

## A Brief History

In its 50+ year history, Arts Presenters has been characterized by a high degree of adaptability, which has allowed the organization to anticipate and respond to the changing imperatives of the performing arts field. The capacity to envision creative strategies, coupled with the organization's continuing stability, has meant that Arts Presenters can serve the ongoing needs of its members while providing them with leadership in exploring new challenges and opportunities.

In the 1950s the number of college and university concert managers was growing, and these presenters were particularly interested in the educational role of the arts and the unique issues related to professional performing arts on campus. In 1957 a group of these presenters left ISCAA (then known as the National Association of Concert Managers) and formed the Association of College and University Concert Managers (ACUCM). In 1969 ACUCM was officially incorporated and granted nonprofit, tax-exempt status by the IRS.

During the late sixties and early seventies, the presenting field was expanding beyond the university, and many other presenters shared common purposes with university organizations. In 1973, the ACUCM changed its name to the Association of College, University and Community Arts Administrators (ACUCA) in recognition of this expanding field. Over the next fifteen years, the membership continued to grow and diversify as the presenting field expanded. By the mid-eighties, colleges and universities no longer dominated the membership and the Association was addressing a wide range of presenting issues. In 1988, the Association changed its name to the Association of Performing Arts Presenters. The membership, which comes primarily from the United States and Canada, now includes many different kinds of presenting organizations; regional, state and local arts agencies; service organizations; producing companies; and artists managements.

At the beginning, membership in the Association provided a way in which the field of presenting could define itself; for the first time, presenters with like jobs had a forum through which they could exchange information and ideas. In the late 1970s, the focus of Association activities was shifted slightly to provide a greater emphasis on the business side of presenting; workshops and publications on marketing and other business-oriented concerns were offered for the first time. The Association also became involved in advocacy efforts during this period.

In the mid-1980's, in conjunction with the Values and Lifestyles Study (VALS), the organization also began to encourage the membership to take a more active role in community life, beyond simply bringing artists to the stage. Toward the end of the 1980's, another change occurred: although still committed to helping members develop sound business practices, the Association devoted greater attention to artistic and philosophical concerns shared by presenters, artists and managements.

From the outset, voting membership in the Association belonged to the institution, not to the individual representative. Institutional membership suggests a stronger and broader base for the arts than does individual membership and members speak and act on behalf of

the institutions they represent. Membership in the Association was 29 in 1957; by 1966 it had increased to 275, where it remained for several years. Today presenter membership is about 850 and Business membership is about 300. Membership has grown as the field has developed and there has been an ongoing demand for support and services.

The University of Wisconsin initially absorbed staffing of the office. Fan Taylor, who was the presenter at the Wisconsin Union Theater, served as executive secretary without compensation for much of her tenure, which extended from 1957 until 1971. She was succeeded by Bill Dawson, who took the executive director's post half-time in 1971; shortly thereafter, his job was expanded to full-time and he served until 1986. In 1986, Susie Farr became the third executive director. As the Association has grown, staffing has expanded to its current size of 18.

Arts Presenters is financially solvent and has maintained a small cash reserve. During 1987-88 the Association underwent its first formal long-range planning process. As a result of this work, the Association moved its headquarters from Madison, Wisconsin to Washington, D.C. and undertook a number of new initiatives, including the creation of a Professional Development position on staff, development of a new quarterly magazine and assumption of a more visible role in advocating for presenters' issues at the national level. Arts Presenters became a member of the American Arts Alliance in 1988. Since that time, its role as an advocate for presenters' issues has increased substantially.

During the recently completed planning process, the mission was further expanded to include not only provision of services to the presenting field, but also to provide a public face to the celebration of the rich and diverse universe of activities represented by that field. This entails a new definition of the field that includes presenting organizations, artists' managers and artists, and requires an added emphasis on increasing awareness of the value and importance of the field, while continuing to provide information and training for presenters and other performing arts professionals.

In 1989-90, the Association administered the National Task Force on Presenting and Touring the Performing Arts, and oversaw publication of An American Dialogue, the report from that 18-month study. In 1989, Arts Presenters was selected by the Lila Wallace-Readers' Digest fund to administer a major regranting program focused on audience development. The planning process undertaken in 1992 and completed in May of 1993 reinforced the importance of some of the existing priorities for Arts Presenters, such as advocacy, research, and initiatives in cultural diversity; it has also suggested the need for some others, particularly in the areas of organizational governance and visibility for the field of presenting. Through all the Association's current activities runs a common thread: the effort to be more inclusive and become a more active participant in the North American Arts community.

## Chronology

**1956** A meeting is held to discuss the possibility of setting up an organization for college and university concert managers.

**1957** The Association of College and University Concert Managers is founded at a meeting in New York. Willard Sistare is president. Fannie Taylor is elected secretary-treasurer. The initial membership is approximately 35 presenters.

**1958** Fan Taylor writes, publishes and mails the first Bulletin in March. By-laws are adopted at the annual conference.

**1959** The first exhibitors participate in the annual conference. The first Award of Merit is presented to impresario Sol Hurok.

**1961** ACUCM institutes its first membership drive.

**1964** The first ACUCM Summer Workshops are held at Michigan State University and Lake Arrowhead, CA.

**1965** The first "Profile of the Membership" is published.

**1966** Fan Taylor goes to work for the National Endowment for the Arts, but continues to serve as ACUCM's chief administrator.

**1968** The first Handbook (then called the ACUCM Workbook) is published.

**1969** The first Wingspread Conference takes place in the spring; the topic is the future direction of the Association.

**1970** The University of Wisconsin Office for Arts Programs, under whose aegis ACUCM is handled, moves from the Wisconsin Union Theater to the Keystone House. A half-time administrative assistant is hired. The ACUCM Southeastern Regional Conference, "the first regional concert managers meeting to be planned and executed under the direct authorization of the ACUCM board," is held.

**1971** Fan Taylor becomes executive director of ACUCM. Joan Lounsbery becomes the first full-time assistant director. Fan Taylor returns to Washington to work for the NEA; Bill Dawson takes over as half-time executive director at ACUCM.

**1972** The annual conference is held in Houston, the first location outside of New York City. The inaugural Fan Taylor Award goes to Fannie Taylor.

**1973** The annual conference moves back to New York. The organization changes from the Association of College and University Concert Managers to the Association of College, University and Community Arts Administrators.

**1975** ACUCAA publishes and distributes the first Programming Calendar.

**1977** ACUCAA participates in its third Wingspread meeting. The topics include the relationship of ACUCAA to national, state and community arts agencies, and ACUCAA's role as intermediary between the touring performing arts and community audiences.

**1978** The executive director's position is changed from part-time to full-time. The membership approves a code of conduct.

**1979** Guidelines for management-presenter relations are distributed to the membership. The Management Achievement Awards are instituted. The first "Marketing the Arts" seminars are held, and the marketing bibliography is published.

**1980** Marketing the Arts is published.

**1981** Technical Assistance and Travel Assistance Program (TAP) is instituted. (Program is discontinued in 1993)

**1982** ACUCAA office moves to new location in Madison, Wis.

**1983** ACUCAA hosts its fourth Wingspread meeting, "The Role of the Arts in a Changing Society," which lays the groundwork for the Consumer Behavior Project. The same year, the first workshop on consumer behavior and the arts is held, and a study on the topic is commissioned from SRI, International.

**1984** The ACUCAA office is computerized. Results of the consumer behavior study are published under the title "The Professional Performing Arts: Attendance Patterns, Preferences and Motives."

**1985** The ACUCAA database is established. The second phase of the SRI consumer behavior study is published.

**1986** ACUCAA launches creative design workshops as the next step in the long-range marketing project. Bill Dawson resigns and is succeeded by Susie Farr. The William Dawson award is inaugurated.

**1987** The association launches its first formal long-range planning process, which is completed the following year.

**1988** The association launches a formal long-range planning process. The ACUCAA national office moves to Washington, D.C.

**1989** Inside Arts magazine is launched. The first Leadership Institute is held. The association administers The National Task Force on Presenting and Touring the Performing Arts. The first artistic development seminar on modern dance is held at Jacob's Pillow. The association is selected by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest fund to administer a major regranting program aimed at audience and community development. By vote of the membership at the annual conference, the organization's name is changed to the Association of Performing Arts Presenters. The first Business member is elected to the board of directors.

**1990** "An American Dialogue", the report from The National Task Force, and "21 Voices", a book profiling 21 exemplary presenting organizations, are published. The Presenters' Reports questionnaire is changed to include more information about artistic quality, outreach and audience development.

**1991** With the American Council for the Arts, Arts Presenters publishes an updated version of Tom Wolf's book, Presenting Performances.

**1992** Presenting Performances replaces the old ACUCAA Handbook as a benefit of membership. The organization's second planning process begins. The Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund commits \$10 million over five years to the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Arts Partners Program

**1993** "Profile of Member Organizations", the results of the 1991-92 survey of presenting organizations, is published. The planning process culminates in the publication of a planning document, "Securing Our Future". The Arts Presenters Bulletin is incorporated into Inside Arts magazine, which increases its publication schedule from four times a year to six times a year. By vote of the membership, Business members are granted voting status as members of the association.

**1994** Audience Development is published.

**1995** An \$80,000 grant is received from the Mellon Foundation to implement the Dance Travel Assistance Program. William Dawson Education Endowment is established. Adult Arts Education project begins as a partnership with the Kennedy Center.

**1996** The first round of grants is awarded through the Dance Travel Assistance Program. A joint staff and board retreat is held and reaffirms association priorities of service, continuing education, and cultural diversity. Martin and Associates conducts Inclusive Leadership Development workshops for Arts Presenters staff and board. The 40th Annual Conference is held in December in New York City. The association's web page is premiered at the Annual Conference. A \$315,000 grant is received from the Helen F. Whitaker Fund to implement the Classical Connections

project. The Young Performers Support Initiative premieres at the annual conference. Audience Development for the New Millennium training course is premiered. A \$300,000 grant is received from the Pew Charitable Trusts in support of the association's continuing education program.

**1997** The annual conference dates are moved to January. The annual conference format is changes to accommodate "festival" of events. Classical Connections seminar in Aspen premieres. Arts Presenters "Vote Watch" debuts on home page to inform members on arts-related votes in Congress. Adult Arts Education Project concludes with the publication of Learning Audiences.

**1998** The annual conference is moved to January and the format is changed to accommodate a festival of events.

**1999** Susie Farr resigns. The annual conference becomes a members-only gathering. The APAP membership directory and artists roster are made available on the APAP website.

**2000** Sandra Gibson becomes APAP's president and CEO in July. The Association of Performing Arts Presenters helps secure the first funding increase for the NEA in six years.

**2001** APAP launches a year-long assessment of the presenting field and a series of national and regional issues forums. APAP launches the Explorations Fund for international travel among presenters and managers, and the NEA awards \$40,000 to APAP to implement the Emerging Leadership Institute.

**2002** The Sidney R. Yates Advocacy Award is inaugurated. APAP develops the Visas Toolbox, a handbook and guide for non-immigrant visas for artists from abroad.

**2004** The Association of Performing Arts Presenters participates in American Assembly convening The Creative Campus: The Role of Higher Education in Training, Sustaining and Presenting the Performing Arts and develops a new Creative Campus Initiative to explore assembly recommendations.

**2005** The Dawson Research Fellowship program begins in partnership with the Bolz Center at the University of Wisconsin.

**2007** The 50th anniversary APAP conference is held in New York City with Fan Taylor serving as honorary chair.

**2011** Sandra Gibson steps down, and the board of directors appoints Mario Garcia Durham as the association's fifth president and CEO.