

Emerging Strategies for Community Engagement in Global Arts Festivals

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## **1. Introduction**

Nearly twenty years have passed since scholars first noticed surprising growth in the numbers of international arts festivals taking place in Europe and North America. Today this growth continues worldwide; in fact, festival proliferation has already reached the point where an exact number of international theatre and arts festivals is impossible to determine.<sup>1</sup>

Over recent decades this ever-increasing popularity of global festivals has contributed greatly to the development of contemporary art forms, as well as spawning fears of its global impact: the fear of an “urban concentration” of artistic influence, the threat of “cultural homogenization” that successful festival “formulas” might engender, the specter of corporate and civic marketing efforts that might overtake and somehow cheapen the artistic impact of festival-makers, and numerous other concerns.

Such fears, though, have largely failed to materialize as these events have sustained their operations. On the contrary, today’s global arts celebrations are providing numerous opportunities for artistic exchange and public benefits. Major European ones such as the Avignon Festival, the Paris Autumn Festival, the Venice Biennale, and others exhibit astounding diversity in their sourcing of talent, the range of their cultural offerings, the magnitude of their funding support, and their seeding of other festivals. More importantly, their partnering with different institutions and the ways in which they intimately connect to the different publics they serve--their “community engagement”--have prodded them to develop their programs in valuable new ways.

This is the principal focus of this paper: the emerging strategies that global arts festivals are developing in order to create opportunities for members of the community to interact with festival activities. This study examines three principal ways in which festivals accomplish this. First, many festivals provide unique opportunities for students and arts educators in their region. Second, arts festivals also facilitate dialogue between arts consumers and artists by creating panel discussions, lectures, and lecture/demonstrations. And third, festivals are also stimulating greater public attendance at arts events by renovating and using unusual spaces outside “official” festival venues. Coupled with the professional workshops that they sponsor, family-friendly activities, unique opportunities for volunteers, and other programs, global arts festivals now encourage spectator participation on many levels, and contribute meaningfully to the cultural education of their different publics.

A secondary focus of this study is to shed light on what drives this trend of arts festivals to build robust forms of community engagement. Sustaining engagement has today become an “industry norm”<sup>2</sup> in USA theatres, just as it has in

international festivals. Managers of the largest world festivals, in fact, spend most of the year travelling globally not only to source programming, but also to note the innovations and best practices of community engagement that annually emerge.<sup>3</sup> Why are we seeing this recent surge of interest in community engagement? Does traction in the community mark a festival as philanthropic and thus more eligible for donations and private sector partnerships? Does it attract more patrons, or more artists interested in community-based programming? And are these global festivals redefining traditional notions of community in the digital age of the “global village?”

An analysis of this trend is the focus of this paper: key recent strategies by means of which global festivals make their work more accessible to their communities. The study relies on the observation that over the past four or five decades, international arts festivals have expanded their roles from that of serving simply as seasonal showcases of artistic products, to that of offering a more or less “full service hub” of cultural activities--sometimes year-round--geared to serve the tastes and needs of a broad and diverse audience. Festivals increasingly discover new social and cultural roles to play in their region; more and more they are studying their communities in order to become more inclusive as they uncover and meet local cultural needs. In short, festivals today have widened their reach from that of arts programming to also include community engagement.<sup>4</sup>

This study hopes to contribute to the growing body of work exploring innovative arts management approaches of major festivals. For example, a myriad of *economic impact studies* are always ongoing--especially in the United States--profiling arts consumers, tracking patterns of sponsorships and donations, and identifying festivals' economic impact.<sup>5</sup> Some recent research has also concentrated upon examining the surprising role that festivals play in *forming national identities*;<sup>6</sup> identifying the growth of *festival “performance circuits”* for dance and theatre that expand companies' touring schedules;<sup>7</sup> and tracing the ever-increasing *importance of social media* in the festival marketing picture.<sup>8</sup> Hopefully this present article can complement these studies by showcasing some challenging ways in which global arts festivals are also reaching out to and influencing their communities, locally and worldwide. There are three types of strategies this analysis will consider:

1. arts education activities impacting a community's schools,
2. artist-spectator encounters familiarizing audiences with the artistic process, and
3. the development of site-specific exhibition and performance spaces contributing to cultural and economic life in the region.

## **2. Arts Education and Community Engagement**

Arts education is certainly the most common way in which festivals have always engaged their communities, relying on artists to reach out to local schools. Such outreach augments thinly-stretched educational resources in the region, impacting students as well as teachers. Arts education also captures community attention and respect--and therefore gains local market appeal--by linking the festival's artistic efforts to family values that ordinarily are important to

communities. And let us not overlook the fact that arts education often generates a profitable income stream for festivals: facilitating grants from foundations and municipal organizations, contracting with local and regional offices for cultural services that festivals provide, and attracting sponsorship (branding) by private industry.

Over the past decade, the need to develop educational missions to accompany artistic programming at global festivals has assumed great importance. As Teresa Eyring, former Executive Director of Theatre Communications Group, has declared about this aspect of producing theatre in the USA:

In cities and towns and rural areas across the U.S., our theatres create a strong, unifying sense of place; they become intricately interconnected with the individuals and entities that are the fabric of their specific locales. They also regularly tap into a national network of theatremakers to get the work done on stages, in classrooms, and beyond.<sup>9</sup>

Reviewing the educational offerings of a half-dozen world festivals, one immediately notices a very large number of workshops offered in conjunction with these events. One-, two-, or three-day "spot workshops" can extend to two weeks at the Athens/Epidauros Festival's Lyceum International Summer School. Venice's Biennale College, offering months of workshops where secondary-level students work with world-recognized masters is another very impressive training program. Canada's Stratford Shakespearean Festival and the Athens-Epidauros Festival even offer university-level three-week intensives; and numerous festivals in the United States and Canada offer teacher-certified training for instructors in classroom methods using drama, art, and music.

Programs like these are always costly to produce,<sup>10</sup> but festival organizers feel strongly that the cost-benefit ratio works in their favor, because artists working in the community always provide valuable publicity opportunities. Teaching artists, for example, paid to work in schools year-round, can sustain a festival's presence in the community for months (provided the festival operates during the regular school year). Music, visual arts, dance and theatre workshops can be offered for all elementary grade levels. Many such workshops are even offered in school settings, but can also happen in community arts and service centers.

Even larger educational commitment for youth audiences is not uncommon, and here we see a great deal of innovative ideas being tested. France's Avignon Festival, for example, has dedicated the Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs in the old city as a "young audience place;" because of its highly symbolic identity and its location in the center of the city, it is easily accessible to families. Under the guidance of Olivier Py in 2017 (stage director and overall Director of the Avignon Festival), three productions for audiences aged 7 - 77 were staged in the Chapelle. Py himself also directed young students in a pre-season stage production. Finding capable directors for such projects isn't easy, but artistic creations "for young audiences . . . are the challenges of tomorrow," declares the Avignon Festival's website.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to providing intensive hands-on production experiences, the Avignon Fest also publishes a “Young Audiences” section in its weekly newsletter, focusing on art exhibitions, shows, workshops, and films for youth 7 – 15 years. It also publishes a “Young Spectators Guide” much like the study guides downloadable from many USA and UK festivals. Avignon's "Guide" gives teachers and parents ideas for educational activities, presents a chronological frieze of the festival's history, identifies walking routes through the old city, and offers amusing riddles and games for very young audiences.

Another strategy that some festivals have used to deepen their penetration into community schools has been to broaden the range of art activities that they showcase. For instance, in the USA's ArtPrize festival, the world's largest art competition, high school robotics teams were encouraged for the first time in 2017 to bring their creations to the event. What have robotics skills to do with art, people may ask? ArtPrize organizers passed on answering this question; on the other hand, they clocked more than 14,000 students and their teachers who participated in “ArtPrize Education Days,” during which ArtPrize offered free arts-immersion programs for youth that also included robotics creativity. ArtPrize also allowed voters as young as 13 years to cast ballots for the \$500,000 in prizes awarded.

“My children love ArtPrize,” remarked one parent whose three children were enjoying the robotics activities. “They are very creative-minded. I think you should do anything you can to encourage children to grow their love of art.”<sup>12</sup> ArtPrize organizers have been quick over the past three years to point to the ways that local schools have bought into the recently-established citywide festival/competition: “ArtPrize has transformed the community, and as a result, the community takes ownership and great pride in this event.”<sup>13</sup>

Of course, expanding inclusivity to more sectors of the community like this, regardless of a festival's overall theme or artistic focus, can quickly dilute the specific arts impact of the event. More interesting for this study are other attempts to deepen youth workshops in ways that include more direct hands-on youth participation than a “traditional” workshop might do.

Taking the Avignon Festival again as an example, organizers have been cultivating since 2014 an innovative program entitled “Young Reporters Culture.” This well-funded project for videographers brings 50 students from 12 to 18 years into contact with professional journalists who teach professional skills in a brief pre-festival training program at selected schools. These students then serve as “festival videographers” recording many aspects of the month-long Avignon Festival: artist discussions, workshops, art exhibitions and theatrical performances, backstage activities, special events, audience responses, speeches, press conferences, and the like.

Supervised by professional journalists and entertainers, the students attend events, meet the artistic teams and prepare video interviews. Students produce more than fifteen short features over the three-week period. Only the videos of stage performances and workshops are edited (for brevity); all the material is then posted on the official web-TV of the Avignon Festival website, as well as on YouTube where material remains freely-accessed year-round.

Scotland's annual Edinburgh International Festival, the largest performing arts festival in the world, fields a similar program for senior high school journalism students. In "*The Herald* Young Critics" program, supported by *The Herald* newspaper, a group of the paper's writers conduct schools workshops in journalism for selected pupils prior to the start of the festival. In 2017, seventy-two students participated in the program at their different schools. They were then brought to the festival in August, and attended performances in music, theatre, opera and dance. After the students wrote their reviews, editors of *The Herald* selected the best in each arts category and published them alongside reviews penned by professional *Herald* journalists. The newspaper also awarded a grand prize for the best student review, the "Herald Cherub Award;" and the Festival's website posted all the student reviews on its "education" pages featuring many of the Festival's outreach initiatives.

In the USA, another educational strategy for serving community schools occurred at Photoville, New York City's largest annual photography event.<sup>14</sup> Photoville normally runs over a two-week period outdoors in Brooklyn's Dumbo neighborhood. More than 90,000 visitors crowded the small site in 2017, enjoying exhibitions, talks, workshops, evening programs, and outdoor social gatherings.

Photoville's unique educational partnering, however, deserves special mention. Co-founder Dave Shelley calls it "peer-to-peer talks."<sup>15</sup> Five years ago Shelley and his colleagues established an "Education Day" to host large groups of schoolchildren in order to grow their love of photography. Unlike other festivals, however, where adult experts introduce youth groups to a festival's artistic offerings, Photoville enlists other high school students who have been studying photo and video documentary to do the instruction. "It's really a no-brainer," said one staffer from the Brooklyn Documentary Center. "Kids don't listen to adults, everyone knows that. So we have a number of high school still-photo and video documentary kids here running workshops for us. That's getting great responses from the middle schools and high schools buying into it."<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps the most extensive arts education program is fielded by the Venice Biennale, called the Biennale Summer School. This 3 - 6 month learning experience (for Italian students only) takes the form of an internship for undergraduates and graduates wishing to enrich their training in organization, management, administration, technical support, editorial work, or communication within the structure of the Biennale.

Dedicated to young artists, the program serves fine arts, dance, theatre, film, virtual reality and music; and it is designed to serve as a bridge for young people to learn how to enter the professional world.<sup>17</sup> Students are supervised individually by master teachers. This work with university students complements the large number of workshop programs offered by the Biennale directly to younger Italian schoolchildren during the regular school year, since the Biennale continues through late November.<sup>18</sup>

We must also note perhaps the most prestigious educational program of the Biennale--and one unmatched by any other global arts festival--dedicated to young filmmakers and students of "virtual reality." Launched in 2017, this project ran through the early part of 2018. Students developed their ideas under the guidance

of industry professionals in workshop settings in Venice. Then at the end of February 2018, three projects were selected for significant funding up to a maximum amount of 60,000 Euro each, thanks to the support of SONY. These three projects will then be presented at the 75<sup>th</sup> Venice International Film Festival in 2018, in the Venice Virtual Reality section.<sup>19</sup>

These four examples of unusual programs in arts education signal some new approaches that global arts festivals pursue nowadays to attract new audiences. By inviting students in these ways to connect their lives with festival activities, organizers offer one-of-a-kind arts opportunities that schools by themselves could never provide. Additionally, they enable young people to meet and work with professional practitioners in music, theatre, visual arts, media and other fields. Festival producers thus help to cultivate a new generation of audiences and arts practitioners, while simultaneously they solidify their festivals' presence in local communities.

Partnering with colleges and universities through internships is a final area where festivals are learning to extend their reach into communities. Internships, for example, offer festival organizers numerous opportunities for sourcing the management talent that all festivals need, and doing so at a minimal cost. Young volunteers perform a myriad of daily tasks such as crowd management, information distribution, ushering, transportation, and other assignments. Faculty and staff volunteers assist with important projects like survey-taking, statistical compilations, translation services, and the like. Many colleges refer to this approach as "service learning" for their students. Faculty volunteers also help to coordinate festival programs with their institution's academic offerings.

A few additional examples of how universities can be enlisted by organizers in order to serve a festival's needs:

- In 2016 the 10-day World Festival of Children's Theatre in Stratford, Ontario (Canada) partnered with nearby Brock University to provide foreign exchange student volunteers (with multiple language skills) to guide twenty-one non-English speaking children's troupes and their chaperones through all daily festival activities.<sup>20</sup>
- France's Avignon Festival profits by the inclusion on its Board of Emmanuel Ethis, President of the nearby Université d'Avignon et des Pays de Vaucluse. Dr. Ethis serves as a key liaison between the festival and the university students and programs. The Festival-University partnership examines and publishes data from audience surveys, conducts impact studies through summer research programs, and develops other curricular projects.<sup>21</sup>
- Venice's Biennale lists 39 higher education institutions--foreign and domestic--with which the festival now partners in some form. The possibilities of developing programming, attracting students, and serving such a broad educational public are tantalizing and challenging.

## **2. Audience-Artist Encounters and Community Engagement**

Turning now from education-related strategies, we can note ways in which arts festivals engineer audience-artist encounters with the general public, thus building community networks. Opportunities for the public to have direct contact with artists and rub shoulders with important people has always helped attract spectators, and conversations with celebrities are always valuable "star power" for festival organizers.

Meiyin Wang, co-director of New York City's "Under the Radar International Festival" remarked upon the value of artistic conversations in 2015:

One of the things that is most important to me is the experience of the festival community--the audience, the artists and the staff. How do we create moments for the community to come together? How do you create the best environment for the collision of different ideas, senses and aesthetic propositions . . . How do we create the contexts for formal and informal conversations?<sup>22</sup>

While traditional approaches for presenting festival artists to the public (lectures, panel discussions, workshops) will likely remain popular, these formats nonetheless display some new wrinkles today--often due to the greater role that technology is playing in the festival marketing campaign.

Take, for example, the free "panel discussion" where artists speak about their work in an informal setting that invites the give-and-take of dialogue. What can or should be done at an international festival for spectators who may not be fluent in the artist's language? In the 21st century, to privilege only one language at an international event can be perceived as politically incorrect, and even exclusionary. Thus, these kinds of audience-artist encounters are accompanied more-and-more by simultaneous translation that makes artists' comments very accessible.

This challenge of translation for stage performances, discussions and presentations has for years vexed not only festival organizers but also producers of individual theatres and arts exhibitions worldwide. For decades, of course, operas, plays and films have addressed the language challenge by using supertitles, subtitles or surtitles *during a theatrical performance*. And art exhibitions could simply *translate signage or documents* into one or several languages. But what of the spoken word in symposia, roundtables, panel discussions and the like?

One group addressing this challenge is the International Amateur Theatre Association. It has made a significant financial investment over the last decade in providing simultaneous translation for audiences at its major festivals. Thus in 2017, spectators attending AITA/IATA's twelve-day quadrennial "Mondial du Théâtre" in Monaco, participated in daily artist talkbacks and discussions, keynote speeches, and Congress proceedings with the aid of free headsets keyed to live translators working in English, French and Spanish (the three official languages of the Association). All festival documents were similarly translated. While not solving all the challenges for speakers of other languages, AITA/IATA has succeeded well so far in strengthening its "inclusivity" for participants at the world festival in Monaco.



Internet access to an artist and his/her work has now become *de rigueur* in many locations.<sup>23</sup> The Avignon and Venice festivals, for example, have been working to develop their web presence, and have been experimenting by developing a dedicated “virtual space” with a program of special web-based projects. Some festivals already provide dual- or even triple-language versions of their websites in addition to the native language version (where the festival is being held). Not every document on the website, however, will receive the benefit of a translation because such work is time-consuming and expensive; so translations are infrequent and inconsistent, although the trend is growing. Even the largest global festivals (Venice and Avignon) only provide subtitles for some of their video-recorded discussions and speeches.

To some extent, technical advancements in the technology of language translation over the next decade may possibly mitigate the language problems that today’s audiences encounter. Nonetheless, festival organizers know that the need for more translation will not disappear any time soon; and they are reluctant to rely simply upon English (the default cyber-language for business, science and other fields) when translating the words of artists or critics.

Engaging today’s media-centric audiences has become particularly challenging for the performing arts, especially theatre, because social media platforms often compete with performing artists for the entertainment dollars of media consumers. In other words, social media are not simply information-transmitters, but often entertainment-providers threatening to siphon-off the same arts consumers that arts organizations seek to attract. What is even more problematic is that social media do not remain static: they continually change their formats in order to appeal to the ever-changing tastes of internet-users. Many communications researchers in the United States and Europe are already hard at work trying to keep pace with these developments. As one theatre arts manager in the U.K. has observed:

As mass communications outlets merge with portable and interactive technologies, venues must develop ways to reach potential and existing customers across a wide variety of digital platforms. . . The millennials now outnumber the baby boomers, representing the largest consumer sector for the arts, entertainment and media. If the theatre community is to remain a thriving cultural destination and influence, then understanding and responding to millennials’ needs and habits must be at the core of programming, marketing and outreach.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to developing translation resources and mastering social media platforms attractive to the public, festival organizers are discovering other creative ways to bring their artists closer to audiences.<sup>25</sup> One such idea gives a new wrinkle to the age-old medium of the printed word.

In New York’s Under the Radar Festival, co-directors Marc Russell and Meiwin Wang served the local cultural community in 2016 by renovating the spacious Levin Mezzanine above The Public Theatre’s main lobby in order to create what they call “the library” where audiences can meet and chat with the artists. “It’s

this area where we expect the artists to hang out after the shows," Russell explained. "Each artist has created a list of books that inspired him. And then the Strand Bookshop searched through the files and found those books. And they'll be on display. So you can go and say, 'Oh, I saw that show!' And then you can see where the artist is coming from." Russell also made sure that his artists marked-up the books and left notes in them: "They've put in notations and you can also write a card and stick it in the book yourself to respond to their markings. Or take the card out and buy the book."<sup>26</sup>

A final example of festivals bringing spectators into contact with artists is the way that festivals steadily increase the amount of artistic background information on their websites. Earlier practices took the form of "artist statements" posted on exhibition walls, or dramaturgy notes printed in theatre programs. Today, by contrast, festival publics avidly devour a great amount of online information that helps familiarize them with the works they plan to experience before they even arrive at the exhibition. The internet (with the help of modern, robust servers) now functions as a "scholarly docent" for the public. Most spectators visit the festival website before they attend, spending hours poring-over the information available there.<sup>27</sup>

Such online information about artists, their work, and festival programs not only increases daily, but also assumes new formats year-by-year. This poses formidable economic challenges to festival organizers who need to maintain attractive web presences for their marketing. As arts manager Olivia Carr noted in a recent article in the British journal, *Arts Professional*:

Arts professionals must use the tools available to engage audiences before, during and after they visit a venue, and remain as accessible as possible. It is increasingly likely that young people's first interaction with an organization will be online, before they ever set foot inside a venue. High-quality, digital experiences are key to catching the eye of this target market, so it's worth investing time in building an online presence that will provide a valuable glimpse into the organization. Video continues to dominate social networks and is predicted to account for 80% of all consumer traffic by 2020.<sup>28</sup>

This sort of *digital, intellectual* enhancement of the artist will likely remain crucially important for festival marketing. Nonetheless it is no substitute for *direct contact with the person of the artist*, nor for *direct contact with his/her working methods*. In this regard, it is very interesting to note the way in which the Venice Biennale tries to overcome these particular limitations in two ways: by having artists talk about their work in documentary videos, and by re-creating artists' studios in the Giardini and Arsenale areas.

In the Biennale's Central Pavilion, organizers have devoted one entire room to screening five-minute videos made by the artists themselves who describe their work: their sources of inspiration, their working methods and materials, their experiments, and the development of the finished work on exhibition. Dubbed the "Artists' Practices Project," these screenings complement the frequent live "Open

Table" discussions involving artists and spectators in live discussions and colloques. The artists themselves, of course, are not always in residence in Venice, and this is why their digital presence in the long-running Biennale is so important. These one-hundred videos "loop" daily over the six-month festival period, permitting visitors to take what amounts to a guided tour by the artist himself/herself of the different works on exhibition.

Many artists, of course, already have video "documentaries" of their work that they use for promoting themselves and for applying to exhibitions and competitions. The Biennale not only uses these to provide spectators with background when touring the sites, but also to post on the festival's website (the "Biennale Channel") that already contains a wealth of video information--thus representing a significant portion of the total video archive of the Venice festival for years to come. An additional Biennale video locale is the "Performances Video Room" located in the Arsenale, where visitors can see all of the performances which took place during the opening week of the Biennale.

We should also note that certain invited Biennale artists also re-create their actual studios in the Giardini and Arsenale areas. By walking through the artist's studio the audience member is brought face-to-face with *the process of how a work of art is created*. Too often, that is, festivals (like museums and music recitals and dance concerts and other contexts) offer only artistic *products* designed to please and satisfy the audience. Occasionally, a museum may offer some video program about an artist to accompany an exhibit. But the Biennale's approach is high profile because it brings spectators into the artist's actual studio or workshop. Consequently, one begins to understand the inspiration, the labor, the experiments, the techniques, the hypotheses, the materials and other aspects of the artist's creation.

By using such digital and live experiences, many global festivals now offer more than just works of art on exhibition to the community: paintings, dance recitals, acoustic installations, sculptures, theatre performances, and the like. Spectators are also invited to examine books that artists have identified as important to their work, tour artists' studios, observe the actual creations, gain background information on the festival's website; as well as enjoy opportunities to see and engage the artists in discussion during the different live artist-audience programs.

#### **4. Utilizing Unusual Venues for Community Engagement**

In addition to the community impact of education programs and artist encounters, today's global festivals also engage their publics by offering spectators unusual environments for theatrical performances and exhibits. There are three recent strategies to accomplish this that bear mention here:

1. utilizing as broad a range of venues as possible, bringing art activities into many neighborhoods in the festival's district (the "multi-venue" festival);
2. directly involving audiences in a "group creation project," most frequently in non-artistic settings (the "spect-actor" festival event); and

3. inviting audiences to observe art work in found spaces, either for temporary or even permanent exhibitions and performances.

Most major arts festivals taking place in urban locations today capitalize upon the availability of already-existing venues. Some festivals, though, seem to increase the number of their venues year-by-year, trying to introduce as many urban neighborhoods as possible to the festival embrace. In the previous section, we noted the recent ballooning of information on festival websites. One website tab that certainly seems to be growing in popularity and importance is the one identifying venues with photos, directional maps, and other information.

Venice's Biennale, for example, revels in presenting a huge amount of work in its thirty-eight different locales around the ancient city. These are outside the main festival areas of the Giardini and Arsenale which include the traditional twenty-nine national pavilions in the Giardini area. Biennale organizers refer to these as "Collateral Events." Churches, palazzos, cloisters, old libraries and other sites attract Venetian festivalgoers stimulated by the infrequently-seen architecture as well as by the world class theatre, dance, music, art and sculpture on display. The website also takes visitors through a rotating banner on the portal page showing different colorful venues with people strolling, dining, socializing, and otherwise enjoying themselves at the various sites ([www.labiennale.org/en/venues/giardini-della-biennale](http://www.labiennale.org/en/venues/giardini-della-biennale)).

Promoting the excitement of venues seems to be a growing trend with global arts festivals. The website of the annual Paris Autumn Festival (another multi-arts, multi-venue fest) leads audiences to forty-eight venues which it describes as "living jewels in the Parisian crown."<sup>29</sup> The Autumn Festival, though, goes further than the Biennale, by listing each venue with its color photo, metro stop, address, and Internet URL.<sup>30</sup> The monster Edinburgh International Festival has only seventeen venues but its website highlights each venue by devoting an entire webpage to each with detailed information about all of the nearby parking facilities, dining opportunities, bus transport lines, pedestrian maps, cycling paths and more.

Probably no more interesting example of a successful multi-venue festival can be found than France's Avignon Festival. Founded in 1947, over the decades it has transformed the entire old city within the walls into a theatrical performance space. In 2017 this event boasted fifty-two performance and exhibition sites--twenty of them described as "very diverse in terms of both architecture and capacity."<sup>31</sup> All the venues are located within walking distance inside the walls of the old city. But the month-long festival also hosts the "Avignon-Off" festival at the same time, allowing 3,000 companies to perform in 100 other venues (mainly street theatre) within the same area.

Sometimes the search for more and more venues can blur a festival's impact, a problem that some festivalgoers complained about in the world's most heavily attended public art festival and competition, ArtPrize, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. When I attended the 2017 edition, the international event was dispersing audiences over 175 venues--some separated by as much as thirteen miles--presumably in order to satisfy the artistic curiosity of more than 500,000 festivalgoers. This begs

the question: is ArtPrize expanding its community impact at the cost of dispersing its focus and losing its community identity?

While the growth of multi-venue festivals is noteworthy in the evolution of festival culture, what is equally noteworthy are festivals' attempts to *directly involve audiences* in "group creation projects" that frequently take place in non-artistic settings. Since the 1960s, museums have often been popular venues where audience interactive exhibitions have taken place. Today, museum visitors can often walk through artistic "environments;" or rearrange, add and remove objects in an installation to capture the dynamic nature of an artwork; or even to "add-on" comments and words and images to work that is still "in-process" until public contributions give it final form.

The field of museum *performance* with the audience as participants and observers has been closely studied by scholars such as Richard Schechner in the United States, who finds such activities strongly tied to community ritual performance.<sup>32</sup> The British art scholar Claire Bishop has made a thorough examination of the genre, noting that this "social turn in contemporary art since the 1990s," really amounts to a "live installation" because it uses non-professional amateurs, like reality TV.<sup>33</sup>

For decades, dance troupes, mimes and others have found museums and art galleries ideal settings for their performance art because an art museum is intrinsically a non-theatrical space. Such groups often want to "break out of the much-vilified ivory tower of art" by indulging in some measure of "social romanticism."<sup>34</sup> In the theatre field, groups like Rimini Protokoll, She She Pop or Dorky Park have also pioneered the use of audience "amateurs" in their work.

Berlin-based Rimini Protokoll, in fact, is arguably the most well-known and influential troupe working in this genre. For seventeen years they have created interactive projects with communities worldwide--often at global arts festivals (they have won the Silver Lion award from the Biennale, for example). The diversified populations of major world cities (Brisbane, Australia), sociopolitical community memories (Santiago, Chile), climate change (Hamburg, Germany), are typical of Rimini Protokoll work that interacts with the public. An excellent example of how a global festival can use this genre of artistic creation to galvanize the local community took place in 2017 at Munich's biannual multi-art, multi-venue Spielart Festival.

This was an admission-free participatory performance event created by Rima Najdi entitled *Think Much. Cry Much*. The work deals with the status and capacity of the human body to overcome borders, notably the external borders of the European Union. The social problem was migration. With the help of a sound installation mediated by headphones, audience members were guided by means of radio drama to move throughout the Munich Central Railroad Station. Their headphones delivered not only instructions for movement but also for suggested role-playing.

Thus as audience members continued to take on new roles, they created a choreography of migration in the railway station; and much of the piece was based upon documentary material, lending the experience an added level of reality and therefore relevance. The writer's research for *Think Much. Cry Much* drove her to speak with border guards, lawyers of refugees, workers involved in the construction

of border fences, Red Cross staff and travel agencies. These conversations became the basis for the choreographic listening trip at the Spielart Festival.<sup>35</sup>

Festivals sometimes use such participation to radically transform the audience from *spectators* to *spect-actors* within the unusual venue. This was a favored Brechtian technique of the influential Brazilian theatre artist, Augusto Boal, who sought to involve his audiences in the Marxist-inspired political action of his plays, beginning in 1971. Most groups today that work with his methods reject his Marxist politics. Boal sought an approach to performance that removes the barrier of actor/spectator, creation participation: a dynamic and a dialogue that operate in opposition to the "monument" of traditional performance. By inviting audience members to actually participate in and create the sociopolitical experience in a public performance that Boal called "invisible theater," he strengthened the spectator's engagement with the particular social issue.

A final example of this festival trend to directly engage community participants in some form of group creation, has been ongoing for eight years at Montreal's annual Festival Transameriques. In 2009 the festival commissioned Sylvain Émard, one of Canada's leading choreographers, to create a public, outdoors dance event ("The Continental") that involved sixty-five amateur participants. In 2017, the event repeated in Montreal as the "Super Mega Continental" involving 375 participants, in order to celebrate the 375th anniversary of the founding of Montreal. During the eight-year period, the show traveled worldwide to thirteen venues, including Canada, the United States, Mexico, South Korea, and New Zealand.<sup>36</sup> As both a public celebration and a form of festival marketing, the "Super Mega Continental" has made an extraordinary impact.

In addition to these strategies for engaging communities by creating multi-venue festivals, and producing interactive public exhibitions and performances, we must also note how festivals invite audiences to observe art work in site-specific, found spaces, either for temporary or even permanent exhibitions and performances. One popular strategy here is the way in which some festivals refurbish abandoned performance sites to accommodate new festival programming.

What deserves notice in this approach is the way in which such renovated venues can sometimes become permanent fixtures in the local community. When this happens, festival marketers promote the venue as an example of their festival's contribution to the community's economic life by building a "sustainable presence." Yorgos Loukos, former Director of the Athens-Epidaurus Festival, proudly pointed out to me his work in this area: "I've found several abandoned theatres in Athens and Piraeus, and I've fixed them up. Now the people are really going there! And the interesting part is that fifty-two percent of our audience is now between the ages of eighteen and thirty years-old!"<sup>37</sup>

Some spectators, of course, will always be drawn to see new plays or artwork in already-existing performance/exhibition spaces; but "found" or unusual "site-specific" venues for plays and dance concerts hold special appeal. They are playful, stimulating and exciting. Of course, visual artists have long enjoyed the opportunity to create surprising installations that instantly capture the attention of the public. Christo, Marina Abramović, Richard Serra, Spencer Tunick are only a few of the world-famous artists active in this genre.

For instance, in the 2017 Biennale, hordes of tourists cruising the Grand Canal in their gondolas were amazed by encountering Lorenzo Quinn's installation entitled *Support*: a pair of 5,000-pound white hands, finished with creases, fingernails, and other fine details, rising out of the water and grasping the Ca'Sagredo Hotel. The human hands appear to prop up the historic hotel from falling into the water, symbolizing the threat that climate change has on history, but also the power that mankind has to stop it. In 2010 ArtPrize gave a \$7,000 award to the creators of an art deco, 20-foot high styrofoam sculpture of the Loch Ness Monster anchored in the city's Grand River. And many in Brooklyn's Dumbo community neighborhood still fondly recall Doug Wishbone's *Ten Thousand Bananas*, an installation that dumped 10,000 fresh bananas on a Brooklyn street for the international Dumbo Arts Festival.

In fact, we can take a second look at Dumbo's Photoville international festival mentioned earlier, noting how the organizers created a site-specific and interactive festival environment for artists and public. In 2017 Photoville featured more than seventy indoor & outdoor exhibits, fifty-one of which were presented in steel shipping containers stacked double-high, and electrically wired. (These shipping containers become the heart of Photoville each year.) Visitors were invited to stroll through the festival area (temporarily created in the waterfront neighborhood beneath the Brooklyn Bridge), entering these "Container Exhibitions" of photo and video art. The containers focused attention on themes like climate change, extraordinary women, migration, city living, Nahua tribal rituals, human trafficking, and many more subjects presented by artists. The intimacy and informality of each container environment concentrated attention upon the particular subjects, and provided opportunities for the public to speak with individual artists.

Additional exhibits complemented the craftsman-like, informal community feeling that these containers created. For instance, *The Fence* was first created in 2011, taking the form of a *collaborative community vinyl canvas* hundreds of feet long stretching along the Brooklyn waterfront. Each year *The Fence* showcases work by hundreds of photo artists worldwide; after Photoville, it travels across the United States, attracting four million visitors annually. *Photo Cubes* are four-foot high cubes scattered throughout the festival area featuring the worldwide work of emerging photographers. Combined with happenings, interactive installations, and other activities, the entire festival environment thus develops a popular, authentic, community-based feel that is radically different from that of traditional museums, galleries, theatres and other venues where spectators usually view works of photographic art.

In 2013, Germany's Spielart festival also echoed this strategy of using shipping containers to produce an informal, intimate view of artistic works; but they drew the public into an experience that was not only interactive but also creative, entitled *CITYWORKS*. Spielart invited ten performing arts, visual arts and architecture artists and groups to present their views and reflections on life in the metropolis in the form of installations or performances. Spielart arranged ten steel shipping containers along the festival's central venues, populated, staged and recorded by artists from eight countries. A multifaceted program with installations,

periodic or permanent performances, interventions and discourses took place, some with moderated tours.

The chosen forms of presentation were very different. From video installations to exhibits and changing concepts, to performances. While video installations, as well as two- and three-dimensional art exhibits occupied the found space of shipping containers, it was one of the performance art presentations that was most noteworthy for our purposes.

Several containers dealt with migration and people living on the margins of urban society. Migration, resettlement, homelessness or refugees were issues discussed in panels convened in a couple of containers. But in one of them, actual vagrants from Munich were recruited and paid to sit there as part of the depiction of the city of Munich. (<http://blog.spielart.org/the-industry-of-waiting-julian-hetzel-2/>). Was that exhibit an “artistic rendering” of displaced people, or the real thing? And would the answer to this question affect how the public responded or interacted with the vagrants? Was this the same approach taken by so-called “reality TV” where bogus plot lines, conflicts and situations are passed-off as documentary and authentic? In short, was this authentic or merely the illusion of authenticity like TV news programs?

Thus, recent attempts of global festivals to explore different venues in order to encourage community engagement have stimulated marketing efforts and posed serious theoretical questions for contemporary artists. Historically, venues were simply sites where performances, exhibitions, concerts and recitals were presented. But all that has now changed as artists working in many different media have revealed original, surprising and creative possibilities in particular venues; and many festivalgoers are joining-in the fun of these interactive possibilities--not the least of which is the fun of creating a unique, original, and time-based, evanescent artwork itself.

## **6. Conclusions**

This brief overview of some community engagement strategies practiced today by world arts festivals has identified a number of important trends in arts management practices, and suggests several directions that future research and development might take.

The main observation we can draw from this study is that engagement strategies have now become key considerations in festival planning, rivaling the importance of sourcing original and compelling artists and their work. Why is this so? Perhaps most importantly, engaging the community has proven itself a powerful magnet in attracting audiences. Programs directly impacting a given community strengthen a festival's local presence, allowing festival organizers to promote the event as a key cultural player in the region. Unlike commercial enterprises that routinely provide philanthropic funding, an arts festival *is already* a cultural program; and its community engagement efforts remind the public again of its importance in the community.

We should remember that community engagement often targets young festivalgoers, a key audience sector representing the future of artistic life upon



which all festivals thrive. In Venice, for example, fully 31% of the Biennale's 2017 audience were young people under the age of 26; in Avignon, 32% of spectators in 2016 were under the age of 35.<sup>38</sup> And these numbers are rising each year. Films, blogs, documentaries, comedy shows, TV series and other forms of cheap and convenient digital entertainment offer appealing alternatives to live performing and visual arts in the marketplace; but today's festivals--despite their high admission fees--seem to be competing for young audiences with successful strategies for community engagement.

A second noteworthy observation we can make about this study is the way in which community engagement strategies have been immensely strengthened by the growth of the world wide web. Festivals that build a robust online presence reach out to more than just youth audiences: spectators of all ages and diverse backgrounds learn about programs and artistic works from the festival websites. It is helpful to bear in mind that the ability of the world wide web to bring the community into the festival embrace means that the spectator's *live experience* is now being greatly augmented by his/her *digital experience* of art and artists. This is an exciting notion; and the marriage of live performance, or of gallery/museum exhibition space with digital media has already stimulated twenty-first century artists in many ways outside of festival contexts.

Consider, for example, the possibility of expanding digital immersion into festival life with the help of a virtual reality site such as the project launched at Avignon in 2017: "Micro-Madness." For a month between November and December, this free digital museum permitted viewers to immerse themselves in festival events after they had actually occurred. Physically located in FabricA (the major rehearsal studio in Avignon), participants could bring their own personal immersive virtual reality headsets, and be surrounded by dancers, actors, directors and others as they watched theatrical work from the recently-finished festival to unfold again.

Fine arts experiences were also wedded to this Micro-Madness program because participants could virtually tour more than 250 masterpieces from nine French arts institutions: the Louvre, the Pompidou Center, Quai Branly Museum-Jacques Chirac, National Museums Meeting-Grand Palais, Palace of Versailles, Picasso Museum, Universcience, Cité de la Musique-Philharmonie de Paris and Festival d'Avignon.<sup>39</sup> Thus, in the future we should expect fast-emerging technological advances to continue strengthening the engagement of global arts festivals.

A third noteworthy conclusion we can draw from this study is that critics and scholars must soon redefine the very notion of "community" in the phrase "community engagement." What exactly constitutes a modern art festival's "public?" In a very real sense, this is now quickly becoming a contested term. The possibility of free global access to much of a festival's programming, and the potential for year-round--and even "archiving"--festival materials, suggests that a festival's *distant* public may be far greater (and more important?) than its *geographic* public. Successful public relations goes hand-in-hand with successful marketing, particularly in the case of global arts festivals that are known to attract many arts consumers from outside the immediate area.

This ongoing digital linkage with live performing and visual arts raises the fundamental question of how a *live* arts experience differs from a *mediated* one delivered on a laptop, a mobile device (smartphone), or streamed at home: is the live experience more engrossing, more meaningful, or more moving? Or is it simply more expensive? Global arts festivals are at the forefront of this area of study and experimentation if only because they can offer a much more tangible, immediate and all-encompassing sense of community to festivalgoers than digital arts consumers receive from their online platforms.

Finally, we should also note that festivals also serve their local, regional and global communities of arts consumers, scholars, and artists by archiving their materials. Practically all of the festival programming discussed in this study—artist presentations, performances, speeches, colloques, audio/video records--has been carefully documented and collected by the major arts festivals. The Paris Autumn Festival's archive stretches back as far as 1972. Avignon boasts records to 1947. And the Biennale archives date back to 1895. Only about three decades of work is readily available online (since the advent of the computer); but the Biennale has two brick-and-mortar sites for all its materials, and these are open to the public. Is access to these materials important for artists, critics and scholars? Is it also of interest to the general public?

In the near future, in fact, we shouldn't be surprised to see festivals charging access fees to their archived materials. Such information, after all, is a valuable form of intellectual property. But the information also holds valuable as marketing tools that contribute to festival prestige: decades of "track records" help to guarantee potential festivalgoers that they'll receive an important, serious, and stimulating quality experience for their entertainment dollar. However, an "archive" by its very nature is institutional like a library, and it certainly isn't cheap to organize and sustain. Thus in the future, we can expect to see not just an expansion of archived festival resources, but also some new strategies to support the costs of maintaining those resources.

Thus the World Wide Web promises both advantages and disadvantages for the contemporary global arts festival seeking greater community engagement. Let us also bear in mind that launching artistic efforts specifically to engage festival audiences has also risen sharply. Organizing teams of website technicians, for example, or hosting artists and companies who specialize in creating interactive projects, or making special arrangements where artists and festival participants can meaningfully engage and encounter each other--the costs of these and other strategies are expensive and continue to rise each season.

There is also the nagging problem that the public's ever-changing media tastes and habits will outpace the efforts of festival planners. For example, shifting preferences for different social media platforms, information/reservation/ticketing services, simulcast possibilities, and emerging mobile applications all drive festivals to allocate expensive resources to this sector. Both the technology itself and the festival's human resources needed to manage that technology are feeling pressure from this digital dimension of arts festivals. Budgets shift to meet these pressures; publicists are hired to adapt quickly to spectators' demands for information; and web designers struggle to keep websites as user-friendly and relevant as possible.

While this study has tried to identify the broadest dimensions of community engagement today, there is certainly more work that needs to be done by scholars of arts management. The following road map of future investigation that is needed might help to give us more perspective on this topic.

1. We need more transparency about different festivals' numbers and finances. There exists a great need to gather and publish more statistical information in order to gain valuable insights into festival management. Festival organizers need to be encouraged to compile and release more data about their work: the size of their audiences and their budgets, the age groups and genders served, budget percentages devoted to different initiatives, and so forth. And this data needs to be sustained for at least five-year period for purposes of trends and comparisons. One model of this sort of work is the annual *Theatre Facts* report on professional theatres, done for nearly four decades in the United States by the Theatre Communications Group. *Theatre Facts* is the only in-depth report examining attendance, performance, and overall fiscal state of the U.S.A.'s professional not-for-profit theatres. As such, it is a vital (and freely accessed) resource for theatre professionals, funders, trustees, policy makers, researchers, educators, students and journalists. ([www.tcg.org](http://www.tcg.org))
2. In addition to tracking-down the numbers associated with internal festival operations, scholars must also try to establish more firmly the linkage between community engagement strategies and actual attendance at festival events. It is one thing to note the *range and cost* of community engagement activities, but quite another to determine the *productivity* of such efforts. For instance, audience surveys are needed that can determine the impact of schools programs, or the popularity of audience-artist encounters in colloquia or workshops. Surveys of festival organizers can clarify the different approaches to community engagement practiced in different geographical venues. And data drawn from vendors of lodging, transportation and dining operations might be linked to different festival programs and appeals to local, regional and international visitors.
3. Scholars might also examine the new forms of “festival partnerships” that are currently emerging. We know that partnering has opened the doors to new funding sources and development initiatives. Not so long ago, partnering aimed only to secure more financial contribution from businesses and corporations who sought “branding” opportunities for their logo. Now, however, festivals and sponsors also relish the opportunity to jointly launch a new program targeted specifically for young musicians in underserved school districts (Edinburgh International Festival), budding videographers and documentarists (Avignon’s “Young Reporters Culture”), and other projects. What new economic structures have been developed as community engagement strategies in order to facilitate this?
4. A consideration of partnerships must also include a study of “satellite festivals” that are being established. This year, for instance, the Biennale will launch its fifth season of the Biennale’s film festival “Venice in Zagreb.” This

- sends an unmistakable message that the international arts community is a key target of Biennale's planners. In fact, a decade ago, Yorgos Loukos in Athens married his Athens-Epidauros Festival to Barcelona's Grec Festival, to the Avignon Festival, and to Istanbul's International Festival in a structure he called the Kadmos Festival. His idea was to partner with these other events to award commissions for shows that would tour to each venue, and to conduct off-season workshops and symposia around the region. Loukos believed the Kadmos Project would serve a "Mediterranean public," broadly conceived, with specific artistic offerings for the Mediterranean regional community. These kinds of efforts represent a major step forward for festival development and need a great deal of study.
5. Publishers, too, have a role to play in all this. They need to gather and publish whatever information is available in some sort of international festival "newsletter" or magazine that would serve organizers, scholars, and participants. Like a gallery of best practices, a magazine with a section on "Community Engagement" could feature profiles of artists, groups or festival directors; strategies for community engagement around the world; development of new venues, and other key topics.

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<sup>1</sup> "Now it's festivals, festivals everywhere. Big ones, small ones, wild ones, silly ones, dutiful ones, pretentious ones, phony ones. Many have lost purpose and direction, not to mention individual profile. Place a potted plant next to the box office, double the ticket prices and--whoopie--we have a festival." M. Bernheimer. "Beyond the Big Three." *Financial Times*, 28 June 2003, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> For details about this growing trend, see the recent study by Dr. Mirae Kim, "Characteristics of Civically Engaged Nonprofit Arts Organizations: The Results of a National Survey." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, v. 46 No. 1 (May 2016), pp. 175 - 198.

<sup>3</sup> I served for eight years with the International Amateur Theatre Association, helping to assess and coordinate the work of global festival organizers in seven nations. For a closer look at how festival directors travel in order to source artists and programs, see my recent article on New York's Under the Radar International Festival: "On the Scene With Mark Russell at New York City's Public Theater," *The American Journal of Arts Management*, (September 2016).

<sup>4</sup> "Over the last decade, arts presenters have learned to respond to shifting expectations among live audiences, particularly young adults. These audiences crave

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a new level of interactivity, they value personal creation and performance as part of the overall arts experience." National Endowment for the Arts, "Live from Your Neighborhood: A National Study of Outdoor Arts Festivals, Summary Report."

<<http://nea.gov/research/Festivals-Executive-Summary.pdf>>. Accessed October, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Consider, for example, the following recent report by Brittany Mashel: "Motivating Millennials: The Next Act in Creating Theatre Patrons." *American Journal of Arts Management*,

[http://www.artsmanagementjournal.com/resources/May\\_2017/Motivating%20Mil-](http://www.artsmanagementjournal.com/resources/May_2017/Motivating%20Millennials%20)

[lennials%20-%20The%20Next%20Act%20in%20Creating%20Theatre%20Patrons%20By%20Brittany%20Masheland%20Martine%20Bertin-Peterson.pdf](http://www.artsmanagementjournal.com/resources/May_2017/Motivating%20Millennials%20-%20The%20Next%20Act%20in%20Creating%20Theatre%20Patrons%20By%20Brittany%20Masheland%20Martine%20Bertin-Peterson.pdf). Accessed July 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Reinelt, Janelle. "Performing Europe: Identity Formation for a 'New' Europe," *Theatre Journal*, v. 53(3), (2001), pp. 365–387.

<sup>7</sup> Ferguson, Alex Lazardis. "Symbolic Capital and Relationships of Flow: Canada, Europe, and the International Performing Arts Festival Circuit." *Theatre Research in Canada* v. 34 (1) (2013).

<sup>8</sup> Carr, Olivia. "Social Media Strategies for Marketing Performing Arts," retrieved from [https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/304/feature/tools-engagement?mc\\_cid=dcfab6748b&mc\\_eid=adedd85f9d](https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/304/feature/tools-engagement?mc_cid=dcfab6748b&mc_eid=adedd85f9d).

Accessed September, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Eyring, Teresa. "Notes Over Coffee: Connection, Leadership, The Long View." *American Theatre*. November 16, 2016,

<http://www.americantheatre.org/2016/11/16/notes-over-coffee-connection-leadership-the-long-view/>. Accessed September, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Following the 2017 season, the Biennale President Paolo Baratta, remarked: "The number of the students who came with their teachers in organized tours was very high, more than 35,000. This was the result of a major effort among and with teachers, an effort to which we devote a lot of resources." *Newsletter*, November 27, 2017, translation by the author.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.festival-avignon.com/fr/equipe>.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Monica Scott, "Art Meets Science," *The Grand Rapids Press*, Sunday, Sept. 24, 2017, p. A4.

<sup>13</sup> Jori Bennett, ArtPrize Director of Business Development. Quoted in: "Q:a." *Revue*, (September 2017), v. 54, No. 9, p. 96.

<sup>14</sup> *The New Yorker*, September 25, 2017, p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> E-mail conversation October 24, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Interview September 13, 2017. The Brooklyn Documentary Center was not the only organization doing this at Photoville. Student photographers also assisted the effort from the City University of New York (CUNY), and The International Center of Photography. Adult professionals from these organizations also offered a Teacher Professional Development Workshop on using photography as a tool for social studies and language arts.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.labiennale.org/it/biennale-college>. Accessed November, 2017. The specific focus of all the "college sessions" is clearly spelled-out, often a year in

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advance: <http://www.labiennale.org/it/biennale-college-interno-2018>. Accessed November, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> The Biennale facilitates school participation by highlighting its educational offerings for young children in a special section of its website:

<http://www.labiennale.org/en/activities-schools-children-families>. Accessed November, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.labiennale.org/en/news/9-projects-biennale-college-cinema-%E2%80%93-virtual-reality-presented>. Accessed January, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Discover more aspects of such partnering with universities in my recent article:

"Community Engagement Strategies at Canada's World Festival of Children's Theatre," *American Journal of Arts Management* (February 2017)

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/b456w7p8zngqwnm/COMMUNITY%20ENGAGEMENT%20CANADA.pdf?dl=0>. Accessed March, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> The Avignon Festival has been working closely with the Culture and Communication Group at the University of Avignon since 2014 in order to profile its audiences. The latest report can be found in "Le Festival d'Avignon et son publique en 2017." *Lettre D'information*, March 9, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Jody Christopherson. "Under the Radar 2015: An Interview with Co-Director Meiyin Wang." *The Huffington Post*, U.S. Edition, 01/07/2015. (Retrieved April 2017 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jody-christopherson/post\\_8810\\_b\\_6430860.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jody-christopherson/post_8810_b_6430860.html)). Rick DeVos, offbeat millionaire creator of Grand Rapids' ArtPrize festival/competition, expressed much the same enthusiasm for artistic "conversations" with the public in a 2009 interview: "I just want to see crazy crap all over Grand Rapids . . . You need ideas rubbing up against each other. You need ideas having sex with each other." (Quoted in Matthew Power, "So You Think You Can Paint," *GQ*, Sept. 14, 2012, <https://www.gq.com/story/artprize-rick-devos>, accessed November, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Audience surveys conducted by the Avignon Festival in 2017 reveal that 91% of visitors utilized the festival website for information prior to and during their visits. "Le Festival d'Avignon et son publique en 2017." *Lettre D'information*, March 9, 2018. Avignon is the only major global arts festival that rigorously surveys its audiences, and publishes the data. In fact, the Avignon website also provides links to in-depth scholarly studies and books published (in French) on survey data derived from the Avignon Festival over the years.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Filice and Susannah Young, "From Mainstage to Movies to Media: Sustaining the Live and Performing Arts Through Artistic Convergence and the Balaban and Katz Philosophy of Continuous Performance." *International Journal of Arts Management*, v. 14, no. 2 (2012), pp. 48-56. [www.jstor.org/stable/41721125](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41721125). Accessed December, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> The extent to which festivals and competitions welcome community involvement has become an important indicator of an event's success, according to recent data released by the prestigious publication, *The Art Newspaper*, regarding global museum attendance. In addition to measuring an institution's success by looking at its annual attendance, or the percentage of *locals* who were visitors at the venue, *The Art Newspaper* also examined the percentage of *members* who were visitors.

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Three cities in the USA were ranked highest in this category. *The Art Newspaper* concluded: "... while places such as Chicago might have more museumgoers, residents of cities such as Minneapolis, Grand Rapids and Bentonville are more engaged with their local institutions." "What is the Most Cultured City in the US?" by Helen Stoilas and Victoria Stapley-Brown. *The Art Newspaper*. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/feature/what-is-the-most-cultured-city-in-the-us>. (Accessed 26 March 2018)

<sup>26</sup> Personal interview with Mark Russell. New York City, 6 January 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Avignon provides useful data for examining its public's dependence upon internet information. For example, its statistical report for 2017 reveals that its patrons are overwhelmingly (91.4%) relying upon smartphone access to its web portal; and this smartphone preference has been increasing for the past five years. Additionally, the study notes that "... only 36.4% of festivalgoers reported that they had not viewed the audiovisual clips" of performances, lectures, etc. posted on the festival website. "Le Festival d'Avignon et son publique en 2017." *Lettre D'information*, March 9, 2018. Translation by the author.

<sup>28</sup> Olivia Carr, "Tools of Engagement."

[https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/304/feature/tools-engagement?mc\\_cid=dcfab6748b&mc\\_eid=adedd85f9d](https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/304/feature/tools-engagement?mc_cid=dcfab6748b&mc_eid=adedd85f9d). (August 2017) Accessed November, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> We should also note that partnering with these forty-eight venues also saves the Autumn Festival much expense and effort in producing theatre and dance events. Marie Collin, Artistic Director of Theatre, Dance and Visual Arts, explained to me: "In the past, some groups wanted a black box, a theatre without a stage, but now we have several theatres like that for their work." (Personal interview, October 2009)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.festival-automne.com/en/venues>. Accessed November, 2017.

A multiplicity of venues certainly attracts a public wishing to explore infrequently-visited districts of the city. But some theatres occasionally become problematic. For example, shows produced in "remote" neighborhoods (like the Théâtre de Gennevilliers where I visited), have a late curtain. We found ourselves walking to the Metro through questionable neighborhoods on darkened streets, since taxis were few and far between.

<sup>31</sup> Avignon Theatre Festival Website, "Artistic Project Facts and Figures,"

<http://www.festival-avignon.com/en/artistic-project>. Accessed September, 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Schechner describes this as "an attempt to overcome a sense of individual and social fragmentation by means of art." (Richard Schechner. *Performance Studies, An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2nd ed., 2006. p. 83).

<sup>33</sup> Claire Bishop, "Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity." *October*, (140), Spring 2012, p. 92.

<sup>34</sup> Franz Anton Cramer, "Theater ohne Bühne: über einen neuen Trend," Goethe Institute online (<https://www.goethe.de/de/kul/tut/gen/tup/20585525.html>.) Accessed December, 2017. English translation by Goethe Institute August 2015.

<sup>35</sup> <http://spielart.org/index.php?id=24&vid=291>. Accessed November, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> (<http://fta.ca/archive/le-super-m%C3%A9ga-continental>). Accessed November, 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Personal Interview, July 29, 2009.

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<sup>38</sup> Biennale *Newsletter*, op.cit. Avignon statistics: *Synthèse de l'étude de public 2016*, op. cit.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.festival-avignon.com/fr/ateliers-de-la-pensee/2018/micro-folie-festival-d-avignon>. Accessed December, 2017.