I learned how to navigate Facebook Insights during my classes in the Arts Administration program, and I was able to use this skill directly during my internship.

## **Press**

A major responsibility I was tasked with as the Marketing/Publicity Intern was to write press releases for the festival. Before I could do this, I researched and collected contacts from New Orleans publications such as *Times Picayune* and *Gambit*, and entered them into our Constant Contact email list. I wrote press releases to publicize the festival, announcing our

participants and events. I sent these to media contacts, who published the information. I then posted links to these articles on the Faux/Real Facebook page.

Not only did I send out press releases, but I also contacted news organizations individually to set up publicity interviews, such as WWNO New Orleans Public Radio and *The New Orleans Advocate*. I arranged a meeting with *Gambit* representatives to discuss purchasing ad space, and I personally invited all of our press contacts to the Faux/Real press conference in October, which I helped organize.

Another of my responsibilities was to create a media application and guidelines for press, so that they could apply for passes to attend the festival events. The application and guidelines were posted on the Faux/Real website, and a press release was sent to all our media contacts alerting them of this process. The guidelines were based on the media credential guidelines of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and are supplied in the Appendices section of this paper, and are titled “Faux/Real Festival Media Credential Terms and Conditions” and “Faux/Real Festival Media Credential Application”.

### **Email blasts**

As Marketing/Publicity Intern, I was also responsible for creating the weekly email blasts sent through Constant Contact, keeping our contacts and stakeholders abreast of Festival information, including participant recruitment, parties, and event information. These were sent to potential performers and past Fringe Fest performers, to general interested parties, and to previous Fringe Fest attendees. I began sending these email blasts in July, and continued until the week after the festival ended.

## **Marketing Tips and Guidelines**

A technique I used from the Fringe Festival was to create a list of marketing tips and guidelines that were emailed to all registered participants. These were created to inform the festival participants of what we needed from them to market their events to the best of our ability, and easy actions they could take to market their event individually. Both of these reference guides were emailed to each of the artists and posted on the Faux/Real website. These guidelines are included in the Appendices section of this paper, and are titled “Faux/Real Publicity Guidelines” and “Tips from Faux/Real for Individual Event Marketing”.

## **Project Management**

Because Faux/Real had an extremely limited staff, I was tasked with project management responsibilities. These included gathering and updating publicity and registration information on each of the events, including dates, times, locations, ticket prices, and event descriptions. I compiled this information into an active spreadsheet that every staff member and most board producers had access to. This information was used for the festival programs and marketing campaigns, as well as on social media and in weekly email blasts. These responsibilities taught me that most artists don’t read their emails all the way through, nor do they thoroughly peruse the festival website. Multiple emails had to be sent to producers reminding them of deadlines, how they could individually market their events through the tips that I created, and guidelines for setting up their Eventbrite accounts.

Another significant skill I learned from assisting with project management was solving crises. For example, one artist did not find a venue in time to be listed in the festival program,

and had not set a date or time for the event to take place. We were able to schedule the event before one of the literary events at the coffee shop, which made sense because the event was a performance-based reading of a poem, which was able to segue nicely into a literature reading.

# S.W.O.T. Analysis

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## Strengths

Initial investments  
Media connections  
Legitimate ticketing and merchandise

## Weaknesses

Poor planning and operations  
Programmatic changes  
Disorganized artist and audience engagement  
Initial lack of media content

## Opportunities

Partnerships  
Volunteers  
Post-fest evaluation

## Threats

Loss of mission-driven organization  
Bring Your Own Venue stipulation  
Competition

## Strengths

### Initial Investments

Before any production can begin, a new festival needs financial resources. One of the main strengths Faux/Real had in its inaugural year was initial investments that made up its operating budget. Ben Mintz, the executive producer, along with some board members including AJ Allegra and Richard Mayer, personally contributed initial investments in the company. This was an important asset because it allowed Faux/Real to begin production without having to do any initial fundraising. The initial investments enabled the festival to pay for website domain and hosting, a Constant Contact account, office space, and other operational costs. Faux/Real was able to start running with working capital, which provided security and stability for the board and staff members, and allowed operations to begin effectively. Additional income was solicited from sponsors and registration fees, but the initial investments gave Faux/Real freedom to

execute the festival simultaneously. This advanced production, which led to higher publicity, and eventually greater ticket sales, successful marketing and brand awareness, and future festival sustainability.

### **Strong Media Connections**

Because Ben, the Executive Producer, works in the media, he has many contacts the festival used to generate publicity. This saved time searching the internet for press contacts, which allowed the festival to be more productive. These media connections also helped me to secure media write-ups about the festival. Because these people knew Ben, they were excited to write about Faux/Real, which increased publicity for the festival. This led to more audience awareness and increased ticket sales.

### **Professional Ticketing and Merchandise**

Another strength Faux/Real possessed was the utilization of professional programs and merchandise, and implementing the Eventbrite ticketing system. The Fringe festival had previously sold tickets for cash, at a flat rate of eight dollars. After taking a percentage of the ticket sales, Fringe would give the rest to the artists. Fringe also required audience members to purchase a hand-made button for access to the shows, the income of which went directly to the festival. Faux/Real transitioned to using Eventbrite ticketing, allowing audiences to purchase tickets in advance online with credit cards. Cash purchases could still be made at the central box office beginning the first day of the festival.

Faux/Real had professional programs printed on quality paper, diverting from Fringe's former tradition of partnering with *Gambit* to produce newsprint programs. In addition,

Faux/Real outsourced its merchandise to local professional manufacturers. This included festival cups, t-shirts, jackets, tote bags, and the festival buttons. A festival poster was also designed and printed by a local artist, available in signed or unsigned prints as a souvenir. The commercial style of the buttons, programs, and merchandise created a sense of legitimacy about the Faux/Real Festival, which would appeal to a larger audience and consequently lead to more ticket sales. The higher the ticket sales, the more money the artists made, which would aid a more positive experience and a higher chance of artists returning and re-registering in future years. Continued registration increases the overall sustainability of Faux/Real, which should lead to even greater success and profits for artists and investors.

## **Weaknesses**

### **Poor Planning and Operations**

#### ***Time Management***

Time-management and scheduling are extremely important to run any company, for-profit or non-profit. Faux/Real began planning the festival too late, the first staff meeting taking place in June of 2015, just five months before the festival opened. Starting this late to organize the festival threatened its success. Events were registered at the last minute, issues were not taken care of, staff was rushed and stressed, and the whole atmosphere was chaotic. This could have been avoided if the festival had begun planning a year in advance instead of a few months. Instead, the impact of this poor time management was a chaotic work environment, deadlines not being met, events being cancelled, errors in the festival program, errors on the website, and events without venues.

### *Lack of Dedicated Staff*

Because of the lack of a project manager or artist relations coordinator, I was tasked with gathering and updating information and details about each festival event, primarily for the festival program. This was a difficult task, as events continued to be entered into the lineup after the programs had been distributed, and splitting my time and energy between project management and publicity left the performance of both jobs lower than it should have been. For an unpaid intern, I was extremely overworked and given an almost absurd amount of responsibilities.

Another challenge of coordinating all of the events was relying on the artists. Many did not submit their publicity materials on time or in the correct format, and much of the information changed up to and throughout the festival. Errors had to be corrected on our website and social media accounts, which was embarrassing and unprofessional.

A significant weakness Faux/Real had was a lack of full-time, dedicated staff. Executive producer Ben Mintz runs NOLA Defender, an online alt-daily news publication. Catherine Nolan works full-time at a separate job, as do Alexis Tabor and Stephanie Elder. The other producers and advisory board members have full-time jobs outside of Faux/Real. Ben and I were the only staff members devoting the majority of our daily work hours to the festival. The staff and co-producers attempted to meet for weekly staff meetings, but these were not always attended by everyone each time. Because of this, management and organization was limited, and communication was reduced mostly to emails, texts, and phone calls. This created a very haphazard work flow, which led to problems and mistakes that should have and could have been avoided.

Faux/Real lacked other key management positions, notably a literature event coordinator and a volunteer coordinator. Recruiting, registering, and organizing the literature events fell to Ben and one volunteer. These were done at the last minute, after the festival had begun and the lineup had been published. This meant these literary events had very little publicity and very low attendance. Some literature readings fell through because no one confirmed them with the readers. This was very unprofessional on the part of the festival and should have been managed more properly.

With no volunteer coordinator, Ben attempted to manage volunteers, but this was not done as well as it could have been. Faux/Real also lacked a project coordinator to oversee and organize all of the festival events. Much of this job fell to me, and because I then had responsibilities of project management in addition to marketing and publicity, neither job was carried out well. Because of this, there were a number of errors in the festival program. These had to be corrected in email blasts and on the website, and which then had to be doubly publicized to correct the misinformation. This created confusion for audience members and frustration for artists and venue owners, as well as losses in potential ticket sales. All of this could have been avoided if there had been an official project manager.

### ***Lack of Professional Office Space***

For the duration of my internship, our “office” was in an unused coffee shop housed in the same building as a local bar, and downstairs from a boarding house. The lack of a professional, consistent work environment was a hindrance to my and the rest of the staff’s work efficiency. A legitimate office space would have benefited productivity and operations. The office space was chosen based on the bar owner’s relationship to the festival. The owner of the bar was a sponsor for the festival, and we received a discount on renting the space in exchange

for a sponsorship and encouraging events to perform in the bar, benefiting bar sales. It was also in a convenient location for Ben to walk to, as he does not drive. On the occasions that we had meetings outside of the coffee shop, he asked me to drive us to those locations, and reimbursed me for gas money. Overall, I don't find these compromises were worth the efficiency and productivity a professional office environment would have generated. Also, having our own space could have helped the festival with the additional store-front value. Passersby would see our office and the work being done, which would increase the legitimacy of the festival.

### **Programmatic Changes.**

Instead of solely performing arts events, Faux/Real incorporated food/beverage and literature events into the festival. The goal of adding more categories of events was to appeal to a wider audience, potentially leading to more ticket sales, satisfied participants and audience members, and increased chances of returning events and sustainability for Faux/Real. However, the most relevant addition, literature events, were very poorly managed, and were not given enough presence to really engage audiences outside of the friends and families of the authors who hosted them. The food and beverage category addition was not an organic development of the festival but rather a chance to appeal to wider audiences and to recognize the food and beverage industries as an important aspect of New Orleans culture. The tie-in could have worked if it had been integrated into the performing arts and literature events, but the food and drink events were completely separate and attracted the same audiences that restaurants and bars usually do. This weakened the festival, because the new category did not really make sense to the general public. Separate food and drink events seemed disconnected from the festival itself and

did not broaden the audiences to those companies, nor did food and beverage audiences engage with the other aspects of the festival.

### **Disorganized Artist and Audience Engagement**

Faux/Real did not have a dedicated Artist Relations Coordinator, and, unfortunately, artist relations were not a priority for Faux/Real. Faux/Real needs artists to re-register in future years for the festival to continue, and artist relations are important in making this happen. Faux/Real set up two events aimed specifically at festival participants: the Opening Night Gala, and Participant Lunches. The Opening Night Gala was held the first night of the festival at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, and was free for all festival participants, although patrons not involved with Faux/Real could purchase tickets. The event was open bar, but not a full bar, and though snacks were promised, they arrived at the end of the evening and were purchased by advisory board member Richard Mayer and *NOLA Nerdlesque Festival* producer Ashton Ackridge, who left the event to purchase them.

The participant lunches were also free for those involved in the festival, and were exclusively for fest participants. These were held at Michaelopoulos Gallery, a venue that shares a building with working artists. There were three lunches, one held each Wednesday of the festival. These lunches were marketed to all festival participants, but less than 20 people attended throughout the three weeks. They were intended to make the festival participants feel special and valued, but the darkness and starkness of the space combined with the rushed preparation and limited seating felt more meager than inviting. More time and energy should have been used to manage these lunches, which ended up being thrown together at the last minute.

Aside from those events, the artists were given very little devotion and care from Faux/Real. We asked them for publicity materials and marketed their events, and they were essentially on their own to book venues, set up the stages, and fill seats. There was very little contact between the festival and the artist, or among the artists themselves. There was no sense of community that surrounded the festival, which was incredibly valuable to the Fringe, and made artists want to come back in future years. This was missing from Faux/Real, and weakened the festival's chances of continuing to happen in future years.

When the Fringe Festival was sold to Ben to evolve it into the Faux/Real Festival of Arts, Faux/Real acquired Fringe's email contacts, over 3,000 potential ticket buyers that Faux/Real could automatically reach. The access to the previous Fringe Fest audience gave Faux/Real an advantage for attaining potential audience members. However, Faux/Real did not use this to its advantage. Faux/Real sent weekly email blasts to these contacts, but these contacts could have been better utilized if personal outreach had been done by individually emailing each contact from a personal email address to inform them specifically about the Fringe evolution into Faux/Real and invite them to follow the festival's new social media accounts and newsletters. The lack of this personal outreach and assumption that the previous Fringe audience members would automatically engage with Faux/Real and attend the events was a mistake. Personally informing potential audience members about the festival increases publicity, community appreciation, and potential ticket sales. Faux/Real's lack of personal outreach led to only a small number of people aware of the festival, and even fewer excited to attend. It doesn't matter how many email blasts are sent out or how many Facebooks posts are uploaded - if personal audience outreach is not done, the public won't be engaged.

## **Initial Lack of Media Content**

Because Faux/Real was transitioning from the Fringe and becoming an entirely new festival, it lacked original content to publicize on social media. Using images or media from previous Fringe festivals would violate Fringe copyright, so Faux/Real literally had to start from scratch and create its own content. The Faux/Real logo was created and published, but it was months before artists sent publicity materials for their events. For most of August and September, the social media content consisted of re-posts from other local New Orleans organizations. When Faux/Real did finally receive publicity materials for the events in October from the artists, those were used for content, but that only gave the festival one month to generate substantial social media buzz. For most of the marketing campaign, there was nothing tangible for audiences to see or connect with, and this initial lack of content resulted in lower audience engagement and lower ticket sales, which hindered the festival's ability to sell tickets and make a profit for itself and the artists.

## **Opportunities**

### **Partnerships**

By partnering with local New Orleans organizations such as the New Orleans Hotel Collection and the New Orleans Tourism and Marketing Corporation, Faux/Real had the opportunity to create relationships within the community that would reap benefits for both the festival and our partners. Because Faux/Real is a cultural festival, partnering with these organizations is a perfect way to associate the Faux/Real brand with increased economic impact for New Orleans. When artists and audience members travelled to New Orleans for the festival,

the hotel industry was boosted at a time of year normally stagnant for the tourism industry. This increased business is an incentive for the NOHC to partner with Faux/Real, take advantage of this surplus, and continue to foster the relationship in future years. With the NOHC sponsorships, Faux/Real was able to get free lodging for some of the out-of-town artists who travelled to New Orleans to participate in the food and drink events. NOHC then promoted Faux/Real on their website and social media. This partnership was successful in benefitting both the NOHC by filling rooms in an otherwise stagnant time of the season, and by generating publicity for NOHC to some of the out-of-town guests participating in Faux/Real.

Traditionally, when tourists and locals spend an evening out on the town, they tend to dine at local restaurants and bars - NOTMC's incentive for partnering with Faux/Real was to boost the restaurant and tourism industry during an otherwise sluggish time of year. The increased revenue for restaurants and tourist attractions improves NOTMC's impact in the city, encouraging them to continue partnering with Faux/Real in future years. This partnership benefitted Faux/Real with increased marketing and broader audience reach, as well as deals and discounts on rooms for festival participants. These and other partnerships also embedded the festival deeper into the community, and brought more legitimacy to the festival, increasing overall engagement and sustainability for future years. However, this partnership was not significantly successful in benefitting the NOTMC, since it really only gave NOTMC a few more clicks on their Facebook posts that Faux/Real shared. Otherwise, there was no real benefit to the NOTMC in this partnership.

## **Volunteers**

A vital opportunity for any event is engaging volunteers. Faux/Real underutilized this opportunity. For the two-and-a-half-week festival, Faux/Real enlisted less than 10 volunteers. The majority of these volunteers worked in the festival box office. Festival volunteers could have been utilized at each event, for day-of-show ticket sales, festival button sales, and overall quality assurance to make sure the events went smoothly. Had Faux/Real engaged more volunteers and personally involved people in festival events, it likely would have inspired those people to attend other events and further support the festival in the future. Volunteers could also have helped to fill some of the gaps in the staff, taking on some responsibilities such as personal outreach or coordinating the participant lunches.

## **Post-Fest Evaluation**

After any major event, it is helpful for the producer to survey the results. Unfortunately, Faux/Real did not conduct any post-festival evaluations, nor did they reach out to festival participants or audience members for feedback. This information could have been extremely useful in improving future festival techniques and policies, and the outreach could have reinforced the notion that the participants and audience members are important to the festival and that their opinions are valuable. Making this small effort could have given Faux/Real insight into some of their flaws, such as lack of artist relations or quality assurance. This was a missed opportunity to engage with participants and audiences, which could have led to increased future ticket sales, participant re-registration, and an overall assurance that Faux/Real actually cares about its artists and audiences.

## **Threats**

### **Loss of Mission-Driven Organization**

The transfer from a non-profit festival into a commercial, for-profit festival threatened the overall efficacy of Faux/Real, because now success has to be measured by the festival's profits. This motivation threatened the efficiency and caliber of the festival production, especially in regards to artist relations and quality assurance. Faux/Real was so focused on soliciting sponsors, registering events, and not going over budget that important issues suffered, including assisting out-of-town artists find housing, providing transportation, managing the productions, and overall making artists feel valued. Faux/Real organized parties for fest participants, but a glass of wine at the Ogden Museum would not make up for personal engagement and quality control. This attitude that Faux/Real's success was measured by how profitable it was, instead of how pleased the participants were, is a threat to the festival. Faux/Real needs artists to come back and register next year, and the year after that, and so on. Faux/Real needs to make the extra effort now to show artists how important they are so that they will be happy and continue to work with Faux/Real in the future.

### **Bring Your Own Venue Stipulation**

The "Bring Your Own Venue" policy was the Fringe stipulation made in the sale of the festival, allowing Faux/Real to offer assistance to artists looking for a venue to house their event, but excluding Faux/Real from the responsibility of actually booking the productions. That responsibility would lie solely on the event producers. Faux/Real published a list of participating venues on our website, and gave recommendations for out-of-town producers who had never

been to New Orleans, but that was the extent of our input. This turned out to be difficult for many artists, and led to last-minute venue changes, as well as issues between the venues and the artists. These issues included venues backing out of their agreements, scheduling errors, and finding venues that were the right fit for the events. If Faux/Real had control over the booking, we could have handled these issues. As it was, this format threatened the festival by lowering the possibility of events taking place, which meant fewer ticket sales and financial losses for the artists, and consequently a lower chance of those artists returning to participate in the festival in the future.

### **Competition**

New Orleans is a city of festivals, with everything from Blues and BBQ to Bayou Boogaloo to French Quarter Fest to the Jazz and Heritage Festival. Faux/Real has enormous competition, most notably the Voodoo Music + Arts Experience, held the weekend before Faux/Real opened. Voodoo is a festival owned by LiveNation, with seemingly unlimited resources for marketing and publicity. Faux/Real had to compete with Voodoo for publicity, and had to motivate audience members to come out again the very next weekend for more entertainment. Faux/Real had to put extra effort into marketing its unique characteristics, differentiating itself from other local festivals.

Faux/Real also had to compete with the expectations of the NOLA Fringe Festival. By the opening of Faux/Real, many people were still unaware that the Fringe Festival was over and that Faux/Real was presenting the performing arts aspect of Fringe. Faux/Real also had to compete with bias towards Fringe and negative feelings for its transition. This threatened audience turnout, ticket sales, and overall festival success.

## **Best Practices**

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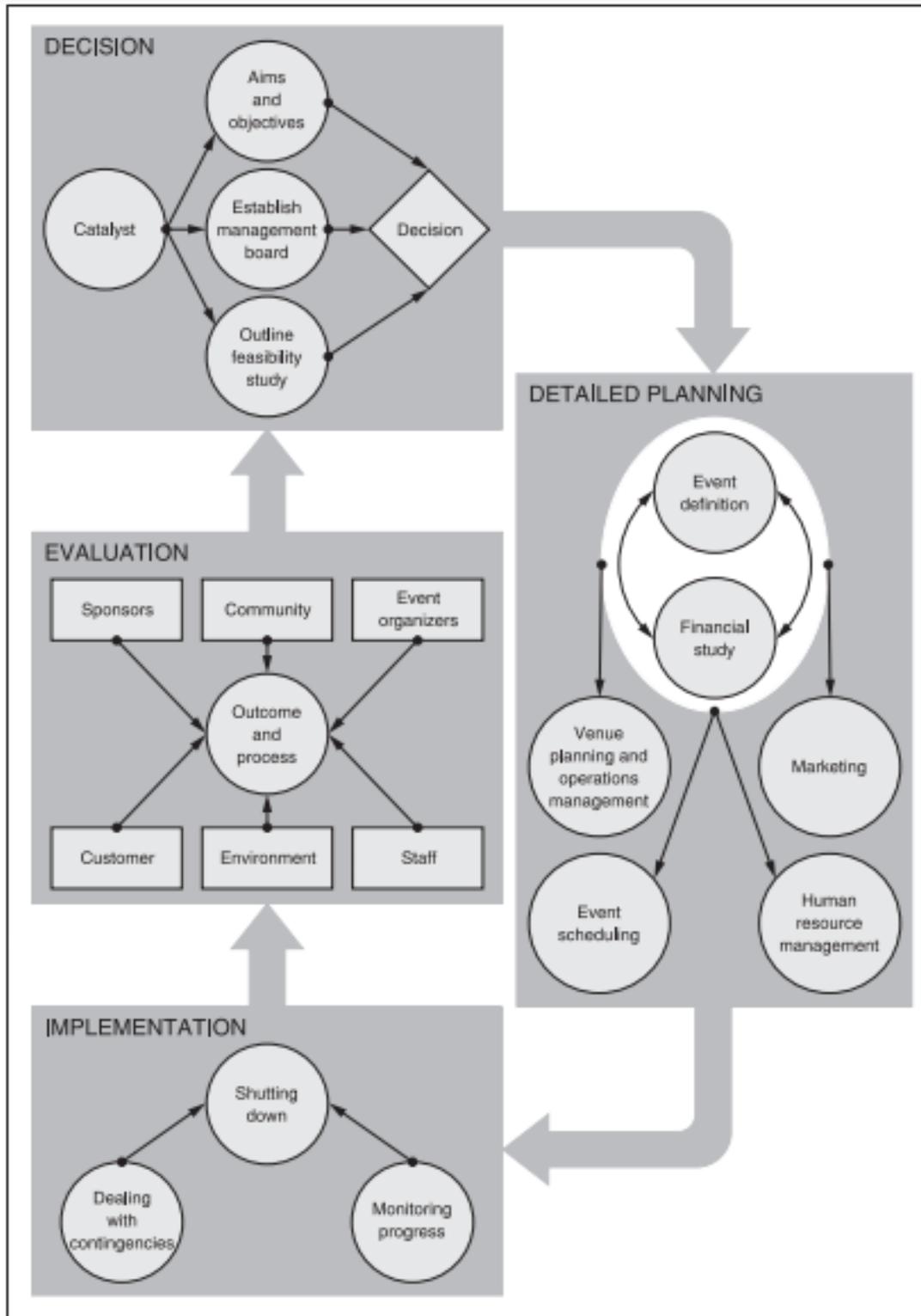
The Faux/Real Festival of Arts was a new festival, and there were no expectations that it would perform flawlessly. As with any large event, there were problems to solve, challenges to overcome, and strategies that did and did not work. In this section, I will outline some best practices for running an arts festival.

### **Operations and Management**

In *Festival and Events Management: An International Arts and Culture Perspective*, Ian Yeoman diagrams a model of special events management, as shown below, which outlines how the event management process works as a system to complete the festival production. The system begins with the Decision phase, where leaders decide what the festival or event will be, and should create a feasibility study to determine if the decision is practical. This phase also includes determining the goals and objectives of the event. “Aims and objectives are crucial and must be resolved early as they impact on many aspects of the event, including marketing and sponsorship. The aim of the event, per se, may be identical to those of the event organizer but at least will be complementary, ‘fitting’ with the organization’s aims and having a key role in achieving them.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Yeoman, Ian, Martin Robertson, Jane Ali-Knight, Siobhan Drummond, and Una McMahon-Beattie. *Festival and Events Management: An International Arts and Culture Perspective*. Routledge, 2011. Print.



A unified model of special events management.

Following the Decision phase is the Detailed Planning phase. This is a major best practice that festival and events incorporate into their production schedule. “Following a positive outcome from the decision phase, the event moves into a detailed planning stage, which is the essence of managing the event. Detailed planning includes event product definition and development of a detailed financial study, before moving on to development of strategies relating to human resource management, marketing, venue planning/ operations management and event scheduling.” The Detailed Planning phase is where strategies and action plans are created to implement the festival. Once the Implementation phase is completed, the event is shut down and the outcomes are re-evaluated for changes and improvements to be introduced in the next Decision phase.<sup>6</sup>

### **Business Plan and Production Schedule**

Before a festival can begin, everyone involved should have a clear understanding of the business plan.

“This is essential – the Business Plan acts as a ‘signpost’ to move your festival or event from its current stage to the desired development for the future. Important sponsors will always seek a copy of the Business Plan. Keep it simple and understandable to all. The preparation of the Business Plan is the role of the total Team/Committee, guided by the Chairman. There are many variations on a possible Business Plan format. Basically the Business Plan should give a summary of Team/Committee and the festival or event, an analysis of the present business that the festival or event attracts, and a financial and promotional strategy for the future.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Yeoman, Ian, Martin Robertson, Jane Ali-Knight, Siobhan Drummond, and Una McMahon-Beattie. *Festival and Events Management: An International Arts and Culture Perspective*. Routledge, 2011. Print.

<sup>7</sup> Failte Ireland National Tourism and Development Authority. *Faite Ireland Festivals and Events Best Practices Guide*. Failte Ireland National Tourism and Development Authority. *AOIFE Online*. AOIFE Online. Web. Feb. 2016. <[http://www.aoifeonline.com/uplds/best\\_practice\\_guide07.pdf](http://www.aoifeonline.com/uplds/best_practice_guide07.pdf)>. p. 10

A formal business plan should be written and presented to all board members and staff members, so that each person has a clear understanding of how the festival will operate and their roles in the production process. Traditionally, the basic business plan will include a brief history of the festival, the festival's vision and mission statement, and goals and objectives. Most importantly, the business plan should include specific strategies for achieving those goals and objectives, and a timeline for festival operations leading up to and including the duration of the festival.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the business plan, a best practice for festival management is establishing a production schedule. A production schedule outlines important milestones and deadlines that the whole festival team, board and staff members, should be aware of, such as deadlines for the website and printing the programs. The schedule should be made well in advance, and include tasks and deadlines for every department, so that there is transparency in all festival operations. A production schedule is not set in stone and will need to be continuously edited to accommodate changes and challenges, but it is an extremely useful tool that helps keep staff focused.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Read, Richard. "Strategic Planning." University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA. 14 Mar. 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Failte Ireland National Tourism and Development Authority. *Failte Ireland Festivals and Events Best Practices Guide*. Failte Ireland National Tourism and Development Authority. *AOIFE Online*. AOIFE Online. Web. Feb. 2016. <[http://www.aoifeonline.com/uplds/best\\_practice\\_guide07.pdf](http://www.aoifeonline.com/uplds/best_practice_guide07.pdf)>. p. 32

## Dedicated Staff and Volunteers

According to *Live From Your Neighborhood: A National Study of Outdoor Arts Festivals* by the National Endowment for the Arts, “Most of the organizations running outdoor arts festivals are relatively small, with five or fewer full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) in the entire organization.”<sup>10</sup>

To avoid the staff being stretched too thin, festivals should have competent full-time staff members employed to handle various management responsibilities, including project management, marketing and publicity, volunteer management, and artist relations. If full-time employees are not an option, volunteer staff members or interns could assist with these roles. “For most festivals, volunteers are necessary in order to keep costs down.”<sup>11</sup> Most importantly, “the roles and responsibilities of the individuals involved needs to be clearly outlined from the outset.”<sup>12</sup> To avoid stress and confusion with important festival duties and decisions, everyone involved should know exactly what is required of them from the beginning of the production process. If duties are added or changed during production, proper scrutiny should be done to determine if one person can handle the extra load, or if more staff is needed to fulfil the increased responsibility.

“Do you have a strategy for recruiting volunteers?...Volunteers must be carefully chosen; must receive appropriate training; be given direction on what they are to achieve, and how their efforts contribute to the festival or event as a whole; be

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<sup>10</sup> *Live from Your Neighborhood a National Study of Outdoor Arts Festivals: Executive Summary*. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2010. Print.

<sup>11</sup> Getz, Donald, Tommy Andersson, and J. Carlsen. "Festival Management Studies." *International Journal of Event and Festival Management Int J Event and Festival Mngt* 1.1 (2010): 29-59. Web. <[http://docentiold.unimc.it/docenti/gian-luigi-corinto/2013/marketing-del-territorio-2013/research-papers/getz-festivals/at\\_download/Festival-management Getz.pdf](http://docentiold.unimc.it/docenti/gian-luigi-corinto/2013/marketing-del-territorio-2013/research-papers/getz-festivals/at_download/Festival-management%20Getz.pdf)>.

<sup>12</sup> African Festival Network, ArtErial Network, British Council. *Festivals Best Practices Toolkit -Part One: Setting Up*. African Festival Network. *ArtErial Network*. ArtErial Network. Web. Mar. 2016. <[http://www.arterialnetwork.org/ckeditor\\_assets/attachments/34/festivals\\_best\\_practices\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.arterialnetwork.org/ckeditor_assets/attachments/34/festivals_best_practices_toolkit.pdf)> p. 41

given appropriate rewards, be appropriately motivated; and treated in accordance with appropriate legislation.”<sup>13</sup>

Volunteers are important for any event, especially a festival that oversees multiple events. Volunteers should be recruited early in the production process, and given specific duties on set dates, times, and locations. Volunteers should have a clear understanding of what they are doing, and they should be valued, because they are incredibly useful to the flow and function of the festival. They should also be given incentives to work, such as a festival t-shirt or free passes to an event.

### **Professional Work Environment**

“Whatever space you will be working in, it should encourage your team to be earnestly focused on meeting the objectives you have outlined. Organizing a festival often means you are working with like-minded individuals who share your passion for the creative field on which you’re focusing, and it’s important to create a mood that encourages productivity.”<sup>14</sup>

Festival staff should have the ability to work in a professional office space with a productive, consistent work environment. This is essential for maintaining timely, effective work output and for leading a positive, energetic staff. The workplace should be easily accessible to all staff members and should have a pleasing, energetic atmosphere. For organizations that don’t need year-round operational facilities, there are many other options that can suffice. For

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<sup>13</sup> Failte Ireland National Tourism and Development Authority. *Failte Ireland Festivals and Events Best Practices Guide*. Failte Ireland National Tourism and Development Authority. *AOIFE Online*. AOIFE Online. Web. Feb. 2016. <[http://www.aoifeonline.com/uplds/best\\_practice\\_guide07.pdf](http://www.aoifeonline.com/uplds/best_practice_guide07.pdf)>. p. 33-34

<sup>14</sup> African Festival Network, ArtErial Network, British Council. *Festivals Best Practices Toolkit -Part One: Setting Up*. African Festival Network. *ArtErial Network*. ArtErial Network. Web. Mar. 2016. <[http://www.arterialnetwork.org/ckeditor\\_assets/attachments/34/festivals\\_best\\_practices\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.arterialnetwork.org/ckeditor_assets/attachments/34/festivals_best_practices_toolkit.pdf)> p. 67

example, the New Orleans itinerant performing arts organization The NOLA Project rents out space at Propeller, a New Orleans nonprofit that offers low-cost office space for small community organizations.

## **Program Changes**

### **Programming**

“For the festival to succeed, it should have tangible roots in the community. If local residents do not support the festival, it will wither and die regardless of the amount of tourism it draws to the community...All festivals depend on community support for their very existence, and and it is this two-way synergistic relationship between festival and community (community deriving identity from the festival and community support breathing life into the festival) that improves the quality of life for us as individuals and for our communities.”<sup>15</sup>

Festivals should grow as an organic extension of the community in which they participate.<sup>16</sup> They should have specific roles in the community, and unique purposes that they serve. The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival (Jazz Fest) celebrates the specific history and culture of New Orleans as the birth of jazz and as a rich musical and cultural community. The programming evolved gradually, beginning with local artists and musicians. When there was a need for more tourism and economic aid after the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, Jazz Fest responded by incorporating larger, more famous, and more globally attractive acts to headline. To continue to annually drive tourism to New Orleans, Jazz Fest has continued to feature nationally and internationally renowned acts, but it has remained faithful to the New Orleans community by maintaining local artists for the majority of its performances. This is an excellent

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<sup>15</sup> Carpenter, Gay, and Douglas Emerson Blandy. *Arts and Cultural Programming: A Leisure Perspective*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2008. Print. p. 131

<sup>16</sup> Read, Richard. “Festival Management and Special Events.” University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA. 29 Feb. 2016.

example of how festival programming grew out of the needs and desires of the community, and has continued to succeed because of it.

## **Community Engagement**

An important aspect of community festivals is the collaborative and participatory partnerships that are formed between the festival and other local community businesses. This is necessary for the community's ability to become aware of and engage with the festival. It creates a network within the community over a specific event or cause, which supports all partners.

“The event organizers must interact with local businesses and the general public to plan the event. This interaction over the period of the event's organization may raise awareness of community resources and also of deficiencies. It produces social links between previously unrelated groups and individuals, and identifies possibilities for the development of the community's resources; generally encouraging a stronger interaction between existing community organizations. The social networks that can develop through the organization of festivals have potential to be maintained beyond the short life of the event... They can also reduce the uncertain environment related to financial support and sponsorship, thus contributing to community development in a long term perspective.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Capriello, Antonella, and Giovanni Fraquelli. *Market-Driven Management in Community Events*. Symphonya. Web. 5 Apr. 2016. <<ftp://ftp.repec.org/opt/ReDIF/RePEc/sym/PDF/symjournal124.pdf>>.

## **Artist Relations**

Artist relations are crucial to the success of a festival. A festival needs its participants to feel valued so that they will continue to register in the festival in future years. If they are treated well, they will return. A valuable best practice for any organization that presents events to the public is to generate a positive relationships with the artists. Coordinating outreach to the artists, meeting them personally and attending to them, and answering any and all questions will make them feel appreciated and valued. This will foster a sense of community throughout the festival, and encourage the artists to return and re-register in future years, thus ensuring the continued success of the festival.<sup>18</sup>

## **Personal Outreach**

It is extremely important for festivals to do personal audience engagement, especially if the festival is new or transitioning. The community needs to feel that they are being served by the festival, and that the goal of the festival is to connect with the audience and generate a sense of camaraderie and fellowship within the community.<sup>19</sup> Marketing and publicity are a large part of this process, but it needs to be taken a step further, with personal outreach to individuals. A great way for a festival to do this is to contact audience members of previous years, or those who have similar interests to the festival's mission. Personal emails or phone calls can be more useful to generating audience members than email blasts or news articles.

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<sup>18</sup> Read, Richard. "Audience Development and Engagement." University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA. 25 Jan. 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Read, Richard. "Audience Development and Engagement." University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA. 25 Jan. 2016.

## **Festival Program Quality Assurance and Distribution**

“Do you circulate festival/event brochures? Generally the following should receive appropriate supplies of your festival/event brochure or leaflet:

- a. Registered/Approved accommodation within a 30km radius
- b. Tourist Information Offices/Centers
- c. Sponsors
- d. Media contacts
- e. Ferry ports/Airports
- f. Chamber of Commerce”<sup>20</sup>

Festival program circulation is extremely important to advertising the events and generating excitement among audiences. Many festivals reveal headliners early, and release the whole program of events closer to the opening of the festival. The events and event schedule are made accessible to the public either through websites, press releases, and tangible brochure circulation. A great example of program circulation was the New Orleans Fringe Festival’s tradition of inserting their programs into an issue of the *Gambit*, a free New Orleans publication with a high level of dedicated readership. The issues were distributed throughout the city, accessible for free in many local businesses. This is an efficient, accessible method of program distribution, and yet another opportunity for community outreach.

## **Post-Festival Evaluations**

“Post event evaluation measures the outcomes of the event in relation to its objectives and is an important tool enabling more informed decisions to be made and more efficient planning to be done and improves event outcomes. Most potential sponsors and some grant giving agencies will seek post event evaluation to be undertaken...Do you have a formal post festival/event debrief? If not then you should do this within one week of the end of the festival or event while everything is still fresh in people’s minds. A debrief should be conducted with all stakeholders. This may be done at a single ‘debriefing’ meeting or a series of

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<sup>20</sup> Failte Ireland National Tourism and Development Authority. *Failte Ireland Festivals and Events Best Practices Guide*. Failte Ireland National Tourism and Development Authority. *AOIFE Online*. AOIFE Online. Web. Feb. 2016. <[http://www.aoifeonline.com/uplds/best\\_practice\\_guide07.pdf](http://www.aoifeonline.com/uplds/best_practice_guide07.pdf)>. p. 58

meetings depending on the complexity of the festival or event. It is often useful for an agenda to be circulated before the meeting. You should discuss every aspect of the festival or event in detail with a view to introducing further improvements for the following year.”<sup>21</sup>

It is always important for a festival, especially a new or transitioning festival, to find a way to get feedback from audience members and festival participants. This will help the festival to improve production in future years, and to address problems or concerns the patrons and participants have, so that next year can improve and generate more audiences. This can be done through emails, surveys at each event, or on the festival website.

After any event, the organizing body should have the opportunity to give feedback on the production process, the management and leadership, and the strengths and challenges they faced throughout. This feedback is valuable to the production staff, allowing members to address problems and issues they faced, and to brainstorm ideas for avoiding or overcoming those issues in future years. The New Orleans Fringe Festival accomplished this with a public annual report posted every year on the festival website. Fringe said in the introduction to their 2013 annual report, “In this report, we talk about what the New Orleans Fringe did in 2013. We reflect on what went well, how we can improve, and what we plan to do in 2014.”<sup>22</sup> This report also included the financial information for the 2013 Fringe Festival. This is an excellent example of the best practice of evaluating the festival to make adjustments and improvements in future years

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<sup>21</sup> Failte Ireland National Tourism and Development Authority. *Failte Ireland Festivals and Events Best Practices Guide*. Failte Ireland National Tourism and Development Authority. *AOIFE Online*. AOIFE Online. Web. Feb. 2016. <[http://www.aoifeonline.com/uplds/best\\_practice\\_guide07.pdf](http://www.aoifeonline.com/uplds/best_practice_guide07.pdf)>. p. 16-17

<sup>22</sup> "2013 New Orleans Fringe Annual Report - Nofringe.org." *New Orleans Fringe Festival*. New Orleans Fringe Festival, 2013. Web. 8 Apr. 2016. <[http://nofringe.org/images/documents/New\\_Orleans\\_Fringe\\_2013\\_Report\\_V1.pdf](http://nofringe.org/images/documents/New_Orleans_Fringe_2013_Report_V1.pdf)>.

to create festival sustainability, as well as being completely transparent and accessible to the community.

## **Recommendations**

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Below are my recommendations for how the Faux/Real Festival can incorporate the above-mentioned best practices into the organization.

### **Operations and Management**

#### **Business Plan and Production Schedule**

I highly recommend that Faux/Real establish a formal, detailed business plan that is clear and specific with how it will handle future festival production. If Faux/Real had strategies for accomplishing its goals and activities. I suggest that for future years, Faux/Real institute a business plan that outlines specific strategies for these goals and activities. These strategies would include specific tasks for securing finances and partnerships, assessing and implementing community needs, and growing the vision for the festival, among others.

I also suggest that in addition to the business plan, Faux/Real generate a clear production schedule, which details each festival deadline for every staff member, as well as clear objectives for daily, weekly, and monthly operations. Both the business plan and the schedule should be made a year before the festival, and re-evaluated six months before the festival to accommodate any changes. The production schedule should be made by the executive director with input from the staff and advisory board.

## **Dedicated Staff and Volunteers**

In my opinion, the most detrimental issue Faux/Real experienced was the lack of full-time dedicated production staff members. I suggest that if Faux/Real cannot do serious investment and sponsorship fundraising to include a budget to pay for full-time, dedicated staff members (specifically an event coordinator and an artist relations coordinator), Faux/Real engage qualified volunteers and interns to take on these responsibilities. This will increase productivity and problem solving, and allow for quality assurance and oversight.

Because volunteer management is so vital to a properly managed festival, I highly recommend Faux/Real assign a volunteer coordinator for next year's festival, and instate a formal, effective volunteer management strategy, including recruitment, training, their value to the festival, and their rewards. This role could be done by a volunteer or an advisory board member.

## **Professional Office Environment**

I believe if Faux/Real had secured a professional office space and maintained a constant, energetic, and efficient work environment, production would have run more smoothly and with fewer crises. I suggest next year Faux/Real invest in a legitimate office space, where staff are comfortable and productive. There are a number of community incubator spaces that could be rented for this purpose, such as Propeller, Launch Pad, Beta, and Landing Zone. Utilizing any of these incubator spaces will increase proficiency and general morale, and provide an appealing atmosphere that is consistent and focused, taking care of problems quickly and with positive attitudes

## **Programmatic Changes**

### **Programming**

Festivals should grow as an organic extension of the community in which they participate. Instead of adding separate food, drink, and literature events to the original performing arts events, I think a more effective method of integrating these aspects of New Orleans culture into the Faux/Real Festival would be to partner restaurant and bar events with the performing arts and literature events. For example, next year, a performance that takes place at a bar could partner with a beverage event to create a themed drink special specifically for that show. This would create integrative, complementary events that allow food and drink patrons to enjoy entertainment with their meals or beverages, and introduce performing arts audiences to restaurants and bars that they might otherwise not patron. This way, each aspect of the New Orleans community that Faux/Real highlights gets attendance, and is integrated instead of separated.

## **Community Engagement**

### **Artist Relations**

I highly recommend Faux/Real put more time and energy into artist relations, and have someone take on these important responsibilities, personally meeting with and constantly communicating with each of the artists, answering any questions they may have. I suggest this person be easily accessible, including outside of office hours. If this cannot be a paid position, I suggest an advisory board member take over these responsibilities. This role should foster connections between the festival and the artists, making the artists comfortable and appreciated,

and increasing the chances of artists wanting to continue working with Faux/Real in the future. Examples of this could include formal or informal information sessions, sending out artist pamphlets with all their participant information, or simple phone calls to artists making sure they have all the information they need. I also suggest this person organize specific meet and greet events that bring the artists together and allow them to get to know each other. This will foster a sense of camaraderie throughout the festival, and create a festival community, which will lead to stronger events and increased ticket sales.

### **Personal Outreach**

Faux/Real was supplied with a marketing plan by advisory board member Ian Hoch, which did not include the best practice of personal outreach and audience engagement. I recommend that next year, Faux/Real integrate personal outreach into the marketing plan, and individually contact previous and potential audience members either by phone or email. Personally informing these individuals about Faux/Real and inviting them to attend festival events will encourage them to engage with Faux/Real, attend the events, and possibly volunteer their time and skills. This direct approach is more effective than email blasts or news articles, and assures awareness. This personal outreach should begin approximately three months before the festival opens, and can be done by advisory board members, interns, or volunteers if utilizing a paid staff member is not an option.

## **Festival Programs**

Faux/Real designed appealing, descriptive, and informational festival programs that answered each of these questions for every event. However, the programs contained a number of errors that had to be corrected in email blasts, on the website, and on our social media pages. I recommend that next year, Faux/Real finalize the program information at least a week before it is sent to the printer, instead of an hour. I suggest that Faux/Real plan this process out ahead of time to have ample opportunity to correct mistakes before it goes to print. If hiring a full-time project manager who can focus solely on the event information is not an option, an intern can just as competently do this job, provided they are not occupied with other responsibilities at the same time. Proper time management is essential for quality assurance on published materials. I also recommend that Faux/Real instate a team of at least twenty volunteers whose job is to distribute the programs to all participating venues, and all local community spaces including bars and coffee shops. I highly suggest that next year, Faux/Real create a strategy for program distribution, and select a date on which the team canvas the city with specific locations to hit from the list quoted above in the Best Practices section, distributing the brochures in an organized and productive method.

## **Post-Festival Evaluations**

Post-festival evaluation is important to the future success of any event. I highly recommend that next year, Faux/Real instate a formal survey for every audience member and festival participant and sponsor. These surveys should collect information about where they are from, where they stayed during the festival, how they heard about the festival, and their opinions about the programming, the festival brochure, the event locations, and whether they will return in

the future. These surveys could be sent by email through programs such as Survey Monkey, they could be paper surveys distribute at the end of each event, or they could be administered over the phone by volunteers who have a specific set of questions to ask.

Another important post-festival evaluation I recommend Faux/Real instate next year is a formal staff and board debriefing, where the whole festival team convenes to discuss how well the festival was produced, any problems or challenges they faced, and ways they can improve for next year's production.

## **Conclusion**

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Interning for the inaugural year of the Faux/Real Festival of Arts gave me significant insight into festival management and operations. I was given the opportunity to utilize my skills and knowledge I obtained in the UNO Arts Administration program, including marketing and publicity, audience engagement, and scheduling in day-to-day operations. Finally, I used analytical practices I learned in the Arts Administration program to evaluate the organization, report relevant best practices, and offer recommendations for future years.

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# Appendices

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## Faux/Real Festival Media Credential Terms and Conditions

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

To complete the application, a letter of assignment from your media outlet editor is required, and should include:

- Dates and events you intend to cover
- A description of your intended coverage, with estimated run date if possible

The deadline to submit applications is October 9, 2015. Applications submitted after October 9th will not be accepted.

Press tickets will be mailed out the week of October 12, 2015.

You must send the Faux/Real Festival of Arts links or copies of your coverage as soon as possible. This is a condition of receiving press credentials for this event.

Media credentials are required to gain access to Faux/Real Fest events. Media credentials are not all-access, you must apply for the specific events you wish to cover.

“Media” is defined as journalists, editors, photographers, or producers who have a verified editorial assignment to cover the festival for a specific media outlet.

Members of the media must be on the Faux/Real press list to receive crucial information about the festival. By submitting your email address, you are giving Faux/Real permission to add you to our contacts for this purpose.

Faux/Real maintains the right to issue, deny, or revoke media credentials at our discretion at all times.

# Faux/Real Festival Media Credential Application

## APPLICATION

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address \_\_\_\_\_

### PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Name of Publication \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of Publication \_\_\_\_\_  
Frequency: Daily \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly \_\_\_\_\_ Bi-weekly \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Publication website \_\_\_\_\_  
Focus of Coverage \_\_\_\_\_  
Editor's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Editor's Phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
Editor's Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide the dates/events you intend to cover \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe your planned coverage \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Will you be doing advance- or post-festival coverage? Advanced \_\_\_\_\_ Post \_\_\_\_\_

Attach letter of assignment and mail with this application to [fauxreal@noladefender.com](mailto:fauxreal@noladefender.com)

By submitting this application and letter of assignment, you are hereby acknowledging that you have read and will adhere to the stated terms and conditions of the Faux/Real Festival media coverage.

## Faux/Real Publicity Guidelines

### **WHAT FAUX/REAL NEEDS FROM YOU:**

#### **Send Faux/Real publicity materials**

For us to advertise your show, we need pictures! **Send us at least 3 high-resolution (300 dpi) publicity photos/art in both black & white and color.** In some cases, we will make the color photos black & white. Photos should be compelling and informative, grabbing the viewer's attention and giving them a general idea of what the event is about. Be sure to clarify which photo/graphic you would like to have published on the Faux/Real website and program, and please only send photos that you have the rights to.

**Send Faux/Real a 300-word description of your event**, and be sure to include the title. We reserve the right to edit the description for the program. If you have Youtube videos of your rehearsals or previews of your event, send us links to those as well, and we will publicize those on our Facebook page.

**Send photos, graphics, descriptions, and links to [fauxreal@noladefender.com](mailto:fauxreal@noladefender.com).**

#### **Follow us on social media**

As your page, "like" the [Faux/Real Facebook page](#), follow [Faux/Real on Instagram](#), and follow us on [Twitter](#)! Once you have added Faux/Real on these social media platforms, we will be able to find you and share posts about your shows.

#### **Create a Facebook Event for your show and tag Faux/Real**

We will share your event on our Facebook page to create more publicity for you! When you have made a Facebook event for your show, email Faux/Real so that we can share the event as soon as possible.

## Tips From Faux/Real for Individual Event Marketing

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MARKET YOUR EVENT:**

#### **Social Media**

Start posting about your event on Facebook and other social media sites as soon as possible - this is a great way to start generating a buzz about your event. Ask your family, friends, and event participants to share these posts on their Facebook pages as well, and remember to tag [Faux/Real](#) in your posts! Send email blasts about your event to friends, supporters, and past audiences. Include pictures, important event info (dates, times, location, etc), and descriptions of the event.

#### **Flyers/Posters/Postcards**

Plaster the city with flyers, posters, and postcards - but do it legally. **It is illegal to post event posters on light posts, telephone poles or anywhere on public property in the city of New Orleans. Any organization mentioned on the poster will be fined, including you, your venue, and the Faux/Real Festival.** You can put posters in coffee shops, bars, businesses, and community spots around the city, with their permission. Make sure your venue posts flyers about your show as well! Your flyers should be eye-catching but easy to read, and should contain important event info (dates, times, and location), the Faux/Real Festival logo, the Faux/Real Festival website, and your ticket price.

#### **Press Releases**

Send press releases about your event to local publications and news outlets. Faux/Real will be sending out press releases for every event, but more info that gets to the media, the better. You'll want to send about 3 press releases leading up to your event, with about 2 weeks between each release, the last one going out a week before your event. In the first paragraph of the press release, you should include the date(s), time(s), and location(s) of your event. You should also include the name of the event, who is producing it, key players, and a description of the event. Remember to check for correct grammar and spelling, and be sure to include that this event is part of the Faux/Real Festival. It is important to send photos or graphics with the press releases, but make sure you don't send the same one to multiple media sources. These photos should be different from the ones you send to Faux/Real for publicity.

## Vita

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Zoe Cuneo was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She earned a BA in Film Studies from the University of New Orleans in May of 2014. In the fall of 2014, she joined the University of New Orleans graduate program to pursue an MA in Arts Administration, with the goal of establishing a career in the arts community.



# MASTER'S EXAMINATION REPORT

## Non-Thesis

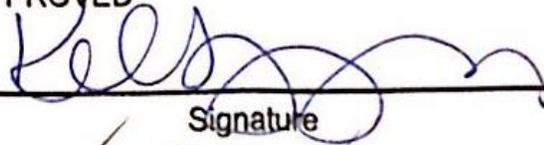
**CANDIDATE:** Zoe Cuneo

**MAJOR PROGRAM:** Graduate Program in Arts Administration

APPROVED

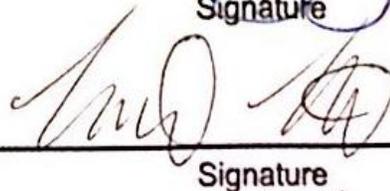
Kellie Greene

Major Professor (typed)

  
Signature

Richard Read

Committee Member (typed)

  
Signature

Adam Falik

Committee Member (typed)

  
Signature

Executive Director of Graduate Programs

Signature

March 31, 2016

DATE OF EXAMINATION: