

**Legal Name**

Studio At 620 Inc

**Project Title**

To support an Artist Accelerator with Sharon E. Scott featuring new work in jazz, theater, and/or contemporary dance created by Gen Y artists to reach a peer audience in the Tampa Bay area online and through live performances

**DDCF Grant Number**

2013025

**Project Progress and Successes**

This report builds on the June 2014 interim report, and offers quantitative and qualitative metrics to demonstrate the overall success of the project. In addition to helping our millennial artists realize their artistic dreams with professional productions, this project was also to help the Studio@620 learn about the impact of emerging social media communication channels. The three overall goals of the project were to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1- Can the Studio@620 find successful ways to reach millennials in the Tampa Bay area to encourage them to embrace jazz, theater and contemporary dance as artists and audience?
- 2- Can the Studio@620 build a sustainable program model that will enable the Artist Accelerator to connect artists and audience into the future?
- 3- Can the Studio@620 develop a model for experienced artists to share their knowledge of the creative process with emerging artists using virtual space?

Organizational Advancement Consulting collected the information for this report in the following ways:

- The evaluator reviewed artist and mentor weekly reports throughout the project.
- The evaluator attended several planning and production meetings.
- Each artist and their mentor submitted regular meeting reports.
- Each artist completed an assessment survey at program midpoint.
- Each artist completed an assessment survey following his or her performances.
- The mentor completed a short assessment soliciting her evaluation.
- The Studio@620 audience was surveyed using Survey Monkey.
- The social media expert sent timely reports and a summary report to the evaluator.
- The evaluator conducted a workshop session with all the performers on marketing, branding, and promotion
- The evaluator attended one of each artist's final performances.

Following the brief descriptions of each artistic project, this summary includes an Artistic Development Assessment; a Social Media Evaluation; and the Final Evaluation.

#### SIR BROCK WARREN

##### "Journey to Greatness"

The triple-threat artist featured original music, choreography, multi-media, plus an inspiring workshop and talk back in which he transformed his triumph over life struggles into empowering works of art. The central theme of this work is self-discovery through self-reflection and spirituality. Artistically, he blends the urban experience, the African diaspora, the avant-garde, pop culture, and classic refinement to articulate the nuances of his creations. He collaborated with Nico Warren and Ryan Copeland of Nic & Ryan Productions to create the eclectic sound for his project. Through performance, Sir Brock aims to empower people to live masterfully; creating the lives they yearn to live.

#### KARLEIGH CHASE

##### "Less"

This one-woman show illustrates how thick the veil is between being "normal" and being homeless, and how a downward spiral into homelessness can happen to anyone. The production seamlessly blended live scenes of Karleigh portraying a woman descending into homelessness with film clips of her interviews with homeless women, illustrating the harsh realities of a life where most have only three choices: panhandling, stealing or prostitution. The evening also further developed the theme of homelessness with a gallery of paintings by Ben Love, a previously homeless artist; and with music after the production from The Open Door Band, comprised of homeless and previously homeless musicians.

#### ERIN TRACY

##### "Foreign/Familiar Cities"

This hybrid dance/theatre/film/live performance by Erin Tracy was based on the novel, *Invisible Cities*, by Italo Calvino. The film explored seven of Italo's cities through dance in foreign and familiar landscapes. The performance culminated in a live dance performance reflecting a "zero moment"-- the essence of the seam between two opposing ideas that is present in the literature for each of the places. Tampa Bay Food Trucks were invited to be outside the Studio@602 during the shows, offering cuisine from some of the foreign locations seen in the film.

#### ALEX JONES

##### "Uncovered: The Power of the Being"

Directed and choreographed by Alex Jones, this dance theatre work explored the journey to empowerment. It told the stories of five individuals as they ventured from a place of powerlessness to find the source of their own personal power. This interactive dance theatre work integrated film, photography, and digital media portraiture to completely immerse the viewer in the performance space physically, audibly and visually.

#### THOMAS "TEIJAY" WILLIAMS

##### "Breaking Chains and Breaking Free"

This uplifting performance fused jazz, gospel and R&B favorites with original music by TeiJay Williams in collaboration with St. Petersburg's own multi-talented Sir Brock Warren. Through song, narrative and spoken word, *Breaking Chains and Breaking Free* followed the journey of TeiJay as he endured and eventually prevailed over the adversity of growing up with loved ones battling addictions. A live band and backup singers interpreted the relentless struggle of TeiJay's relatives and his need to escape this generational curse. Abuse counselors gave an informal speech at the end of the show and were available to talk with anyone afterward.

#### MARK FEINMAN

##### "See. Hear. Feel."

The centerpiece of this gallery-style performance was a concert of familiar songs and new works composed by Feinman and performed by his band, La Lucha, representing memories that are lost to Alzheimer's disease. The show also included a visual arts component from artist and photographer, Rossie Newson and poetry read by poet Gloria Muñoz. "Art Stations" were placed around the gallery where audience members could put on headphones to listen to the music while reading the poems and enjoying the photography. As part of the performance, artists spoke about their involvement in the project. A visual art/poetry book along with a CD (everything seen/read/heard at the show) was produced; and partial proceeds from the limited edition CD and booklet benefited a local Alzheimer's organization.

#### I- Artist Development Assessment

The first and most important goal of Project GenYes! was to select and nurture six millennial, emerging artists in concept development and audience development. Six artists began receiving one-on-one mentoring from award-winning artist Sharon Scott both on and offline. The six were also charged with developing additional mentors and volunteers to assist in the creation of their projects. That process varied from artist to artist, who transformed concepts into complete productions through weekly personal and remote "computer" meetings. The six artists were surveyed after their performances, and their responses are as follows:

#### Quantitative Summary

Answers demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the project.

On a scale of 1-10 with ten being the highest level of satisfaction

- Did the project meet your objectives? Average response score: 8.5
- Did the Studio@620 meet your objectives? Average response score: 7
- Did you grow in your projects? Average response score was 8.5

#### Qualitative Summary

1- Did your project change as you went through the process?

Each artist praised Sharon Scott for helping them develop their project. Under Ms. Scott's mentoring, each one developed a social theme that developed out of a personal experience. It was astonishing to see that the six pieces covered such a wide range of social issues, from homelessness to Alzheimer's disease, and were neither self-indulgent nor didactic on stage. They varied in quality of course, however each was a valid theatre experience for the audience.

2- Did the Studio@620 meet your objectives?

The consensus was clear that there was not enough communication from the top down. The artists needed clearer guidance on what aspects of the project were their responsibilities and what they could expect the Studio to handle. Although they cited the value of the marketing and social media instruction, they felt it was unreasonable to expect emerging artists to develop their work, perform it, and promote it.

3- What would you change if you were to do it again?

Artists felt that an increased budget, centralized video technology and a "contract" outlining specific expectations and responsibilities would have been helpful

4- How did Sharon help you?

The emerging artists formed a strong bond with their mentor, and offered consistently positive assessments of her involvement. Representative quotes that were common to all include:

- "Kept me on track and pushed me at times when I wanted to give up."
- "Show business is 10% show and 90% business. She respects the artists' gifts, and she is exceptionally great at brainstorming ideas and challenging us to think and work through our ideas."
- "Sharon helped bring my ideas to the next level. It started off as a musical and became the soundtrack of my life. While creating my show, a lot of old demons had to be addressed. Sharon helped me address them and incorporate them into my show. Sharon said 'Turn your mess into a testimony.'"
- "Sharon helped tremendously -- reminding me to believe in my artistic choices and take risks."
- "Sharon was great at asking questions which helped push my project in the direction of my vision."

5- Did this experience help you?

Several of the artists have received offers to restage their shows elsewhere.

- "Yes, absolutely -- blending a social issue with my art will allow me to use my talents in other markets."
- "The experience allowed me to be seen as a creator, versatile art maker. Gained much knowledge of media."
- "The incubator grant allowed me to tackle a bigger work than I might have taken on myself."
- "Yes, media outlets take me more seriously. Other artists are interested in collaborating with me. The workshops provided helped me artist branding, organization and media contacts."

6- Do you have suggestions for Studio@620 for the future?

Each of the artists' answers focused on communication, organization and structure. A suggestion for next time is to develop a handbook that explains all parameters, requirements, and information regarding the project; as well as a calendar with deadlines.

## II- Social Media and Audience Development

The Studio@ 620 began media promotion of the project; inviting artists to apply in early 2013

The Studio also began developing the website and media outreach tools. The grant award received coverage in local and state newspapers and also received coverage in social media e-news.

Once the artists began developing their projects, the responsibility for posting and social outreach also became their responsibility. During this time frame the Studio@620 experienced a loss in office leadership and in the social media arena. While a search was conducted for a new manager, a new social media expert was engaged to rebuild the social media outreach. Tracy Kennard of Your Virtual Footprint reenergized the social media output from April to November 2014.

### Social Media Statistics for the Artists

Over the last 26 weeks of the project, when the artists were in production mode, the

participants generated 225 Facebook posts; 812 Facebook post likes; 48 Facebook posts comments; and 76 additional page likes (127.1%). They recorded over 2,000 tweets, of which 611 were coded as favorites, 294 were retweets, and 43 were replied to. They were mentioned on Twitter 109 times. Twitter gained 138 followers (1,380%). With 148 followers in total by 11/30/14, accounts reached are 8,239 with exposure to 9,272. Twitter activity peaked on 8/30/14 with 27,295 accounts reached with exposure to 31,795

#### Social Media Statistics for the Studio@620

Facebook likes increased 15% with 655 new likes.  
Twitter followers increased 30% with 230 new followers.

#### Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing

Although social media numbers did increase over the life of this project, the initial decision to start from scratch with a separate Facebook or Twitter page for Project GenYes was ambitious. Next time, it is recommended the Studio@620 use their built-in Facebook fans and Twitter profile. Build on the current platform and later spread out through the artists' connections and blogs. Social media campaigning needs leadership from the host institution, building on the Studio's current platform and then adding the artists' blogs and other connections.

It was a valuable experience for the artists to learn how to do their own media, but it would have more efficient and productive for Studio@620 to submit media releases on their behalf.

- The project was based upon the artists blogging the evolution and development of their projects. However they were focused on their work, and not able to devote the time required to write and post enough blogs to generate interest.
- Some artists had professional videos posted on their blog. Others did not have that capability. Overall, their blog submissions decreased after their first few were posted.
- Blog limited social sharing buttons to just Facebook and Twitter whereas Millennials might be on other channels like Google+, Instagram, tumblr etc.
- The website was poorly designed to grow with the program according to the social media expert.

#### Social Media Outreach and Ticket Sales

What has been learned is that Facebook and blogging are not the most effective vehicles for selling tickets. In fact, millennials are more likely to turn to other communication tools such as snapshot, tumblr, instagram, and instant messaging. The follow-up audience survey revealed that postcards sent to those on the mailing list were the top promotional device. However, in responder comments, almost all mentioned. The numbers below are not exact, but representative of the survey:

- Postcard: 60%
- Other (email cited): 45%
- Website: 35%
- Facebook: 28%
- Friends of the artist: 15%
- Newspaper: 5%
- Twitter: 4%

For this project, Facebook and blogs were not effective marketing tools. Direct emails,

postcards and personal invitations were. Marketing still requires the producer and the artists to collaborate and reach out to the general market, personally, frequently, and through a variety of channels that will reach various audiences. The survey results may be skewed, as 80% of the online survey responders reported themselves as being over 50 years old. This may be an indication that baby boomers are more willing to respond to surveys than the millennials are.

We also learned that presenting the shows over a period of five months has pros and cons. It gave the artists time to develop, and the Studio@620 time to present other bookings. However, the momentum of the media campaign waned as time passed.

The first two productions were 100% sold out, indicating strong interest in the overall project. Attendance fell to 50% in the middle and then picked up with the final show at 75% capacity. The disparity may be partly due to the fact that, in the evaluator's opinion, the first two artists had the strongest performances and one cannot rule out word of mouth about an exciting show. However the first two shows also benefited from the initial excitement about the overall program. The final production benefited from a strong promotional effort by the artist that also included a public crowd fundraising campaign.

#### Performance Dates

- July 11-13, 2014 -- Journey to Greatness -- Sir Brock
- August 14-17, 2014 -- Less -- Karleigh Chase
- August 23-24, 2014 -- Foreign/Familiar Cities -- Erin Tracy
- October 10-12, 2014 -- Uncovered: The Power of Being -- Alex Jones
- October 17-19, 2014 -- Breaking Chains and Breaking Free -- Teijay Williams
- November 21-24, 2014 -- See. Hear. Feel. -- Mark Feinman

#### Attendance figures for all shows

- Friday attendance summary 54% capacity
- Saturday attendance average 75% capacity
- Sunday attendance average 70% capacity

#### Sharon Scott Mentor Evaluation

The GenYes project met my artistic objectives. The millennial artists were creative and progressive, beyond my expectations. I would rate that portion of the project a 10. While the original concept to create an Internet stream of their work in addition to the live performance [was not realized], the opportunity and experience trumped all upsets.

All work experiences will encourage growth. Working with the millennial artists, and being introduced to their methodology, research, marketing and branding efforts was enlightening. I introduced the artists to an aspect of incorporating relevant social or community issues, which created a musical/theatrical interest for the Studio@620 and the GenYes! project.

Next time, I suggest a longer period of development, a dedicated space for meetings & rehearsals, ability to choose an IT team to develop streaming efforts, and possibly produce an online GenYes magazine. With assist from Doris Duke, do it again.

#### Bob Devin Jones, Artistic Director Summary

1- Was the program successful?

The Gen Yes program was a qualified success in three distinct ways.

- Firstly, the Studio was the incubator and beneficiary (as well as the Tampa Bay region) of sponsoring six emerging artists create new, personal and meaningful work. This was accomplished through the direct and constant mentoring of Sharon Scott. However this arrangement created a somewhat secondary role for direct mentorship from the Studio and me. Several of the projects were conceived with larger production requirements that far exceeded the committed funds. The Studio adjusted the budget accordingly, and in two instances made more funds available to the individual artist.
- Secondly, because of the yearlong Gen Yes program, the "artist accelerator" component had a longer than warranted development period.
- Finally, although three of the participating artists performed their pieces to near capacity, we did not attract as many in the targeted age group (19 - 33) as we had hoped.

2- Would we do it again?

- The Studio would definitely undertake another initiative of this scope. All six Gen Yes artists created new work that perhaps we otherwise would not have seen. That was deeply gratifying and well within the mission of the Studio being a "Yes" in our community. The final program, Mark Feinman's See. Feel. Here. already has secured performances beyond the Studio. The biggest change I would implement in a similar program would be to greatly increase the video documentation as the work was being developed.

#### Organizational Advancement Consulting Evaluation

Overall, the evaluator feels that Project GenYes! achieved positive results for the artists and the Studio@620, while also revealing a few stumbling blocks (learning experiences) that could be resolved in the future, leading to even greater success. Final conclusions are as follows:

- The Project GenYes! grant raised the visibility of the Studio@620 to the Tampa Bay community.
- The Studio@620 audience already supports the organization, and they are accustomed to seeing new and cutting-edge works by students and professionals. As one survey responder wrote, "Great shows and great community and mentoring and another great Studio success."
- The community's initial enthusiasm was very high, but interest waned over the long implementation timeframe.
- Social media campaigns are valid marketing tools but not the best way to communicate with and involve millennials in the performance arena.
- The incubator stage growing into accelerator stage provided incomparable experience to the emerging artists. Their comments reinforce the value of the artistic direction they received
- The various levels of experience of the millennial artists meant the Studio mentor and staff devoted much more face-to-face time with the artists to develop the shows, and less to marketing it online.
- The artists generally did not expect to deal with budgeting, production, volunteers, and media releases. All of the participants needed leadership in the production area. The young artists soon realized that they needed to grow and become creative business people as few, if any, had produced staged shows before.
- The producer cannot rely on the millennial artists to also generate their own promotion while they work on their shows. The common perception that millennials share their lives through social media did not translate into attendance inside the Studio.
- It would be helpful for someone from the host organization to assume responsibility for converting basic social media into a project-specific, targeted marketing campaign.
- The "computer meetings" did not work as envisioned and indeed, the best work was done

in person. Email served primarily as a communication tool, not as an educational tool.  
- The artists surprised this evaluator by choosing to address social issues in a positive and very collaborative and creative manner, each seeking out social service professionals and other artists to create their works.

In summary, Project GenYes! is an investment in what can be achieved in the future. The original goals at the top of this report were met with various degrees of success:

1- Much was learned that could be implemented to continue to reach millennials in the Tampa Bay area to encourage them to embrace jazz, theater and contemporary dance as artists and audience.

2- Further the program model, with suggested modifications and improvements will enable future Artist Accelerators to connect artists and audience.

3- The model of having an experienced artist share knowledge and mentor emerging artists in the Studio physical space was the most effective way to teach, motivate and develop the artists. Using virtual space is not a substitute for direct contact; however a follow up Project GenYes! video will continue the outreach to the virtual community.

### **Challenges / Obstacles / Failures Encountered in the Project**

Our artists were asked, "Do you have suggestions for Studio@620 for the future?", and their responses focused on communication, organization and structure. A suggestion for next time is to develop a handbook that explains all parameters, requirements, and information regarding the project; as well as a calendar with deadlines. The Studio@620 will take these suggestions moving forward with other projects.

We also learned that presenting the shows over a period of five months has pros and cons. It gave the artists time to develop, and the Studio@620 time to present other bookings. However, the momentum of the media campaign waned as time passed.

### **What was learned from these that might be of benefit to others?**

### **Links to relevant website(s) and/or project publications, reports, etc.**

[www.studio620.org](http://www.studio620.org)

### **If someone wishes to speak with your organization further about your project, would there be a willing contact? Y/N**

If yes, please provide contact name and information for preferred method of contact (email, phone, etc).

Bob Devin Jones, Artistic Director

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