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INTRODUCTION

AT THE 2019 FALL FORUM ON GOVERNANCE: A NEW PLAYBOOK, TCG GOT SERIOUS ABOUT examining our field’s traditional business model. How does it affect our day-to-day operations, fundraising practices, organizational culture, and artistic programming processes—and how might it need to change? This Fall Forum featured conversations on how to improve, rethink, and enhance our organizations' resources (including income streams and capital structure); our program and organizational structures (including staff infrastructure, board governance, analyses of programs and services, artistic planning, and more); and our impact (how we measure our success, and how we communicate our charitable value). TCG thanks our 2019 Fall Forum participants and sponsors in joining us from November 8–10 in New York City to directly address the issue that keeps so many of us up at night. How do we keep our organizations financially healthy while continuing to produce powerful theatre in our communities?

293 ATTENDEES joined TCG, including participants from 106 TCG MEMBER THEATRES, 33% of whom were theatre TRUSTEES from around the country. 45 SPEAKERS led 19 SESSIONS over just 2 days of programming.

Fall Forum attendees were welcomed at an opening reception at The Library at the Public Theater, which featured two peer facilitators, Brian Joseph Lee and Madeline Sayet, sparking emergent conversation around the two questions that were threaded throughout our time together, as we contemplated our field’s challenges with our business model: What do we want to keep? And what do we want to leave behind?
PLENARY SESSIONS

OPENING PLENARY “Model Makers: Innovation in Nonprofit Arts Leadership”
featured keynote speaker Deborah Borda, President and CEO, New York Philharmonic, in conversation with Henry Timms, President and CEO, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts

Substantive and honest. Excellent presenters.  —Susan Clampitt, Trustee, Mosaic Theater

MORNING PLENARY “Model Momentum: Theatres at the Crossroads”
presentations from Robert Rosener, First Vice President, Morgan Stanley LLC and Zannie Voss, Director, SMU DataArts and Professor of Arts Management, Meadows School Director of the Arts, Cox School of Business, followed by conversation with Cynthia Fuhrman, Managing Director, Portland Center Stage; Tim Jennings, Executive Director/CEO, Shaw Festival; and Marshall Jones, III, Producing Artistic Director, Crossroads Theatre Company; moderated by Teresa Eyring, Executive Director & CEO, TCG

Superb grasp of the data and wonderfully useful information.  —Claire Stern, Trustee, Weston Playhouse Theatre Company

CLOSING PLENARY “Model Behavior: Building the Plane While Flying It”
included statements offered by Edgar Dobie, Executive Producer, Arena Stage; Chandra Stephens-Albright, Managing Director, Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre Company; Eric Ting, Artistic Director, California Shakespeare Theatre; and Blanka Zizka, Founding Artistic Director, Wilma Theater; and a discussion facilitated by Mark Valdez, Director

I appreciated this session a lot...It affirmed a lot of things we are struggling with internally.  —Karthik Subramanian, Interim Managing Director, Company One Theatre
BREAKOUTS, WORKSHOPS AND OTHER SESSIONS

SATURDAY
on All Aboard: Reimagining Contemporary Governance with Yasmine Falk, Founder and Partner, Advance NYC; Trella Walker, Associate Director, Advisory Services, Nonprofit Finance Fund; and Lisa Yancey, President, Yancey Consulting; moderated by Nataki Garrett, Artistic Director, Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Exceptional insights, [as well as] opportunities to ask questions [and] get answers.
—MaryBeth Bunge, Managing Director, Hangar Theatre

on With a Little Help From Our Friends: Opportunities for Collaboration and Adaptation in our Model with Michael J. Bobbitt, Artistic Director, New Repertory Theatre; Catherine Carr Kelly, Executive Director, Central Square Theater; Owais Lightwala, Managing Director, Why Not Theatre; Thaddeus Squire, Chief Commons Officer, Social Impact Commons; moderated by Laurie McCants, Ensemble Member, Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble

This was a great panel. The theatre professionals were very candid and gave personalized accounts. They encouraged discussion and it lead to the generation of lots of ideas for us to take back and consider.
—Mindy Ellmer, Trustee, ZACH Theatre

SUNDAY
on Power from the People: Rethinking Theater Marketing for the 21st Century with Erik Gensler, President, Capacity Interactive

This was by far the best session I attended. Erik is an excellent presenter and someone who has a bigger perspective on our work so is actually inspiring.
—David Schmitz, Executive Director, Steppenwolf Theatre Company

The 2019 TCG Fall Forum on Governance featured 10 breakout sessions and two workshops, each addressing an area of our three focal points: resources, structure and programs, and impact. Other sessions included lunch conversations on related issues like mission-aligned investing and the synergy between commercial and nonprofit theatre models; and a post-Forum trustee working session on equity, diversity, and inclusion.
I am particularly motivated to start discussions with my board and staff about planning against an upcoming recession.

—Leigh Henderson, Managing Director, Teatro Visión

I have a number of practical ideas about board meeting structure from the board governance session that I will be implementing next month.

—Katie Liberman, Managing Director, Hudson Valley Shakespeare

I thought the 2019 Fall Forum was excellent! Personally, this was one of the best Fall Forums for me in the last five years. There was a lot in this [one] that addressed my questions and needs.

—Francine Thomas Reynolds, Artistic Director, New Stage Theatre

I found it to be a wonderful experience.

—Chandra Stephens-Albright, Managing Director, Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre Company

Read AMERICAN THEATRE’s entire report-out piece from the 2019 Fall Forum on Governance here: https://www.americantheatre.org/2019/11/22/TCG-Fall-Forum-a-deep-dive-into-a-new-playbook/

SEE YOU AT THE 2020 FALL FORUM ON GOVERNANCE, NOVEMBER 13-15, 2020 IN NEW YORK CITY!