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Survey of the Art Presenting Organizations of Acadiana

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Survey of the Art Presenting Organizations of Acadiana

by

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Undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of

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Contents

Introduction.....	2
Background: History and Demographics of Lafayette	4
Acadiana Arts Council.....	9
Performing Arts Society of Acadiana.....	12
Theatre League of Louisiana	21
Cité des Arts	24
Conclusion	33
Works Cited	36
Appendix A.....	38

Introduction

Lafayette, Louisiana, in the heart of south Louisiana, is a hub for business, tourism, and art. From its early settlement, the Acadian people of enjoyed spending time being entertained by art and culture. Once the oil boom began in the mid twentieth century, artists and arts organizations began to flourish throughout Lafayette. These organizations range from music, to dance, to theatre, and to the visual arts, and have supplied Acadiana with world class artists that are internationally known. One of the most important sectors of this artistic growth is the performing arts presenters of Acadiana, comprised of the Acadiana Arts Council, the Performing Arts Society of Acadiana, the Theatre League of Louisiana, and the Cité des Arts.

Lafayette's demographics would seem to show that these arts presenters would find it difficult to survive. The median income of families is low compared to the median income of families in the nation, and college educated people only make up a quarter of the population. With this, the population of Lafayette considers itself very religious and conservative. These elements should dampen the success of the arts in Lafayette.

Instead, the arts presenters in Lafayette have flourished, and each has organized itself rather differently from the others. The Acadiana Arts Council is the main vehicle for arts in Acadiana. It is a major source of grants for the other arts organizations in the area, and it also presents the visual and performing arts throughout the Acadiana area. It is a large organization with a large board, and many funds. The Performing Arts Society of Acadiana welcomes artists from national and international origins to Acadiana so patrons can be entertained and Lafayette can be culturally enriched. The society focuses heavily on education and outreach to local children. While having a smaller budget than the arts council, the society continues to

grow in size. Totally different from the society is the Theatre League of Louisiana who once presented performances throughout south Louisiana. Now just located in Lafayette, the league presents nationally touring musicals with only two members of the board and a part-time employee. The newest art presenter in Lafayette is the Cité des Arts that strives to be an incubation center where new and old artists alike can come to create new works of theatre and music. Because the Cité is such a new organization, it struggles to make ends meet. Staffing is minimal which creates a board that must work in the day-to-day business of the organization to meet marketing and development needs.

The arts have truly flourished in Acadiana, but many problems still exist for these organizations. All are constantly competing with other forms of entertainment that are so readily available today, and they even must compete against each other for ticket revenue and donations. Money is still difficult to come by, and all of these organizations run on low reserves of cash. These problems have forced each of these organizations to create different forms of operation, and each organizations success is due to this form. No matter if these organizations are seen as presenting mainstream or legitimate art, each organization performs an important role in the Lafayette artistic scene.

Background: History and Demographics of Lafayette

Since its settlement, Acadiana, that includes the parishes of Acadia, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, and Vermillion, has been a proud supporter of arts and culture. The French Canadian Acadians sought refuge in the area after being expelled from Nova Scotia in the late 1700s. Finding their way to the wet and swampy land of South Louisiana, they brought their love of music and dance. This love of culture and entertainment still lives today in the Acadiana region where Cajun French songs can still be heard at restaurants, parties, and on the radio. Cajun dancing is still taught as part of physical education classes in middle schools throughout the region. This sense of entertainment and art has boomed throughout the region, specifically focusing in the heart of Cajun Country, Lafayette.

Lafayette has seen growth from a small agricultural community to a center for business, tourism, and the oil and gas industry. Settled in 1821 by Jean Mouton, Vermilionville sat besides the Vermilion River. In 1884, the town was renamed in honor of the Marquis de Lafayette who was a friend of George Washington and who helped command American troops in the American Revolution. Lafayette continued to be a small, quiet town based around agriculture until the discovery of oil in the region in the 1940s. Today, Lafayette is a hub for the oil and gas industry where countless drilling and services companies meet to dispatch equipment and employees to oil wells both on land and in the Gulf of Mexico (Lafayette). Also, a major source of income for the region is its tourism. Located only an hour and a half away from New Orleans, Acadiana is known for its food, music, and wetlands.

The history of the arts and arts organizations in Lafayette truly begins with the expansion of the oil and gas industry. One of the major visualizations of this great boom is the Heymann Performing Arts Center. Conceived by Mayor Jerome Domengeaux and Herbert

Heymann and designed by Architect A. Hayes Town, the Heymann Center was completed in 1960. Set on the edge of the Oil Center, a business district where many private oilfield companies held main offices, the Heymann Center was a testament to the newly discovered wealth in the region and a hope that the performing arts could flourish in the city. The Heymann Center has a 2,230 seating capacity and is the only major theatre space in Lafayette that is not owned by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Therefore, almost all theatre, music, and dance events happen at this one venue, and smaller and less-known productions or groups cannot perform in the space because it is not economically viable. The Heymann Center was built to create and artistic and cultural movement in Lafayette, and it has become the centerpiece in the artistic community of Lafayette.

After the construction of the Heymann Performing Arts Center, a wealth of performing arts organizations began to sprout up throughout the city, all using the Heymann Center for performances. In 1982, the Lafayette Ballet Theatre created a conservatory for local dancers and began performing classical and modern work at the Heymann Center. Also performing at the Heymann Center, the Acadiana Symphony Orchestra (ASO) began as part of the University of Southwest Louisiana's music program and became its own community orchestra in 1984. In the early 1990s, ASO became a fully professional orchestra and began receiving national renown. The Performing Arts Society of Acadiana began in 1987, and is still using the Heymann Center today. Because of the construction of the Heymann Center, many new performing arts organizations began to form in Lafayette.

Another major piece of culture in Acadiana is its many festivals and festivities that are found in Lafayette and that are serious contenders with the performing arts. Festivals Acadiens et Creoles, a music festival celebrating the history of the Acadian people, hosts both Cajun and

Zydeco bands during the month of October. Festival International de Louisiane, one of the world's largest international music festivals, celebrates the francophone history of Lafayette in April of every year. Also in the spring, the musical performance series, Downtown Alive! showcases regional and national bands every Friday night for months. The fall gives rise to football season where many fans of the Louisiana State University Tigers and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Cajuns keep their weekends busy, full of parties and tailgates. These many festivals and festivities cut into much of the performing arts organizations' ideal markets.

Lafayette's many entertainment diversions are supported by a young demographic that is predominantly white. According to the 2000 U.S. Census and its 2006 estimates, Lafayette Parish is now estimated to have a little over two hundred thousand citizens with about half of that number actually living in the city limits of Lafayette. Couple this with the fact that the Acadiana region has around 540,000 people, and arts organizations in Lafayette have a large number of potential patrons. About sixty-five percent of Lafayette's population is between eighteen and sixty-five years of age, with children under the age of eighteen coming in at twenty-five percent and persons sixty-five and older coming in at ten percent. This signifies that a large portion of the population have children living at home. With Lafayette's center on family ideals, most households will concentrate on their children's wellbeing and enjoyment, causing arts organizations to compete against this. The young population of Lafayette is also a very large majority white. The Census Bureau estimates that in 2006, 71.2 percent of the Lafayette population is white, and 26.2 percent of the population is black. Other races including Asian, Native American, and Hispanic all have fewer than two percent. This young, predominantly white population is both a great market for arts organization, but sometimes is difficult to tap into.

Lafayette also has a large middle class. Forty-two percent of the population has incomes ranging from thirty-five thousand dollars to one hundred thousand dollars. The median household income in 2004 was \$39,367, and also as of 2004, 16.5 percent of the population fell under the poverty line. But, Rachel Zupek of CareerBuilder.com praises Lafayette as the city with the seventeenth lowest unemployment rate. That rate is only 3.3 percent. This large middle class and low median income gives arts organizations the difficult task of creating and finding quality work without creating high ticket prices. Those people with more disposable income, more inclined to pay higher prices for arts events, are a very small part of the population equal to less than ten percent.

Educational data is another important piece of the demographics of Lafayette. Education, especially post-high school education is extremely lacking in Lafayette. According to the Census Bureau, a large percentage of Lafayette residents, hovering under eighty percent, have finished high school, but only twenty-five percent of the population had achieved at least a bachelor's degree. Because of the low level of college graduates, it can be difficult for Lafayette arts organizations to prosper due to the fact that higher educated populations often support the arts with more repetition.

Other useful data for art organizations in Lafayette include many other studies and surveys that point to an extremely conservative city. Over seventy-nine percent of Lafayette residents consider themselves religious, with sixty-four percent being Catholic. Also, sixty-four percent of the population is registered Republican while only thirty-four percent is registered Democrat. The greatest study signifying Lafayette's conservatism may be the Bay Area Center for Voting Research's (BACVR) study on the most conservative and liberal cities in the United States. In 2005, the BACVR listed Lafayette as the ninth most conservative city

in the United States with a population over one hundred thousand people (“Study”). Lafayette is a city where much of its population is religious, Republican, and conservative, and this usually does not foster great artistic expression.

The history and demographics of Lafayette have created a community that accepts the arts, despite the community’s strong conservative leanings. Since Acadiana was settled, its citizens have enjoyed arts and culture. Today, there is an absorbent amount of cultural activities that potential patrons can participate in. The performing arts organizations of Lafayette must compete against all of these activities and other entertainment offerings of today including television and films. Though organizations must compete against these offerings, there is also large population growth in the area, and education in the area continues to grow. These encouraging signs and difficult problems create an environment where there is much potential growth for organizations if they can identify weaknesses and strengths and act upon them.

Acadiana Arts Council

The Acadiana Arts Council, or the AAC, was the first arts advocacy organization in Lafayette. Created to support fledgling arts organizations through the use of grants, the AAC has grown to include museum space and programming. Today, the council is separated into community development, education, the Louisiana Crossroads, and exhibits. These individual departments support the community through funding and programming. Along with funding organizations, the AAC houses the Acadiana Center for the Arts, a gallery space. To do all of this, the AAC has to be a very large organization with a large staff and large board.

The AAC has advocated for the arts since its incorporation in 1975. AAC's mission is "We create, facilitate, nurture and fund arts and cultural activities to enrich quality of life and place." This is mainly done through the council's major support of arts in Acadiana through granting over three hundred thousand dollars per year (*Annual Report*, 15). Most of these grants come from the Decentralized Arts Fund created by Louisiana governmental agencies including the Louisiana Division of the Arts and the Department of Culture. Other sources of funding come from over two hundred business partners and other donors (*Annual Report*, 4). These funds go to supply the other granting programs of the organization which include Community Arts Funding that brings art to underserved neighborhoods, Partnership Awards that are given to performances, exhibitions, and many other arts related programming, and Arts Grants for Teachers that support the building of arts education within schools. These funding opportunities sustain the many arts organizations in the area including the arts presenters.

With the major piece of the AAC mission as creating and funding the arts, another major piece is facilitating the arts. This is primarily done through the Acadiana Center for the Arts. The center, created in 2004 in downtown Lafayette, has two gallery spaces that allow for

both large scale exhibits, which rotate every two to three months, and smaller exhibits that change monthly. Now, the AAC is ready for phase two of the center, a three hundred seat, state-of-the-art theatre space. Groundbreaking will begin in November 2008 with a planned completion date of summer 2010. A medium sized theatre space has been needed since the 1970s (Lyle interview), and the space will be used for workshops, theatre performances, concerts and events (*Annual Report*, 29). With both the galleries and the new theatre space, the AAC, through the Acadiana Center for the Arts, will be able to facilitate more of the arts in Acadiana.

The Arts Council also places high importance on the nurturing of the arts in Acadiana. This nurturing occurs through the large staff of the AAC. The council has the largest staff, a group of twelve, of any arts organization in Acadiana. These staff members nurture through many jobs including visiting other organizations, like January 2008 visit of the artist community in Arnaudville. The AAC has begun assessing the small and stagnant arts organizations in the area, and the marketing coordinator has begun to provide training and technical assistance to small organizations. The large staff is supported by a board of directors made up of nineteen individuals. They see their job as to guide the organization to continue to “enrich the lives of students throughout Acadiana” and to “improve lives” through the arts (*Annual Report*, 5.) The nurturing of the arts in Acadiana is created through a mission that is supported by the board of directors and a large staff.

Like the nurturing of arts in the mission of the AAC, the mission also places high importance on the creation of cultural activities. These activities are created through the programming of Louisiana Crossroads. Louisiana Crossroads is the creation of the AAC and the public radio station KRVS-FM. These performances by regional performers happen

throughout south Louisiana, from Lake Charles to Baton Rouge. Performances are also aired live on KRVS. These presentations create both artistic and economic stimulus, introducing Acadiana to musicians intertwined in the local culture. They boost an excitement for arts and financial benefits for the musical performers. The Louisiana Crossroads project allows for cultural activities to be created all over south Louisiana.

The Acadiana Arts Council is a large organization with a large budget, reaching over a million and a half dollars, and a large staff. When a person thinks of an arts organization, they think of organizations like the council who support the arts through funding and programming. Where this becomes tricky is that the AAC is the largest competitor to the other, smaller arts organizations in Lafayette. These organizations rely heavily on the funds administered by the AAC, but must compete with the AAC for patrons and donors. Through its mission, the Acadiana Arts Council seems to be able to do both. It supplies many organizations with the needed cash and needed tools to survive and prosper while having its own success.

Performing Arts Society of Acadiana

The Performing Arts Society of Acadiana, or PASA, presents nationally and internationally recognized artists of all performing arts disciplines. Created to bring these types of artists to the Acadiana area, PASA has become an important arts organization for Lafayette. The board and staff continue to grow, but the organizations still needs ever increasing finances and staff. The growth of the board is primarily due to the need for donors, and often, the large board creates problems for the organization. PASA is now experiencing some great success, and is in the middle of a giant strategic restructuring to fit the growth and depth of the organization.

Begun in 1989, PASA set out to present talented, internationally known artists to the underserved Lafayette where most artistic performances were by locals. PASA's programming includes dance, music, and theatre. The programming has ranged from the London City Opera to Dora the Explorer. Outreach has also become a major part of PASA where school visits, lectures, and master classes are a staple of the organization's presentations. The 1995 – 1996 season was a special highlight for PASA. It was the first time that PASA presented a world premier, commissioned work, *Feu Follet*, a narrative dance performance that tells the story of the Acadians' settlement of south Louisiana. It went on to tour throughout the world, including at New York's Lincoln Center. PASA also prides itself in its success with opera in the area. It has hosted the New York City Opera National Company in the only full-scale opera production in southwest Louisiana history. In 1998, the Louisiana Division of the Arts designated PASA as the base organization for the statewide presentation of opera. These successes have created an organization that exudes much credibility in the Lafayette area.

The historical success of PASA has been made possible through a carefully crafted mission. Recently, the mission statement underwent changes to help in solidify a vision for the organization. It says:

The mission of the Performing Arts Society of Acadiana is to educate, inspire, entertain, and culturally enrich the people of south Louisiana by providing local access to a diverse range of performing arts.

Each piece of the mission is presented through many of PASA's events.

PASA's mission begins with the ability to educate. Besides seeing all performance as education, the organization creates many opportunities for education through outreach to schools and scholarships. The outreach of PASA allows for many students from middle schools to high schools to gain valuable knowledge about the arts. PASA begins with offering special matinee performances of groups for the schools in the area. This year, PASA will present the Elisa Monte Dance Company, the Aquila Theatre's production of *The Iliad*, and *Chicago City Limits*. Often, groups go to schools to teach classes or present some of their work as exemplified by last year's Second City performance at Lafayette High School. Another important piece of education is PASA's Play It Again, a program for children interested in music who cannot afford their instrument. Play It Again receives old instruments from community members and refurbishes them for students. The education of students specifically interested in performance and arts administration is also supported by PASA through its L. Hill Bonin, Jr. Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship is available for high school and college students who pursue a short-term education and training in the areas of performance or administration. It is also available to organizations proposing performances with high school

and college aged students. These educational opportunities fit directly into PASA's mission to educate and strengthen the arts in Acadiana.

Another main piece of PASA's mission is to entertain and culturally enrich the area surrounding Lafayette. This is done through a wide range of programming that offer Acadiana residents a variety of artistic performances. PASA is known for all types of events from presenting opera, ballet, Shakespearean plays to circuses, children's programming, and famous comedians like Bill Cosby. This wide range of programming is not only to showcase a variety in arts and culture, but to also create Acadiana residents who appreciate all types of art. The hope is that patrons may come to a performance of a favorite musical group or favorite artists and will be moved by the art to come and view more of the performances. One example is last season's performance by Toxic Audio, an a cappella pop group that creates all of its instrumentation through the five members' voices. This event was offered for a small donation, and before the performance, artists painted works on stage. After the event, the Executive Director plugged PASA's upcoming events. This small performance, targeted at a young, musically inclined audience, allowed them to view art and to know what other types of performances PASA was presenting. This type of synergy opens up unsuspecting patrons to other arts events through its entertainment qualities, and ultimately enriches the culture in the area.

Though there is much success with the idea of entertaining and enriching, this type of programming can also form some problems. The wide range of programming often confuses Lafayette citizens. According to a study for the PASA Strategic Plan, fifty-four percent of area residents have never heard of PASA or are only slightly familiar with the PASA name (App 3, p3). Because PASA presents dance, theatre, and music in the Heymann Center, it often gets

confused with the other organizations that present in the center like the Acadiana Symphony Orchestra and the Lafayette Ballet Theatre. Potential patrons do not know when a music event is for PASA or ASO, and when ballet is presented, they do not know if PASA has brought them in from around the world or if it is the local dance company. Another major problem with this programming occurs when PASA presents performances like its upcoming Neil Berg's 100 Years of Broadway. Most "Broadway" styled productions are usually presented by the Theatre League of Louisiana, also performed in the Heymann Center. With so many presenters using the Heymann Center, PASA, a catch-all for all artistic performances, does not have an identity due to its wide range of programming.

For the 2007 – 2008 Season, PASA experimented with its programming to include more popular so the organization could possibly gain more patrons and notoriety. The two well known acts were Queen Latifah and Randy Newman. Because these performers are rather well known, PASA expected to make a revenue, but instead ticket sales did not materialize. "Never again," says Executive Director Jackie Lyle, "will we do a season like that." The board wanted more popular performers, and Lyle went along with it for the season. Lyle, in an interview, points out that the season lacked the idea of the original mission of the organization to bring artists that Acadiana residents may not normally see. Instead, PASA filled a season with performers that could easily be seen at the many casinos around Lafayette. Not much ticket revenue was made either due to the abundant costs of the popular performers, and PASA reported losses on both of these performances. No new sponsors were added for bringing in more popular performers, but PASA did receive many more names and information from residents that could possibly create more ticket sales in the future. "The problem," Lyle says, "is that we do not have the marketing budget to pursue these new names." From now on, Lyle

believes that getting back to the original PASA ideal of presenting high-quality, rarely seen artists will continue the entertaining yet culturally enriching mission of the organization.

Because the 2007 – 2008 Season failed at bringing in more patrons, a new direction should be taken in marketing. As reported earlier, fifty-four percent of the 540,000 residents of the nine parish area known as Acadiana barely know anything about PASA, and almost eighty percent of the population has never seen a PASA performance (Strategic Plan, App. 3, p3).

This may be due to the low income of households or small percentage of individuals who have graduated from college. On the other hand, many people know about PASA's performances in the area through an abundance of newspaper ads and articles and television commercials; these people just do not know that it is a PASA event. Lyle says that of those who know of PASA events are usually inclined to come back because of the high quality of performance in every event. It is just a matter of "getting people there."

PASA must create an image in Acadiana that distinguishes itself from the other arts presenters in the area. This image must contrast itself from the symphony, ballet, and the theatre league. A simple philosophy of marketing the mission may best serve PASA. PASA's mission places emphasis on the entertainment and education of patrons through the use of many performance art forms. If marketing materials could capture the fun and experience of seeing many different types of performances, then PASA could distinguish itself from other arts organizations and possibly give it an edge in the market. Another important aspect to place in PASA marketing is the idea of the organization's success. Lyle is very happy with the credibility that PASA has within the community, but if that credibility is not known throughout the whole community, many opportunities are lost. PASA can gain more patrons through the use of branding and showcasing the quality and credibility of the organization.

With an added image to their marketing materials, PASA can also move into more electronic mediums for marketing success. Lyle remembers when she first started PASA, and Lafayette had only fourteen channels on television and only five radio stations. Now with cable and satellite radio, it has become difficult for PASA to get out its marketing materials. One place that PASA is taking full advantage of technology is the many Lamar digital billboards that dot Lafayette roadways. Lyle enjoys that the organization can place an advertisement at 12:00 noon on the main stretch of eateries and can place the same advertisement on different roads at rush hour. While PASA is using technology, the organization could use more through the use of the internet. PASA events do show up on the many online community calendars, but ads on local websites and the use of social networking sites could be used to gain younger people as audience members. With using both an image and new marketing techniques, PASA will gain more patrons and open up its potential market.

This marketing plan could be implemented through the staff of PASA, but because of the small staff size, much of the staff's time is used in just running the organization. Executive Director Jackie Lyle, who has been with the organization since its inception, must juggle the artistic and business management of PASA. She must create the programming and manage all of the other staff members. The other four staff members are divided into development, operations, and community relations. To create the marketing plan discussed above, there needs to be a person specifically in the organization for marketing. This will create added stress for Lyle, but the PASA Strategic Plan believes that adding a Director of Operations who can oversee all the business of the organization could alleviate this stress (33). The creation of a Director of Operations will allow Lyle to concentrate on working with the artistic side of the company focusing on programming and outreach while the Director of Operations could

concentrate on funding, marketing, and other business transactions. To fully realize its potential, PASA must take steps to add more positions to its staff.

While PASA's staff needs to grow, its board of directors does not, and PASA may even want to decide to lower the number of members on its board. Currently, the PASA board seats thirty-two directors. While all of the members do have a love for the arts and a love for the mission of PASA, the board can become cumbersome when decisions need to be made. Its specific purpose of guarding the mission and deciding the future of the organization can be in jeopardy when discussions arise. Speaking with Lyle, some board members feel that their opinion and work is not necessarily needed because of the large size of the board. The large size of the board is due to there being no term limits or board size limits in the organization's bylaws. In fact, many members have served on the board for many years. The Strategic Plan suggests that a two year term limit with the ability to have a second term following the first may work to get new directors that have new ideas (30). Old members can sit on an advisory board for one year and then enter the board again. Also, shrinking the board from over thirty to around twenty or twenty-five may create a board that can make decisions faster and can have every board members voice heard. With term limits and a smaller board size, new ideas may come to PASA through new members and the board will feel as if their voices are being heard.

The Strategic Plan for PASA also suggests that the board become more diverse. For the most part, the PASA board is made of primarily upper-middle class to upper class citizens, mainly from the city of Lafayette. Only five of the current members are from a minority group which is only six percent of the board. This is a little odd because Lafayette's black population is over twenty-five percent of the whole population. The only way to appeal to a diverse group of patrons is to have a diverse group of board members who can bring their own unique

experiences and ideas to the organization. Most of the board members are also middle-aged and onward. PASA might benefit from a few younger members of the population. Younger and minority members of the community will create a more diverse PASA board of directors.

While it is easy to say that PASA needs more diversity in its board, especially from minorities and age, the requirements placed upon the board may be a deterrent for their inclusion in the board. PASA requires its board members to purchase at least two season tickets and make a contribution of thirty dollars every year as membership dues. It also asks each member to secure five thousand dollars in donations from themselves, other individuals, or corporations. This is a hefty sum of money for many people in Lafayette, even without counting the five thousand dollars. To gain a more diverse board, PASA may need to waive the five thousand dollar donation and create a volunteer time donation requirement that can supplement the expensive donation requirement. With a volunteer time supplement that reduces the amount of money a board member needs to obtain, PASA may be able to diversify its board with greater success.

Some problems occur, though, when the board is downsized and the financial requirement is waived. PASA works with a limited cash reserve, and these actions will limit this cash reserve even further from fewer donations. With taking away ten board seats, the organization will be left with fifty thousand dollars less which easily pays for a staff member or a performance. And then, if the financial requirement would be waived in some cases to gain a more diverse board, this would cause even less money coming in. Often, though an organization's personal contact to a company or individual has left the board, the donors continue to supply funds, and the development staff at PASA could work on keeping these donations. These financial problems could also be remedied by having the advisory board

required to raise a certain amount of money too. Though a smaller board and a waived donation requirement would cause a lack of funds, these changes are necessary for the internal health of the organization, and they can easily be remedied through the development staff and the advisory board.

Since its opening, PASA has been respected among the Lafayette arts community for bringing in top quality, nationally and internationally known artists. While the organization has had much success, most of Acadiana residents do not know about PASA, and what they do know of it is confused with the other art presenters in Lafayette. Specific growth is needed in PASA's marketing capacity through the hiring of a marketing director so they can create a specific image for the organization that makes the organization have its own, unique appeal. The board can help in creating this image, but it must become limited in size and term so each board member's voice can be heard and a diversity of new members can bring their voices and ideas to the organization. With PASA's strategic plan and other suggestions, the organization can confront its problems, gain new patrons, and continue work towards the fulfillment of its mission.

Theatre League of Louisiana

The Theatre League of Louisiana is the main theatre presenter of national touring musicals in the city. With a coverage area that once spanned much of Louisiana, the Theatre League now only presents productions in Lafayette, and has reduced its staff size. The Theatre League may be the most financially sound arts organization in Lafayette and has found a steady base of ticket subscribers. The league has found its comfort zone and has become stagnant.

The Theatre League of Louisiana was created in 1993 as a nonprofit organization by three citizens of Louisiana: John O'Meara, from Lafayette, a member from Lake Charles, and a member from Alexandria. The league was created for the simple purpose of providing live entertainment to the underserved areas of Louisiana, specifically Lafayette, Lake Charles, and Alexandria. For its first decade, the league presented touring musicals and nationally known musicians in this market, and supporting local performances like the Lafayette Ballet Theatre's *Nutcracker*. With the death of the board member from Alexandria, there was no initiative to find new board members, and the league began to focus just on the Lafayette market. Now, the league presents only a yearly Broadway Series at the Heymann Center with such performances as *Hairspray*.

The Theatre League board serves only as a function to continue its nonprofit status. When interviewed, O'Meara, the programmer and facilitator of the organization, could not remember the last time he saw the official bylaws of the organization or the mission. He just goes about creating the next season. He also states that his counterpart in Lake Charles is only there to keep the organization "functional," and to keep the organization as a nonprofit entity. The league is now solely run by O'Meara.

O'Meara is not just the only active board member, but he is also the director of the organization, running the business of the league. He programs all performances a year to two years before, and he says that it is very simple. He says, "I've got four agencies that I know create good productions. Then I see what is coming this way. I have either got a date for it, or I don't, and then I take it or I don't." There is no artistic vision or set of ideals that O'Meara follows. He just books what is available. With O'Meara doing all of the programming, there is only one other member of the organization, a part-time office worker who takes care of the general business activities. There are no volunteers for the organization, and ticket sales are outsourced to the Heymann Center Box Office. The business transactions are all done by O'Meara and his part-time assistant.

Financially, the Theatre League is the most successful performing arts organization in Lafayette through its ticket sales and sponsorships. Ticket sales account for ninety-three percent of the league's budget. The league typically sells out the Heymann Center for all of its events because of the popularity of its selections and a high season ticket subscriber base who, according to O'Meara, "hang on to their tickets every year just to get the same seats." The other seven percent of the budget comes from sponsorships. This is O'Meara's other major job in the organization, to gain and retain sponsors. Over the past few years, he has gained new full season sponsors and single show sponsors, a feat he is proud of. This is also where his challenges are. To make sure that he continues with the right amount of sponsorships, it is always an activity, cultivating and keeping sponsors.

The marketing for the Theatre League would never suggest that the league continuously sells out its productions and has one of the strongest name recognitions in Lafayette. For such a popular presenter, the league does not have a website. The only way of finding information

online about the league's current season is through the Heymann Center website or TicketMaster. Other marketing materials include newspaper ads, billboards, and a simple 8 ½ x 11 ticket order form. The Theatre League's marketing is stuck in the 1990s, and maybe the greatest weakness of the league. Because of Lafayette's young population, it will be necessary to move to the internet with websites and internet ads to continue the great success of the league.

The Theatre League of Louisiana is a simple nonprofit organization whose sole mission is to bring a popular Broadway series to Lafayette. Despite its simple board, its simple organizational structure, and its simple marketing, the Theatre League may be the most popular arts presenter in Lafayette. It often presents the most popular names on Broadway, and though many see it as not legitimate art, these performances often spark an interest in theatre and art that continues in individuals throughout life. Because a child saw a musical with their grandparents, they might find a love of theatre that pulls them into a profession in the arts or that pulls them into becoming a patron of theatre for life. To continue with its success, the league will have to look at new ways of marketing to its market. With a focus on this new marketing, the Theatre League of Louisiana can sustain its success for many years to come.

Cité des Arts

Located in the one hundred block of Vine Street, only a block from the main downtown thoroughfare is the Cité des Arts. One of the newest arts organizations in the area, the Cité describes itself as the place “Where Cultures Connect.” Their mission and philosophy focus on the underserved portions of students, adults, and artists in the area. There is a true excitement among the organization’s board members, staff, and volunteers for the organization, but it cannot mask the severe problems that haunt the Cité that include a small board, an incredibly low budget, a non-existent full time staff, and many other issues. Despite these problems, the Cité sees itself as a unique artistic enterprise, and it is ready to grow to create more opportunities for arts in the Lafayette area.

Created in 1998, the Cité des Arts was begun by a dream of a new theatre in Lafayette that could host smaller performances than the large Heymann Center. Began by Maureen Brennan, a strong advocate for the arts in Acadiana who once served on the board for Festival International, Cité looked to sponsor musicians, theatre, and dance through the primary gift of a performance space. This space was found in 2003 at the back of the old Lafayette downtown hotel. The founders could see that the dilapidated, old ballroom of the hotel could become this theatre space. The space was not all that was changed. With such a large building, Brennan says in a note, “the goal shifted from a simple little theater space to a home for local arts and culture.” Now, the Cité boasts a one hundred seat theatre, a café, and a second performance space. Also created was a practice room for music lessons, office space, a dance studio, and a recently opened artists’ store where music and works of art are sold.

Working with the city of Lafayette, the Cité has pushed its mission even further. Plans are now in the works for an artists’ village. This multi-dwelling project will house families and

individual artists. Plans include residential apartment, houses, a performance center, theatre, and even a healthcare clinic. Cheryl Castille, Programming Director of the Cité, says that there is “no benefit to be an artist” in Lafayette. It is often difficult to make a living being an artist, and even if artists can make a decent amount of money, there is still need for healthcare and spaces to perform and rehearse. Being the main financial agent of this endeavor, the Cité hopes to fulfill its mission further by having a true home for artists of all different disciplines and cultures.

Cité des Arts’ mission creates a facility where the interaction between cultures and artistic disciplines are important. The mission states:

Our Mission is to provide an experience that welcomes and encourages interactions between various cultures, generations and artistic disciplines in order to increase the participation, enjoyments and knowledge each may have with and of the others.

Cité tries to create an environment where music, dance, theatre, and the various visual arts can come together to learn from each other. Castille says that the Cité is designed to be an “incubation center” for artists. The artists from different cultures and different artistic disciplines can meet and create together.

This mission of the Cité des Arts is supported by a general philosophy for the organization. The first part of the philosophy is that they “believe that our future is with our children, and that the arts provide a means by which they may discover and develop their individual strengths.” Arts education is the main focus for this piece of the philosophy. Dramatiks Productions teach young people about much of the theatrical world through a summer theatre program, and acting classes are held every Tuesday. Another main source of education is Dave Trainer’s music lessons that features fiddle, guitar, piano, and other string

instruments. The education of children in the arts is a main objective of the Cité, and its success is through its many educational programs.

The second part of the Cité's philosophy deals with the various cultures of the area. It says, "We believe that visitors to our community – and our community itself – will benefit from experiences where they may encounter the various cultures of our area." Probably the greatest example of this experience of different cultures is through the many Cité dance programs. The Ballet Académie, the Ryan School of Irish Dance, and Cajun and Zydeco Dance classes all make their home at the Cité. This wide range of dance styles, coupled with theatre and music, creates a facility where the cultures of the area are showcased and where the community and its visitors can experience the many cultures that make up Lafayette.

The third piece of the Cité's philosophy is its belief in the interaction of artists from different disciplines and different generations. The Cité believes "that a special synergy emerges from the interactions of different artistic disciplines, cultures and generations." This may be seen in the many impromptu-styled events. On Tuesday evenings in their café, the Cité hosts its Community Bluegrass Jam. Individual artists of varying ages come to play and listen to other musicians. All are welcomed free of charge. Other major synergy experiences are the Monday Night and Thursday Night Reads. Monday Night Reads occur every month for writers and playwrights to read their new pieces of work. The Thursday Night Reads happen every week, and are hosted by ULL's Department of English. Here beat poets, lyricists, and short story writers are welcomed to go to the open microphone. Both the Monday and Thursday Night Reads allow for artists to get feedback on their work. Audience members are encouraged to discuss the pieces with the artists. Maybe the greatest example of this mixing of disciplines is in the Cité's Artistic Voices Series where four artists from four different disciplines discuss

the creative process. This year hosted artists from film, theatre, visual arts, written word, and music. The many events at the Cité promote the discussion of art between different artistic disciplines and different generations.

The last part of the Cité's philosophy deals with the fact that the organization tries to create a broad range of programming through its facility: "We believe that our focus as a facility organization more than as a producing organization guarantees our community much more diversity in programming, and our various arts organizations wider audiences." In fact, the Cité only produces around four theatrical productions a year. For the rest of the year, the facilities are opened to the many programs mentioned above and any other artists wanting a place to perform. This philosophy allows for the Cité to place its name on many different events and programs. The hope is that audience members will like one event that they attend, and that event will open them up to the other programs from other artistic disciplines that the Cité offers.

While all involved with the Cité des Arts believe that their mission and philosophy will spark artistic creativity, the mission and philosophy of the organization may become overburdening for Cité. With so many projects and ideas, the Cité faces a large problem when large growth will happen. Gone are the days of a "simple little theatre space" as spoken about in Maureen Brennan's note. The organization has tacked on children's theatre, musical performance and studies, and dance studies. If the Cité continues to evolve and grow, there will be no space for all the events and projects that the Cité wants to offer. What will the staff at the Cité begin to cut, or what will they turn away? This becomes difficult because the mission is vague, and it does not place any importance on one art form. One of the more important ideas at the beginning of the Cité was to produce a few theatrical productions a year;

this could be abolished at some point in the future due to a new vision by new board members. Also, the mission focuses heavily on the artists themselves, looking after their needs more than the needs of patrons. This creates a difficult fundraising problem. Since most of large donors are only spectators at arts events, they will need extra encouragement and extra explanation for what they will get out of donating to the Cité. The large and cumbersome mission and philosophy may become overburdening with the expected and hoped for growth of the Cité.

While the mission and philosophy of the organization may become overburdening for the Cité itself with growth, these items are already confusing to potential patrons who see the vast array of offerings as a mixed bag. The Cité philosophy believes that the various art programs it hosts are complemented by each other because Cité patrons may enjoy one type of art event and then try one of the other many offerings. While for some potential patrons this is a welcoming idea, for most, the many programs may be overwhelming. There is so much at the Cité that patrons who just want to see an artistic event once, twice, or three times a month will find such an array of offerings that they will essentially be overwhelmed by a decision. Since these events are new works and often experimental, the quality of the offerings is in question, and potential patrons may not know which event to go to. If they pick the wrong event, these patrons may be forever turned away from the Cité. Patrons may be also only associating the Cité with a certain type of art. Some see it as just for dance, or just for theatre, or just for music, and they will never understand that the organization has so much more to offer. The mission and philosophy of the Cité des Arts is large and overreaching, and it confuses potential patrons due to the many different types of art events that the Cité offers under its roof.

Because of such a large and overreaching mission and philosophy, the Cité des Arts needs a staff that can explain to potential donors and patrons what the organization does.

Castille points out that it is often difficult to describe to potential donors what the Cité actually does. She says, “It usually takes us inviting them to events and having to actually show them the space and show them all that goes on here.” It is just a matter of getting these patrons and donors to the Cité. To do this, the staff often relies heavily on word of mouth to get patrons to understand the events that go on at the Cité because marketing funds are small. The board is also needed to invite family, friends, and coworkers to events so the Cité can introduce itself to new patrons and donors. Because of the large number of arts offerings at the Cité, the organization must find ways of getting patrons and donors to understand all that it has to offer.

The staff of the Cité des Arts must do much to showcase the many different offerings of the organization, but the staff is too small to accomplish much. The staff of the Cité is made of one fulltime employee and a few part-time employees. Cheryl Castille, as Programming Director, is the only fulltime member of the staff. She is often at the Cité from the morning until night. She programs the offerings, does the marketing, writes grants, and does anything else that might be needed. Much of what she would like to get done is restricted by time constraints. Castille is helped by a few student part-time workers. Creator of the organization and the Executive Director, Maureen Brennan concentrates on the business of the organization, but she is not paid for her work. She has her own psychology practice, and is only available for little amounts of time. After the first few years of the organization, the Artistic Director position became a part-time, paid position. The Cité’s 2009 Strategic Plan hopes to secure the Artistic Directorship as a fulltime position soon so Castille can focus more on development and marketing. The many offerings at the Cité des Arts are hurt by the incredibly small staff that can only do the necessary things to keep the organization up and running.

The small staff of the Cité des Arts requires the board to take on more day-to-day business roles than other arts organizations in Lafayette. Much like the other organizations, the Cité sees its board members as people who can support the organization through oversight, fundraising, and presenting the organization to the community. Castille believes that one of the most important jobs of the board members is to “talk the place up.” The Cité is so new and so small that the main objective of the board is to just get people to know about the organization and to ultimately get the same people to events. While most organizations just ask a board to support the mission, the Cité board must use their job experience and talents to help out the small organization. The board finds new members with certain qualities that fit a need of the Cité. Castille is not afraid of calling members for help. She says, “if I am confused about something with the marketing, I’ll call our graphic designer who is on the board, and she’ll talk me through it.” Because the Cité is such a small organization with a small staff, the board cannot only be the overseeing entity of the organization, but often times must get into the day-to-day business of the organization.

Just like the Cité des Arts board is much different from other in Lafayette arts organizations, the marketing for the Cité is also very unique. Because of low funds, marketing must find free or extremely cheap ways of advertising. Castille can rarely buy advertisements in the newspaper because they are so expensive. Instead, she tries for newspaper articles and spots on local network news and radio stations. Community calendars are also a must for Cité to get its events out. Also, Cité is the only arts organization in Lafayette to use the internet to its full potential. Castille has used her student workers to move into social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace to gain as much exposure as possible. She is also interested in using Facebook advertising and text messaging because they are cheap ways of reaching many

people. With the very small marketing budget the Cité has, the organization has been forced to think creatively in its marketing. This has led the Cité's marketing to be youthful. This targeting of younger generations may allow the organization to create a patron base that will grow with the organization for many years.

While the marketing budget is small, the biggest marketing problem is explaining what the Cité des Arts encompasses. In fact, tickets and attendance is not what the Cité is trying to sell; it is trying to sell the idea of the Cité instead. The marketing needs to explain that the Cité is there to be an incubation center for the arts in Lafayette. Most of the productions put on in the building are done by community actors, and they often feature new writers, new works, and new directors. The marketing for the organization must appeal to this gritty idea of art and theatre. The staff, amusingly, refers to the Cité as the “zany” arts organization in Lafayette. This must be shown in the organization's marketing. What should be more important to the Cité, instead of marketing arts events, is creating its own brand that includes this zaniness. The Cité should make a comparison to PASA with its world famous performers and the Theatre League of Louisiana with its lavish, touring musicals. This branding should occur to show the importance of what is being done at the Cité and how it is helping create a more artistic society. If the Cité tackles this problem with marketing and brands itself, it will lead to more patrons and donors seeing the altruism in the Cité's mission.

The low marketing budget and small staff size signify that the Cité des Arts' finances could be in better shape. The 2009 Strategic Plan states that the organization continues “to have weeks where the bank balance becomes uncomfortably low.” Actual revenues for the organization, which include admissions and merchandise and café sales, only make up one third of the organization's budget. Another third comes from grants, and the other third is

through memberships and corporate sponsorships. The importance of artist outreach for the organization is both the greatest help and greatest harm to these finances. The Cité is successful in grants because of the importance it places on the artist and donors who enjoy this type of mission give willingly to the cause, but this also hinders donors and patrons who want a more refined type of art experience. As discussed before, the Cité has to explain significantly what it does and how it does it to potential patrons. The unique and quirky identity of the Cité turns away more donors than it retains, and it also turns away patrons to create low attendance figures. The Cité des Arts' problems in finances will never truly go away. With the addition of the new Artists' Village, the organization will be able to grow its budget from rent revenues and programs that will happen there, but because of the unique style of the organization, the finances of the organization will stay low due to its small appeal to patrons and donors who enjoy more refined art experiences.

The Cité des Arts is a young arts organization that is just finding its footing in the Lafayette area. Unlike the other arts presenters in Acadiana, Cité provides more work for local artists and a true home for artists in the area. While the Cité will grow in organizational size, budget, and offerings, it will never become a large arts organization. It will continue to be an incubation center for new works of music, theatre, dance, and visual art, but even though the organization is creating the next wave of art in Acadiana, it will never become a truly recognized arts presenter in Lafayette.

Conclusion

The arts presenters of Acadiana have created missions and organizations that have greatly influenced Lafayette's culture though each of them are so different. Statistics and demographics should indicate that art organizations in a city such as Lafayette with one hundred thousand people should not have much success. College graduates only account for twenty-five percent of the population. A low median income shows that many in Lafayette do not have much to spend on entertainment. Even the high religious and extremely conservative populations should spell doom for the amount of arts organizations in Acadiana. The success of these organizations lies in the history of the region where Acadians settled there, already with a love of art, culture, and music. Where normally art would be rejected, art has been welcomed with open arms throughout the area and throughout the social classes.

This acceptance may also be caused by the ability of the arts presenters in Lafayette to create organizations with different purposes and missions. The Acadiana Arts Council is able to present visual arts and music, focus on education, and nurture the other arts organizations in the area because of its large amount of funds and large staff size. The Performing Arts Society of Acadiana answered a need for world-class artistry to visit Acadiana, an area where before PASA began presenting most performances were from local professional and amateur artists. Their success has created an organization with much credibility and a staff and volunteer base with so much excitement that the board of directors has almost outgrown its means. Much like PASA, the Theatre League of Louisiana focuses on the many national tours of musicals, which before the league was created, never appeared in the region. The league has downsized into an efficiently run organization of two board members and a part-time worker, and through this, the organization has cut costs while still filling to capacity the Heymann Center. Lastly, the Cité

des Arts has created a place where Acadiana's own artists can come, experiment, and present their work to a variety of the population. This may be the most important artistic work going on in Lafayette. Though the Cité will grow in staff, budget, and patron size, it will continue to stay small due to its eclectic nature, but it will fulfill a necessary segment of community members and artists.

While it may be easy to judge each of these organizations as to whether they are presenting legitimate art or not, each plays an important role in Lafayette. The Acadiana Arts Council supplies the funds needed for the other arts organizations in the area. It is often the Theatre League of Louisiana that introduces people to theatre and the arts. The mainstream productions it presents are filled with magic and great performers. This often sparks a love for the theatre that allows Lafayette residents to delve deeper into other performances. PASA provides this next step presenting to patrons internationally known and extremely talented artists. While these organizations are very important, the most important may be the final step at the Cité des Arts where artists, inspired by these other organizations, come to hone their craft. Instead of presenting theatre and artists outside of Acadiana, Cité presents only local artists, giving them a home and a place to experiment and practice their art. But, if not for the organizations like PASA and the Theatre League, Cité might not exist and prosper like it is today.

The four major presenters of art in Acadiana have created organizations totally different from one another. Though sometimes these organization's missions seem to blur, each has gone about its presentation of performers in their own ways. Lafayette's boom of art and culture began with the boom in the oil and natural gas sector. It has continued to this day,

growing and prospering due to these art presenters and their different missions, affecting a large portion of the Acadiana population.

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Appendix A

	Mission	Programming	Board Size	Staff Size
Acadiana Arts Council	We create, facilitate, nurture and fund arts and cultural activities to enrich quality of life and place.	Regional Musicians	19	12 full-time
PASA	The mission of the Performing Arts Society of Acadiana is to educate, inspire, entertain, and culturally enrich the people of south Louisiana by providing local access to a diverse range of performing arts.	Internationally known dancers, musicians, and theatre companies.	32	5 full-time
Theatre League	None	Broadway Tours	2	1 part-time
Cité des Arts	Our Mission is to provide an experience that welcomes and encourages interactions between various cultures, generations and artistic disciplines in order to increase the participation, enjoyments and knowledge each may have with and of the others.	Community dancers, musicians, poets, playwrights, and theatre practitioners.	8	1 full-time, 1 part-time, 1 non-paid, a few student workers