

Visit of Donna Walker-Kuhne  
 CEO & President, Walker International Communications Group  
 Melbourne Lecture, November 2003

**FOTIS KAPETOPOULOS**—*Kape Communications*

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, friends I welcome you here today and I won't take up too much of your time it is a great honour and pleasure to have Donna Walker-Kuhne (DWK) with us from New York.

For those who are not aware this is part of the Multicultural Arts Professional Development (MAPD) programme funded by the Australia Council and auspiced by the Aust Multicultural Foundation.

With no further a due I would like to welcome on stage one of our key funding partners the Australia Council represented by Karolyn Brown.

**KAROLYN BROWN**—*Australia Council*

Good morning everybody – I thank you Fotis.

In the first instance I would like to acknowledge to the traditional owners of the land on which we stand the Kulin people. Also I would like to acknowledge representatives from Arts Victoria, Nicky Klempfner and Anthea Hall, Mr Hass Dellal from the AMF and Chris Booth head of Leadership from RMIT University.

I don't believe you can talk about the arts without talking about diversity. Diversity and creative expression are closely entwined. Vibrant creative communities are also communities comfortable with diversity. A creative diverse community provides windows and mirrors to its citizens by which they learn, respect, identify and celebrate.

SBS recently released a report called *Living Diversity*. They found Australians from whatever background have a remarkable level of tolerance and embrace of everyday diversity at work at school and in the community. The arts express is amazing diversity of cultures it is an interval part of who we are and our way of life. As Australians we have something special to say in the arts considering we are the home of the oldest indigenous culture in the world and our unique mix of peoples from more than two centuries of immigration.

The Australia Council is a world leader in the articulation and implementation of policy that reflects, responds to and promotes the arts in our multicultural society. Our arts in a multicultural Australia policy is built on extensive research and consultation with artists and arts workers by the Australia Councils' multicultural advisory committee ACMAC as we call it.

At its core the Councils policy recognises, celebrates innovation in our multicultural society and our indigenous culture.

One thing we know from our research is that 67% of Australians would feel more positive about the arts if there were more multicultural events and activities. These findings also highlighted that people from non English speaking background expressed a more positive view overall towards the arts. But there are



Donna Walker-Kuhne

challenges, despite their generally positive attitude people from non English speaking backgrounds participate less in mainstream arts activities. These results are pertinent to what we are looking at today, the need for multicultural arts community to occupy a more central role in the arts environment.

How can this happen? One of our key missions is to ensure all Australians have the opportunity to engage in the arts. An important way to achieve this is to provide development opportunities to artists and arts organisations to reach to Australia's multicultural community to play a key role there in the expansion of the arts.

Professional development is a major factor in helping arts workers to confidentially market and promote the arts to multicultural audiences and to take advantage of a huge untapped sector which demand is high. Australia Council initiatives such as the Multicultural Arts Professional Development (MAPD) program which Fotis referred to and the Multicultural Arts Marketing Ambassadors program (MAMAS) are working to this end. To date the MAMAS program has helped train 64 audience development professionals from 33 language and cultural groups developing strategies to promote the arts to Australians of non English speaking backgrounds. Its success has attracted international attention from organisations such as the Southbank Centre in London, the Northern Arts Board of the UK and the Asia Society in New York and Melbourne.

The MAMAS program and the MAPD program are helping to creative a shift in branding and marketing of Australia's culturally diverse arts in several ways. They're raising awareness of the benefits and processes of developing non English speaking background audiences. They're identifying potential new audiences and creating confidence in marketing and developing strategies to target these audiences.

We are here today with the same goals and we are privileged to have one of the worlds leading experts on audience development in multicultural communities to share here wisdom. But this wont be your last chance to benefit from Donna's expertise I'm delighted to announce that she will also be a guest specialist on the Fuel 4 Arts.com online forum from the 20th to the 28th of November. You will also find an overview of her presentation on the Fuel 4 Arts.com website as well as an informative transcript on culturally diverse audiences from a recent online forum. Fuel 4 Arts currently has 10,800 members and we're increasing at about 300 members a month primarily international. For more information Fuel 4 Arts we have some brochures outside.

Our partners in today's presentation for DWK deserve special thanks, Arts Victoria, Kape Communications and especially to Fotis for all his work in coordinating Donnas forums and workshops and his team, the Australian Multicultural Foundation, RMIT University, Kultour and Multicultural Arts Victoria. On behalf of the Australia Council I would like to warmly welcome Donna Walker Kuhne to Melbourne and indeed to Australia. We look forward to working with you and learning from you of the coming days not only here in Melbourne but also in Sydney and in Perth. Thank You.

**FOTIS KAPETOPOULOS**—*Kape Communications*

Now ladies and gentlemen one of our other funding partners will be represented by Nicky Kempfner from Arts Victoria.

**NICKY KLEMPFNER**—*Arts Victoria*

Thanks Fotis.

On behalf of Arts Victoria I'd like to welcome our guest Donna Walker-Kuhne along with co presenters in today's forum and attendees from the huge range of organisations represented here. We're delighted to support today's event for a number of reasons firstly encouraging the participations and engagement in cultural activities is a key government priority. Specifically, Victoria's Arts policy, *Creative Capacity Plus* aims to broaden access to the arts and build audiences in under represented groups including those from culturally diverse backgrounds. With three-quarters of a million Victorians having been born in non English speaking countries, there is huge potential to broaden the composition of arts audiences. Successful audience development also has great potential to expand the sustainability and diversity of arts organisations.

Seminars, training and skills development has been one of the most long-standing and popular areas supported through Arts Victoria audience development program. Not least by enabling participants to network and take time out from the usual pressures of running an organisation.

Before I finish up I thought you might find it useful to look at a few recent statistics taken from the 2001 census to get an overview of Victoria's cultural diversity.

If you're interested in going further, both the ABS and Victorian Office for Multicultural Affairs websites provides a huge amount of additional and fascinating information. In terms of the total population of Victoria you can see there are just over 4.5 million. In terms of birthplace, 43.5% of Victorians had an overseas-born parent or were born overseas themselves, and this breaks down to 20% of Victorians having at least one parent born overseas and 23.4% of Victorians born overseas themselves.

Of the million-plus Victorians born overseas, almost three-quarters were born in countries whose predominant language is other than English. 28% were born in mainly English-speaking countries, with a huge number of New Zealanders and slight fewer South Africans represented in that category.

20% of all Victorians spoke a language other than English at home and there are 180 different languages other than English spoken. In numerical terms, for major LOTE (languages other than English) groups in Victoria, the Italian community with almost 150,000 is number one, followed by the Greek community, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Arabic and Mandarin.

In terms of countries of birth, the major immigrant groups in 2000/2001 were from China (excluding Taiwan), India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam – and that's really only the top of the list, but it goes down to about 30 other countries in the ABS statistics. So if you are at all interested that site is well worth looking up. Thank you.

**FOTIS KAPETOPOULOS**—*Kape Communications*

Thank you Nicky, it is my great pleasure to introduce Hass Dellal. He is the head of the Australian Multicultural Foundation (AMF) one of Australia's peak multicultural advocacy organisation with significant international links and it is the organisation under which the MAPD program which is hosting Donna is being auspiced.

Thank you very much Hass.

**HASS DELLA OAM**—*Australian Multicultural Foundation*

Thank you very much, I really have the pleasure of introducing DWK but I just wanted to say it is just fantastic to really get up and listen to what Karolin and Nicky were saying. I think my job is all finished in terms of multicultural organisations. We're having mainstream organisations saying it all for me so I think it's all done so my job's gone it's really what we wanted to achieve so that's terrific, we're getting the right language being spoken by the mainstream institutions now. Look it's a great pleasure to be here to actually introduce Donna and for those who haven't had the time or chance to read the bio on Donna with your permission I'd just like to go through it so that you understand who Donna is and her achievements.

She's acknowledged by the American Arts and Business Council as one of the United States most foremost experts in audience development. Donna has devoted her career to increasing access to the arts for America's large multicultural population as the former Director of Marketing and Audience Development at the Public Theatre. She initiated a range of audience development activities for children, students and adults throughout New York City.

Currently she is the CEO and President of Walker International Communications Group. She provides marketing and audience development consultation for not for profit and commercial productions in the performing and visual arts and she was the first American invited by the National Arts Council in Singapore to delivery Marketing workshops. She is also an adjunct Professor in Marketing for the Arts at Brooklyn College and New York University. Donna was nominated for the Ford Foundations leadership 2001 Leadership for the changing world fellowship and has several books to her credit.

You will find in the last couple of days that I've sort of met Donna you will find her to be a real live wire and also a person with great enthusiasm towards her work and is absolutely contagious. So with those few words, Donna can you please join us?

**DONNA WALKER-KUHNE**  
*CEO & President Walker International  
 Communications Group*

Good Morning. WOW! Who would imagine that a young African-American woman from the south side of Chicago would be in Australia talking about audience development, truly creating history, I am so proud to be here with all of you and deeply, deeply honoured to be representing the United States on such and important topic.

I know that everyone has acknowledge all the gracious support that has enabled my trip here but I also wanted to add my deepest appreciation to the Australia Council, Art WA the office of Multicultural Interest of course Kape Communications who have been such an amazing host not only for me but also for my family because my husband my mother and my daughter have also accompanied me here to this wonderful, wonderful city.



Donna Walker-Kuhne at the Melbourne Arts Centre.

So what I'd like to do with you this morning in our brief time together

I normally teach a 10-15 week course and we're going to go through all of this today in about three hours. But what I'd like to do is talk to you generally philosophically about audience development and to share with you what I've kind of consolidated into the 10 tools of audience development then highlight some specific projects I've worked on and then we're going to have some break out sessions for you to actually start to kind of stretch those muscles of creating an outline on audience development and then to share some of what you've come up with so it's going to be an exchange of information this morning.

With your permission is that okay? *[Positive response from audience]*  
 Great..

In creating this idea of audience development I think what's most important is mentioned in the introduction for myself you know when I started working at the Public Theatre New York I had a vision and it came from the Director George C Wolfe who hired me.

George is a director and a playwright in the United States and when he called me he said Donna I've been at the Public Theatre for three months and I've noticed that the audiences are predominantly white. I'd like this place to look like a subway stop. Can you do it? And I said 'Yes', not knowing how but definitely yes and so that night I had a dream and that dream was in the lobby of the Public Theatre which is a very beautiful room similar to this one there were many, many people almost looking like the United Nations and everyone was smiling they had a glass of wine and they were talking and laughing and I thought that's what I'm going to create everyday. That became my mission that became what motivated me to go to work everyday and to try and come up with new ideas.

Why is it important to have a vision? Well I think you have to know who is your typical audience and what do you want it to be. The *Lilla Wallace Report* which is a foundation in America funds a lot of multicultural products. They stated that 'chartering a new course for audience development can't just be the passion of a museum director or it's marketing or education department. It requires the commitment of the entire organisation to conduct business in new ways which reach far beyond the walls of the museum and we can apply that to all of the art forms that we represent'.

That's when it starts at the top but it's important to have the leadership make the commitment, but when it becomes part of the fabric of your organisation even if it's a one person organisation that the idea of audience development and multicultural arts become part of your mission and vision, then I believe you can start to have an effective initiative.

In the arts organisations the most important component of audience development is a spirit of collaboration amongst all the departments. Here in Melbourne I've been able to experience at the Australian Arts Council and Arts Victoria and it seems that it's something that everyone wants to support and that's so important so that it's not just one department that says this is critical we have to do this but actually everyone from your janitorial staff to your executive leadership need to be aware of the importance of this so that they can all contribute because everyone has something important and significant to help in this process.

I learnt that when I was at the Public Theatre and I was creating a programme to invite the Haitian community into our theatre and our janitor said to me 'Donna I'm bringing a bus load of my friends' then I knew that the message was filtering down to everyone and that it was a very inclusive effort.

Not only do you need a dream and vision but you also need a plan. I've worked with a number of arts organisations while they are intentioned they have not developed a strategy so that's why I believe marketing is such an important component of audience development. It's not enough to just have the goodwill to say yes we have to embrace all of these diverse audiences but you actually have to have a marketing strategy that's going to allow you to do that. It's not just the thought but it's also the science of marketing that I believe makes this very important and effective.

Audience development requires a strategic plan that is holistically integrated into the fabric of your institution or organisation and this strategic plan should be grounded in your history and the history of the communities that you are trying to reach so it should be based on an understanding of a willing openness to multiple cultures which I think you already have that here.

So, that's what's more important than filling the seats or meeting the bottom line is this whole purpose this whole idea of creating access for everyone. Your plan should be to build a long lasting foundation which will be grounded in the very culture the culture of the communities that you're trying to serve.

It's a long term, long lasting are words you're going to hear a lot of. This is not a quick fix it's not like taking an aspirin and you'll feel better in a few hours, this is something that requires a commitment from your life.

I think it is extremely personal the idea of allowing your life to be a bridge to various communities and you have to think about am I the right person for the job and you may not be and that's fine you get someone who is. But what's important is that the initiative is in place and the support primarily financial is also in place.

So why are the arts so important? Why are we using the field of arts in order to explore diversity? Well I believe that the arts are the only tool that we have that successfully crosses ethnic and cultural barriers that bridge misunderstand and erase social strife and celebrates diversity all at the same time and I've learnt that when diverse groups of people share the common experience of the arts that they not only are personally enriched by the experience but they also develop an appreciation for humanity.

Making the arts accessible to us a broad an audience possibly helps us to build a better society. It's not just this is the right thing to do or the arts are so important that we are actually looking into the future.

What do we want to see 100 years from now? Do we want to see the kind of relationships we have now or do we want to see them improved do we want to see closer understand more respect and appreciation for each other. Well I believe what the arts can help us do.

So here in Australia you celebrate indigenous cultures, you have the non English speaking people, you have so many variables here that we don't have in the United States. So for me it's been wonderful learning about the different definitions of multiculturalism and audience development so I thank you for broadening my understanding so I can take this home and look at this on a more global level instead of being locked into our own communities.

I think that the strength of audience development is really the compassion and the integrity that we bring to this arena. At the same time, it can also be very daunting to think about now how do I speak to all the different cultures well it's not all of them at the same time. I believe you take it one by one because that's the preciousness of this effort. It's not something that you kind of wake up and decide okay we're going to just take care of everybody today, that's actually not possible we need to do it very individually.

The other thing that impressed me about the arts here in Victoria is that you have federal support for the initiative of audience development and that's something we do not have in the US. Our efforts a very local we have some national arts organisations that have embraced this idea and I lecture quite a bit around the US but we do not have our federal government that has made part of their mission to create this multicultural initiatives so I applaud you for that. I am going to go back and speak very loudly about what you are doing here and hope someone will listen to that we can start to learn from this kind of initiative too.

Now I will talk about the language of audience development and its definitions. Over the years I have heard a lot of definitions and justifications for audience development. Some people may say it's a way of putting butts on the seats just get the people in here and it doesn't matter. Other people will say, well we got a grant so that means that we have to make these efforts to bring people in because we've got funding for it. Then there are people whom their board members will say well we're doing this ethnic specific play make sure you bring in the audience that reflects the play.

None of those are audience development. They are very short term goals. I think that they're short sighted because what happens once the goals have been accomplished what do you have? You don't have anything that's long lasting that will allow you to really tap into those audiences in any meaningful way. Therefore, I define audience development as the cultivation in growth of long term relationships firmly rooted in a philosophical foundation. It has to live somewhere.

Audience development is not something just in the air something that you grab off the shelf. I feel it has to live in a philosophical belief that in your heart, that is in your life that you translate through the various efforts that you have developed.

Audience Development is long term relationships firmly rooted in a philosophical foundation that recognises and embraces the distinctions of race, age, sexual orientation, geography and class. Here in Australia, I get the sense that it's primarily based on culture.

In the US our definitions of audience development go beyond ethnicity. We're very concerned about geography. For instance in NY we have uptown which is where many of the white Americans might live and there's more wealth there. Downtown is Greenwich Village kind of a bohemian, young multicultural lifestyle.

Many people who live uptown will never come downtown to see arts and culture so for us that's audience development so if we can just get them to get in their limo's or cabs to come downtown that's extraordinary because then we've started to bridge some gaps. The geography doesn't have to be miles of miles apart sometimes it can be next door to get people to leave their house and feel comfortable about that.

Also sexual orientation for us in the states is very important as a tool for audience development welcoming those communities into various art and cultural experiences.

Class is a very important issue in the states as something that we don't talk about but it's actually more important than race and we all know how important that one is. But class is something that automatically prevents people from feeling invited to the various arts and cultural organisations.

I use myself as an example. The Public Theatre is a beautiful 48 year old theatre that was built by Joseph Papp in New York and when you walk past there are these gorgeous chandeliers and it's just really nice but I never felt invited inside the building even though we've done *A Chorus Line*, *Hair* and *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow is Enough* and all kinds of wonderful productions. It wasn't until I got a phone call from George C. Wolf that I felt invited.

I use myself as an example. I am a pretty sophisticated theatre person, why didn't I feel invited to go in there. Well that's what audience development is about it's creating the kind of feeling the sense of welcome. The mission to make people feel 'this is my place', that there's a sense of ownership, so all of those speak to this definition of audience development.

It is also the process of engaging, educating and motivating diverse communities to participate in a creative entertaining experience as an important partner in the design and execution of the arts.

Audience development is not us coming to save the world we're not social workers we're not fixing a problem. Audience development is all of us sitting at the table and deciding what's going to work best for me to feel comfortable to come and enjoy your art form and what can we produce and programme that will be inviting for you.

That is where the dialogue happens for audience development. We're partners in the design and the execution of the arts. There is no superiority complex that we're coming to save you. Audiences that we are trying to cultivate – I should tell you a secret, they're doing just fine.

We're the ones who think and feel that's it important that we reach out to them to enjoy our art-form. Let me be clear, their lives are not starving because they had not come to my museum or gallery or to see our dance performance. They're happy so it's really important to understand that point and it took me a while as well.

Audience development as I mentioned before is a specialised form of marketing that requires more than the mastery of traditional marketing techniques. We all know about direct mail, email, serious subscription drives, advertising and press but audience development components and that is the relationship building and the partnerships that I talked about and the spirit of collaboration because in order to have a lasting impact on your perspective audience the relationship needs to be both personal and organisational.

I keep using the word personal not meaning that you have to move in with various communities, but meaning that a part of your life is extended to theirs and they generally feel that you care about them and you have to define what that means. Your mission is to make a connection with their hearts by demonstrating the value of incorporating the arts into their lives.

We're talking about the heart to heart connections. Once that connection is made, then the idea of experiencing and supporting the arts and culture become organic, so then they can hear what you have to say. Now there is a relationship rather than I got this letter and they're coming to my town or organisation and they're going to talk to me about some possible programs. Well you may respond or you may not but

if you feel this personal connection this person bothered to call me on the phone or I met with the person or saw them on the street or they came to my organisation and made a presentation those tiny steps make such a critical difference.

Soft Power is what I've been using to be able to make these connections with people. Soft Power is a term that first popularised in the early 90's by a Japanese scholar a philosopher named Daisaku Ikeda. He made a speech at Harvard University and he used it to describe the process of encouraging another person to adopt or change a behaviour based on inner motivation rather than forceful dogma.

This whole idea of organisations buying into the importance of audience development is critical. The way that I believe it is best presented is through soft power so that actually comes from them. Because of the dialogue, because you have made these initial gestures they're going to suggest why don't we do this together, let me share my list with you or I have some ideas of programming. That's how soft power can be very effective this building of consensus and understanding among people through personal interaction and dialogue. I think that's the core of audience development building the consensus and understanding through people through personal interaction, dialogue and participation in the arts.

Real audience development is labour intensive it requires that you get in the trenches roll up your sleeves and really engage your life. It's a long term process by nature and it requires sensitivity, tenacity, persistence and courage.

I don't understand the word no and it just doesn't translate in my life so I will meet with various organisations and they may say 'oh well we can't do this right now'. I didn't hear that. I'm just going to ask it another way. I'm going to find a way and that's the kind of determination that I really believe audience development requires. So that idea of you coming back to your offices saying we tried and it didn't work that should just not be a concept. At some level it has to work and that's up to you to find that to make it happen based on your own understanding of why this is so important.

I think that's really important to understand and because audience development is a collaborative process. The other component is internal marketing sometimes you'll have to sell this idea to your colleagues so that you can get their support they still need to understand maybe the value of it not to continue the two ideas.

I think that when we are first engaging different communities what's important to design are points of entry. Points of entry I think are approached or ways of gaining access to what your cultural product is. I think the approach to effectively diversify audiences should be fluid and approach that allows the audience entry to the world without the expectation that they're going to respond in any way particular way.

In other words, *[inaudible]* you not to sit down and map out their cultural experience – okay they're going to come in, they're going to have a great time they're going to applaud, they're going to stand up and then they're going to want to buy something. That's all your issue, we want them to come.

That's it, they may not like it. I've had many people tell me I came to see that play, don't call me again, it was horrible they were my friends, you can imagine people I don't know might have been saying. To be honest with you I felt the same way about some of those plays I felt that they were ridiculous but that wasn't the point.

The point was we want you to come inside of our building and feel a part of what we do. We'll keep figuring out what's the best product to put on the stage we want you to come inside. You want to release this whole idea that everyone has to love you or know what your cultural product is that's probably not going to happen unless you're really, really brilliant and amazing and if so please come to New York and help us, because we need it.

As I mentioned before the goal of audience development is not to fix any social problem and I just want to reiterate that because we all have various issues and conflicts in different communities please don't use audience development to fix that. Audience development is about creating access to arts and culture. You have some political and social concerns then use those tools to change that. Nor is audience development about rescuing a forgotten or pitied group of people as I mentioned before they're all fine, they're all fine.



I also wanted to talk a bit about the global efforts that I've made in developing audiences. You know this is really a universal concern. The more people step outside of themselves you're going to realise it's okay that people look different from me or they speak a different language, you know it's really fine.

When I was marketing director for the Dance Theatre of Harlem which is an internationally renowned African American ballet company, in fact they've been here to Australia several times primarily Sydney. When we started travelling around the country in the US we noticed that the audiences were predominantly white and we wondered, 'Where are the black people?'

We're a black ballet company they should be coming in droves. But it was because of the art-form they felt that classical ballet was a sell out, if a black person did classical ballet that meant you were saying you weren't black, so why should I spend my money and support that kind of psychosis, that's how they may have felt about it. So my job was to educate them about the importance of ballet and why they should come and see it and then creating tools that would allow me to do that.

When we went to Cairo we were invited to perform there, there were so many issues there because in Cairo this was in the 80s' there were 60 million people and the theatre that we were invited to the Opera House could only seat 2000.

These 2000 people had purchased their tickets weeks ago and they definitely represented the elite of society. For us the people that we really wanted to perform to have no access, so how could we make sure we had some connection to them. We spoke to the television station, they have two stations there, Channel 1 and 2 and they're both owned by the same company. So we arranged to give them video tape of the company so it could be shown the entire time we were there so that people could see it in their homes.

We also went to speak to different dance companies and local community groups about what the company in New York was doing, how the dancers were using dance as a way to strengthen their bodies, how they were trying not to get involved with drugs because at that time in Cairo they were very concerned about the drug problem with their youth. We used our dancers as ambassadors to help them with those issues as a way of creating access to those communities.

*[Inaudible]*

I also went to Johannesburg, South Africa in 1992 to create the marketing initiative. We had to develop a campaign that would engage the black South Africans because at that time black South Africans had a pass that required they had to be in their homes by 10pm at night. The curtain came down at 10.10pm. Once again you have a population that cannot come and see the art form that you actually created for them to enjoy.

So how do you get around that? I started to have dialogues with some of the local dance companies and with some of the South Africans as well as advertisers and presenters and we came up with 350 audience development activities over a three week period. Therefore, the Company would perform at 8pm at night and they were out in the townships during the day including Soweto. They presented master classes sometimes out in the front yard, sometimes out in the street and engaging with the community and because of that there was tremendous support from the presenters. Everyone benefited financially because we were accomplishing our goal.

People were still going to the theatre to enjoy the company we were making sure that all of the locals were able to experience the company. The publicity that came out of it for those of you who are press agents was enormous because this was something that was ground breaking. So when you think about audience development it has many different opportunities. That you can utilise to help profile what you're doing but also to let your communities know that there are different ways of accomplishing a goal and you don't have to allow legislation or the lack of funds to be a reason not to accomplish that goal.

I just share those case studies with you as just examples of having very little resources and trying to make the magic happen.

Now I would like to talk about these 10 tools for building audiences. It's not something that you haven't heard before but it's kind of consolidated in an easy format to follow.

Before I get into the 10 Tools I think they're framed by two bookmarks, one is vision which I've talked about the other one is the art of listening. When you are talking with people who feel uninvited and who perhaps have some barriers to you or what you are saying, you have to enhance your listening skills. It's not just listening with your ears that is the last place you need to worry about. I'm talking about polishing the way you listen and watch and observe what people say. Because that's the information that you need to really be able to craft an initiative that represents their interests.

Steven Covey wrote the book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. He says listening is more important than asking questions. He offers three important principals related to this highly necessary skill.

He says look directly at the person who is speaking learn to listen with everything you've got and forget yourself completely. You know how we're listening and you're already preparing your answer or doing your shopping list or you're thinking about how you're going to respond to someone who made you angry earlier on in the day. He is suggesting forget all of that and really put you 100% in the moment.

Why is this important? Successful audience development requires that we talk to our potential audience hear what they have to say and incorporate their ideas into the work of our organisations. So rather than project what we think other people need or want or project our intentions on the behaviour of others we need to understand them as individuals because each person has their own precious gift that they have for us so the way we listen is really important.

There is another book that really inspired me about the art of listening. I don't know if you've heard of it it's by Marty Roberts the book is called *The Man Who Listens to Horses*. It is about a guy who trains horses and he has developed an ability to really connect with them. You're thinking horses, human beings what's the connection. It's all strategies it's all the techniques that we can borrow into what we're doing.

Robert's explains that his ability to listen to horses his ability to read their signs and responds to their needs grew out of his patience, humility and openness of mind. He says not only can horses understand everything said to them and they can tell a lot about a person through observation he created this process called 'Join Up' in which he engages in communications with the horse and builds trust by allowing him to be vulnerable.

What I take from this is the openness that we need to have as we approach these various communities that we're trying to engage not coming with our own preconceived notions of what they need or how they should respond but being totally aware of what we hear.

When we started doing our research at the Public Theatre, because when we started in 1993 after George told me he wanted the subway stop – quote audience then it was okay, 'where do we start?'

My first day at work I had a blank table and my rolodex that I brought with me from Dance Theatre of Harlem, two staff persons who had no experience in marketing much less audience development but very passionate young women.

Where do we start? We started with our research but more importantly we listened, we listened to why people were not coming to our theatre. We've been around for 45 years we created Shakespeare in the Park we were the ones that created multicultural casting. Why aren't you coming to see productions? Those were the questions we asked and we just listened to what they had to say without the 'buts'... just listened.

The philosophy of listening I think is rooted in a belief that the utmost respect should be extended to all living beings and the establishment of clearly designed expectations. I think this is really important to understand these bookends of vision and listening

When I was at Dance Theatre of Harlem we were going into Lincoln Center, for those of you who don't know, the Lincoln Center is probably the most prestigious performing arts centre in the United States and it

was the first time an African American company was going there so we were very concerned. Are audiences going to come, will black people come?

I formed a ground of core community leaders to help me to promote this in the community. There was one woman in particular who was amazing she represented a lot of the churches. In the United States churches are a very powerful tool for marketing for any product, bank loans, mortgages and credit cards.

But for me it's important arts and culture and this woman taught me so much about how to listen to what people need and also how she implemented what she hears to reach her goal. So I have a videotape of one of our meetings and I just wanted to show you about three minutes of her report on what she was saying about what people heard what people told her in the community and how she was able to translate that into ticket sales.

### Tool 1 → INVESTMENT

I'll go into the first tool of audience development. The first step that is so important is investment. You have that here you have your government that is joyfully investing in you're whole process of audience development. It's not just money. Investment means to put in the time and effort for future return. I believe ultimately you're going to see the income and the profit when you make that kind of effort.

The critical point that needs to be embraced by every member of your organisation is that audience development is something that is organic and that you want it to reflect the philosophy of your organisation.

I believe it should be included in your mission statement, that there is something that is philosophically written that anyone can read and understand that this is who we are and this really important.

Along with this idea of investment is the long term labour intensive effort that requires a sense of vision and purpose and requires an understanding of all the complexities and nuances of your organisation so that you can be as creative as possible in your implementation. You may think, well I don't have all the resources to make it happen think again, you may, it's about opening and being creative to that.

*[Presentation of video.]*

Tape session 1, part 2

*(Inaudible)*

What we do with our lives and what I've been emphasising is that we create the context we create the environment in which the ideas can percolate and grow. We empower the very people that we're trying to reach so they will then suggest ways which will best reach their constituents. That's really our jobs.

### Tool 2 → COMMITMENT

Tool Number 2 is commitment. So essential, especially if you're working with a small budget small staff and because of our sense of commitment I think we can be more creative, tenacious and focused.

Having a passion for audience development is imperative because this work requires commitment to attaining a result not giving up on our efforts when change doesn't happen right away or losing faith in our communities' abilities to respond. We have to continue to matter what it will happen with time and passion.

I think commitment also means extending our life to supporting to the goals of various organisations and communities that we are trying to reach, which means perhaps we can join the board of directors. Perhaps

we can start to go to some of their activities, some of their meetings to have a better understanding of what their cultural needs are.

### Tool 3 – EDUCATING ARTIST AND AUDIENCES

The third tool is educating your artist and audience. Audience development also means educating not only the audiences about the value of what it is that we have but also the artist that we are working with whose work is ultimately the foundation in which this initiative rests. We have to take on the role of educators, I'm not talking about arts and education programmes which I know a lot of you have, but I'm talking about designing systems that will inform your artists and audiences about your vision and they will support based on shared interests.

To educate artists means to share the vision of your organisation so that they become aware of the larger goal beyond the creation of their own projects. Most artists want to just do their work they don't want to hear about ticket sales, audiences coming, who they are, what they look like and where they came from. 'I want to create my work and hopefully get paid at the end of the day. I don't think artists have that luxury anymore, I think that all of us are in this together and I believe our responsibility as administrators is to encourage them to also be active in how we can engage our constituents. What does that mean? Well in some instances it can mean asking the artists will they be available to come with you to help demystifying the product. Many times that's what prohibits people from trying different things they just don't know what it is. Think of yourself when you go to a restaurant, you usually order your favourite dish or one that you know is going to taste really well or one that someone recommended to you. But if you see something you've never heard of what is your impetus to try it. That's why demystifying the product is very important and artists can be very helpful. It doesn't mean that they become ticket sellers they don't have to take a marketing course it means that they will make themselves available to go with you to go a school or to do readings at bookstores.

When I was at the Public Theatre as is the tradition with most theatres the first day of rehearsal is a meet and greet. It's when all of the creative team gets together with the entire staff. My staff knew to run to all of the actors and tell them we're going to need you to come with us out to the community – just say yes. They would look at us – that department is crazy. We had a reputation, they called us the 'integration warriors' of the Public Theatre, those three they're crazy over there but they're really determined and they're very sincere so that's why they let us stay I guess – didn't put us away.

By going up to the actors the first day of rehearsal we kind of planted the seed in their heads, we're going to be calling you later there are some schools we need you to go speak with, bookstores or some collaborations with some other groups that will help us serve as a way of educating. These new audiences think we should be empowered to do that.

Also educating the audiences required that we share our vision with them, as well as helping them become familiar with what we are doing. I think we do this in advance of our expectations with them to come to the box office to buy tickets for them to purchase a work of art.

Audiences need to understand what it is that we're encouraging them to see not just us tell them to go or just come and see it, it's going to be great. You have to explain why because there are other things that they can do with their time.

I think we need the compassion to maintain an imaginative theatre which is beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those different from us. So again it's outside of yourself, your life, how you see things to understand how do they see it, and attaching a value to that as opposed to a judgement.

Educating your audience means helping them understand the importance of a mutual benefit from connecting their lives to your art-form so that they can see that is something that can be helpful either to their children, something that would be a form of entertainment, it reflects your culture, whatever the languages to say – to say it.

Ultimately the goal of the arts I think is to create global citizens who have the wisdom to perceive the inter connectiveness of life. We are all connected at the end of the day and what we are trying to do is extend those lines of connections through the arts.

My former boss George Wolfe used to say what he loved about America was that we were all mutts, we were all a combination of all kind different ethnic backgrounds whether one wanted to acknowledge it or not.

We all come to the country with a different cultural background and then once we got there, there was a lot of intermarrying and all kinds of things happening, but he said what connected us was our lives, was our history together. So I think knowing this helps for us to remove that barrier or that fear of I can't talk to these people – sure you can, we are all part of the same family. The inter connectiveness of life is very important to understand.

#### Tool 4 → RESEARCH

Tool number four is research, that's the most important component of audience development. If you don't want to do anything else or care about anything else you do about your research because that informs your decisions. There are several types of research that we are going to get into because this is not a marketing presentation.

I think what's most important about your research is that you want to understand the buying habits of audiences you want to reach. You want to understand what have been the existing barriers. As I mentioned to you before, when we did our research at the Public Theatre, what we did at that time in 1993 this was pre internet days we went through the phone book and we looked up any organisation that had the word youth to it or community, because we didn't have any place else to start. We had this mission – to create a subway stop, my gosh, that's the world. Okay well we can't call the world today so let's just narrow this down by calling all of these individuals. What we would do is pick up the phone, Hi my name is DWK, I'm calling from the Public Theatre. We have this new initiative called 'Cultural Explosions' and we would like to get to know you and talk to you about how we might work together. That's all we said, work together not Hi we want you to come see our show, Hi we have ticket discount program, do you have a mailing list that we can borrow, none of that.

Hi we would like to talk about how we can work together, so most were curious. This is New York most people were very curious, 'sure what have you got?' They would say okay well come in let's talk so we didn't come just ourselves we brought tokens/ you know t-shirts, cups, posters things like that.

In 1993 the Public Theatre was experiencing a very low audience attendance we had like 35% of our capacity buying tickets, so there was a lot of merchandise stored in our basement. I went down there I saw all those t-shirts and posters and I said I'm getting those things out of here and so I asked permission, you know the internal collaboration thing is important and got permission to use whatever I needed.

Every time we went to a meeting we took something from the Public Theatre with us, whether it was a cap, a mug, posters something from Shakespeare in the Park and people really appreciated that. You know how much we all like to gather stuff. If you look in your closets the stuff that we have that you felt so good when you got it and so this is all I'm talking about, it's the moment. It's that one moment you get that one shot when you can walk into someone's heart, one time to do it so you want to be able to walk in boldly with compassion.

So that's one of the things that we wanted to accomplish. We went into these meetings with these smiles and because we are so fresh and we haven't had a lot of experiences to feel overwhelmed or defeated. We're going in there with a lot of zest, we're so excited it's Cultural Explosions. Look we've brought gifts and want to talk about how we can work together. They were like – Who are these people?

But their lives were opened so then we could step in and talk about okay we're a theatre and to be honest with my staff didn't know what the plays were, because we started this on our first day.

I started September 15 1993, I left Dance Theatre of Harlem that Friday so my whole world had been classical ballet now I'm in theatre the following Monday, like two days later! Do you think in two days I had time to cram the history of Shakespeare and the history of modern American Theatre – I don't think so!

That Monday I'm like the rest of these people that we're approaching, I don't know a lot about the theatre but what I do know is the value of the arts and that's what I was selling not the specific art-form because I didn't have that information yet.

So as we're going in and talking to these groups they're really receptive to working together, creating something that would allow them to feel a part of the theatre.

So what have we learned, we've learned several things. One, yes almost everyone had heard about the Public Theatre. Two, why didn't they come? They didn't feel invited. Three, why didn't they feel invited? I didn't see myself represented in the art-form. Four, if that happens would you come? Maybe that's all the information I needed to know right then.

Going back to internal education, we took all that information back to the Public Theatre, spoke to our artistic team, literary team this is what we're hearing so if we want to cultivate these audiences they have to see their culture on the stage. Are you prepared to make that commitment, otherwise it's not going to be effective. So these were the conversations we had internally but what came out of the research for us was three programs that we institutionalised.

One of them was Free at Three. The third Sunday of every month we would give to any organisation who asked two hours to do whatever they wanted at the Public Theatre. You might think why is that important? The Public Theatre is a very prestigious place and if you are a small arts organisation or one individual artist to say that you are performing at the Public Theatre is extremely helpful from a funding point of view. To get press for your community for you to feel that your work is more value, more enhanced.

So now we're giving them things that will help enhance what they're doing. There's a value to this for us they're bringing in their community. That was the deal, you get the space for free and you bring in the audiences. Once the person stepped inside the door of the Public Theatre they were mine. I took them and we would go up to them. How are you? Where did you come from? Where do you live? Would you come back? Was it what you would like to see? Very hands on very grass roots very life to life. Looking at them in the eyes, smiling smiles are very powerful please using them more we would have much less violence in our society just smile, even if it hurts. Those are the ways we connect with these new audiences who for the first time were coming inside to our building.

Why did they come? because we created a bridge. What was the bridge? Their friend was performing at the Public and they wanted to come and support. All of this is for free, no money exchanged hands.

As an organisation we had the space it was literally empty as I told you no-one was coming anyway. Why not use this space as a way to cultivate new audiences. The ideas would come from them we didn't say you've got the third Sunday of the month you should do a reading by this playwright. No here's your two hours as long as it's legal and you have to say that in New York as long as it's legal you can do whatever you like. So what did they do, staged readings, they had meetings, they did musical performances, they did all kinds of things that were really extraordinary. That program continues at the Public Theatre as a way of cultivating new audiences and serving as a point of entry.

The second thing we heard we went to Harlem as you know Harlem is predominantly black American community although now it's becoming much more diverse and we met with a group of theatre directors. George Wolfe and myself we were sitting around a table and George said so how can we work together, what do you guys need here and they said we need Shakespeare, nobody every does Shakespeare in Harlem. You think people in Harlem can't appreciate Shakespeare and we said no we just hadn't thought about it. So we ran back to the office talked to our literary team and came up with a programme with a really

complicated name Shakespeare in Harlem. This programme was a week of free classes that our multicultural actors gave to the community of Harlem of learning the language of Shakespeare.

We found out one of the reasons we weren't seeing a diverse community audience for Shakespeare was the language. Maybe people felt they wouldn't understand it without even hearing it. Just the word Shakespeare to them detonated some very complicated dialect or if I'm not British I won't be able to understand it so I better not go because they would feel intimidated. So what we did was demystify Shakespeare by going into the community with people who looked like them presenting workshops dialogue and then ending with a free performance. Where we would have a question and answer afterwards. That programme continues until today and not only is it in Harlem but it's in all the five boroughs that make up New York. Those are highly funded programmes those are the kind of initiatives that corporate sponsors are extremely interested in because it shows community initiative and it shows collaboration.

All of this we learned from listening, these are none of my ideas these are what people were saying they wanted to do. The other thing we created after our third month of this research and meeting people and giving away all the merchandise and partnering we realised we needed to have an event that would bring everybody to this one room. So we had an Open House. I don't know if you have open houses here but I think they are an excellent way of welcoming people into your season and your home.

Think of your arts organisation as your home. For me it was having everyone into my living room, you know small group three hundred and fifty people into my living room to talk about the arts and culture. This first open house had a very international feeling because our initiative at the Public Theatre – Subway Stop but we had to start somewhere. So we nailed it down to Asia/American, Latin/American, Native/Americans and African/Americans. Those were the four ethnic groups that we were trying to target.

At this Open House we had drummers from those various countries, so as you walked into the building you hear this amazing rhythm and energy which just kind of opened your life a bit. My point is use everything use the opportunity to get people to walk into your building. We knew once you crossed the doors and you start to hear the drums naturally you start to move a little you kind of loosen up but there is also this connection that comes from your life that says this is kind of nice. This means you are now open to hear what's next. They get past the drums they sign in and then we have them come into one of our large theatres where we now have some speeches and we are able to get some of our actors and board members to welcome them to the Public Theatre. To talk about how important it was that they were there and working together and the future and then George shared his vision. People need to know what it is that you're doing and why? So don't keep it a secret say it as often as you can.

George articulated his vision as the artistic director these are the kind of choices I want to make and for these reasons. That allowed people to feel not so strange and it makes sense, I really like this guy. So after that we thought we have a beautiful theatre let's show it of. Like this beautiful place here, that's how you get the staff involved.

All of our staff became guides and we broke off into groups of ten and they started to take all of the people – three hundred and fifty people around the Public Theatre sharing the history of the building this is the place where this play was created. Hair was first done on this stage A Chorus Line was on this spot go ahead and stand there. You can stand on the same spot Robert Di Niro was standing when he did his one man show.

Because we had the history we were using it to engage and educate. Of course, not all of you have that kind of pedigree and I'm just giving broad strokes for you to translate to what you need. You wouldn't want me to come here if I didn't give you broad strokes. Having that kind of history really helped people connect to the Public Theatre.

After they had the tours then we had a big party in lobby. If you take anything away from the lecture today FOOD is a critical tool for audience development, good food not little finger sandwiches, beans and rice, chicken, hearty substantial food. Why? Because if they didn't like one thing you said, anything they saw, they had a good meal. That becomes the memory of you. You have to start somewhere even if you call them up and say Hi remember that good meal you had, let's go forward with that. That's one of the reasons I think food is so critical.

We had a lot of good food that was donated from a lot of restaurants which is something that is fairly easy to do for all you marketers, you know how to do that. Then we had them complete a survey because we wanted to learn about them and that information from the survey became our database for our multicultural community. So that's how we kind of unfolded the strategy.

#### Tool 5 – REVIEW & ANALYSIS

You've been doing your research the next step is to take a look at it. What have you learned? How can you incorporate that into the fabric of your organisation? Who do you need to connect with to make that happen? Is price a concern? Do you need to reduce your price, are they okay? Do you need to do discounts? What are the barriers?

#### Tool 6 – FOLLOW UP

Most importantly is to not disappoint the people you are trying to cultivate. Please don't make any promises that you can't deliver. It's okay to say I don't know or we'll have to get back to you. But to commit and say yes we're going to be here full force, we're going to do your plays, we're going to hang your works on the walls, we're going to go into the community and bring our technicians when you don't have the authority to do that or the resources is fatal. Because you've started from a position of mistrust, you've now gained the trust you don't want to do anything that will take that away. Please be very careful in your follow up.

#### Tool 7 – PARTNERSHIPS

Frankly this is where I have the most fun because I love collaborations and I think this is really a smart way to do audience development. Partnerships fundamentally have to be based on a feeling of equality. What they are bringing is just as valuable as what you may have to offer. You may have to do an internal sales job because everyone may not agree with you about partnerships or they may not want to buy into. Because of your passion and focus you'll be able to make that happen. Some of the partnerships I really enjoyed were with the visual arts because I love the collaboration of the different art forms. I don't think that audience development requires you to work in just that one form I think the more points of entry you can create the more a person can feel comfortable and have access.

I work a lot with galleries and museums in New York and one of the plays I worked on a musical called Harlem Song was about the history of Harlem. The Metropolitan Museum of Art also has an audience development initiative and they were very interested in us working together. It just so happens they had an exhibition on African American art in the 1940's which was around the same period as this play. We decided to collaborate so what that meant was we would bring our artistic team who would explain how we put this show together from the choreography to the music, to the script and then we had a performer sing some of the songs. They had a curator talk about the art from that period and how it reflected the music and choreography that we put together. At the end of the presentation, our choreographer taught everyone a dance step that they could do in their seats.

People left feeling happy and joyful and then the curator offered private tours through the exhibition. Seven hundred and fifty people came to this free event at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These are the kind of initiatives that we started to institute combining art-forms. There was a very modest budget and all the planning was done very low key with a lot of email back and forth.

Another interesting partnership I did with the visual arts was with Studio Museum in Harlem which is another wonderful museum which documents history of African Americans. We were doing a play called Top Dog Under Dog by Suzan-Lori Parks. It is about two brothers and their struggle for control and understanding. Studio Museum asked if we would work together which was very nice. They had a programme already that



targes young intellectual artists, savvy crowd and they wanted to have something interesting to offer them. So I brought the cast of this play there for a discussion and it was a really smart discussion.

The cast was Jeffrey Wright and Don Cheadle who are very famous actors in New York, in America primarily in film. People were very excited to be able to engage in dialogue with both of them. But more importantly it was a way for us to collaborate [through] theatre and the visual arts to create a third art-form. You know create something else that people could attach themselves to. Those are just a couple of the partnerships and collaborations that I think I've really had a good time doing and I'll talk about those when we get into the case studies.

### **Tool 8 – BUILDING BRIDGES**

The eighth tool is building bridges, extending an invitation. Just keep in mind what we're doing is building bridges to communities and we're encouraging them to feel comfortable to leave their house to come to your house. Just consider what needs to be in the middle what's in the path, what kind of gestures do you need to make what sees to you need to plant that suggests that it's safe and they'll be welcome.

One of the first things that George did at the Public Theatre was to fire all of the house staff at the box office staff because they were typical New Yorkers, arrogant. Couldn't care less about you or what you needed, just arrogant. I'm from Chicago I'm still visiting New York even though I've been there for twenty three years. It was true, that's a real turn off for someone who doesn't feel invited.

You got up the courage to go in there and buy a ticket and then someone doesn't even look up at you and they say give me your money and sign here and you go away and you kind of feel like you want to crawl up under a rug. That's not audience development, so rather than try and re programme them get rid of them. He brought in younger people, very multicultural representing all the different constituents we were trying to reach who wanted to be there and who understood the vision.

That changed things dramatically for us because that was the welcome before they can get to your programme they have to get past the house staff. They have to first go buy their ticket so it's very important who these people are. You have to be mindful of who they are and take the time and go and talk to them and make sure they understand that they are the ambassadors for your initiative so they are there with a smile and you don't want them standing there with their arms crossed, with a smirk on their face, if they can't smile at least look pleasant, have your eyes opened.

The little things that will make a person think okay I can go in here. Some of these organisations and facilities can be very threatening if you've never been there before, so just keep it in mind that's what building this bridge is about all the same steps we need to do to open that up.

### **Tool 9 – CREATING VALUE**

One of things that I have to emphasize is that audience development is not charity work as mentioned to you before we are not social workers we are not saving the world. We are talking about how to make arts and culture accessible to everyone and how to attack the existing barriers that may have systematically or not denied them in a very subtle way access. That's what creating value is about. It's not just increasing earned income and it's not always reflected dollar for dollar.

For instance, someone will say you've spent all this time how much money did you bring? That's not always the way you can evaluate audience development. It's certainly not going to be an immediate way.

I think ultimately the goal is that you are going to make your financial target but that it's not going to be a direct path. I think it's something that's very long term. For us at the Public Theatre just when I left which was last year we were really seeing very systematic ways of audiences coming in supporting all the different

productions and seeing an increase in our earned income. We would normally per year see a 10% income on our ticket sales based on the efforts of my department and by the time I had left that had increased even more but that took nine years so that takes a long time.

Be aware that you cannot create value by giving away free tickets. So many people will call me and say, well we're doing audience development we gave away tickets to this group of kids the other day. No you didn't you just gave away tickets to a group of kids that's all you did. That had nothing to do with audience development. Why? No value, where is the value? When someone calls you up and says hey I got a free ticket for a concert tonight, do you feel as if there's been a cultivation process. There's been a courtship that someone cares about you and what your interest are, NO. You got a free ticket and if you're not busy you'll go but if it's raining you may not go. So how does that allow you to reach your goal, it doesn't.

I really want to emphasise [that] giving away tickets is not a long term strategy of audience development. If you find you have tickets or you have seats or you have a day where your gallery can be opened to a community let the community know what you're going. Tell them you are our cultural ambassadors we are inviting you here because you represent a constituency.

Choose them carefully don't just go through the phone book and call the first ten people you see. Call organisations that represent groups that you want to cultivate. Call tastemakers, who are they? People whose names you see in the newspaper and society columns. I call those the big mouths, those are the people who like to see their names in the society columns.

Give them some reason to be in the papers by inviting them to come to your events so that they can go back and talk about it. These are the people who create that buzz and you want to find those people and court them as well. That's when you can start to create value if you find that you have these free tickets.

Also if you find you're working with students encourage them to write thank you letters, encourage them to maybe use this as a term paper so that they start to feel there's a real reason why I'm doing this and there's an attachment to this.

#### Tool 10 – APPRECIATION

The last tool is appreciation. Henry James once wrote three things in life are important, the first is to be kind, the second is to be kind, and the third is to be kind. At the end of the day it all comes down to the little things we do and showing how you appreciate whatever someone does for you. In this journey if they give you a name, if they give you a smile, if they close the door, say thank you. Please note that not everyone is going to welcome you.

We went to one organisation, a Latino cultural organisation. I actually kind of knew the executive director and I thought this is going to be an easy meeting. My staff and I went and I took the producers because I thought this was going to be really great and we sat down. I had my mug, I had given her a Public Theatre mug, put it in the centre of the table and it's shiny and everything and she just said to me – I don't do this. What do you mean, I said and she just said to me I don't do this and I said excuse me and she said I don't do this what do you mean I said I do not share information I am tired of cultural appropriation, I am tired of you white organisations coming to us multicultural organisations and wanting our resources and I will not do it and she stood up and left the room.

I was so shocked because when I checked the mirror that morning I could have sworn I was black but you know something may have happened on the subway I don't know, but her perception regardless of her looking at me and the fact that my boss looks like me she saw a white institution and she was not having it and she left.

It took me five years to court her, for her to really trust what we were doing with the Latino community. Ultimately she started to do her programmes there. She represented a very large population so her point of view was one that I had to deal with. You may find that despite your good intention or how you look you

may be perceived differently. That's your point of departure not what you think but what they perceive. It also takes their courage to acknowledge that.

But getting back to appreciation I even sent her a thank you letter even though she left the room and didn't give anything. I thanked her for giving me that one minute to tell me that she wasn't going to give me anything. You constantly are the person who is showing the example because we are all pioneers in this world this is still a new effort so it's very important how we craft that.

With that I would like us to take a little break and we will come back with some case studies.

## CASE STUDIES

[DWK] So how many of you are sitting with people you know, you came with. Could you please move when we do the break out groups I'd like you to do that with people you don't know so that you can learn from each other, and share some new experiences.

Let's do it quickly 10, 9, 8

Okay let's settle down.

Okay what I'd like to do now in the half hour before we commence our break out session is to share with you some of the case studies that represent some of the communities I've worked with. One will be with the Asian American community and with the Latino community and then with the Native American and this will all be related to the theatre, Public Theatre.

In the early 90's at the Public Theatre there was a period of a few years when we did not produce plays by an Asian American playwright. Because this is an important demographic felt we needed to, reach out to them in a substantial way in as a creative a way as possible.

When we did produce a play by an Asian playwright, we found that it was very cutting edge and it wasn't attractive to the older demographic. You know when you do audience development, there are so many layers, not just the work with the community but also the ages within that community. That's a whole other workshop on generational marketing and looking at the buying habits and interests of those groups.

We found that the works we had chosen to produce were not attractive to the older demographic which was primarily the ticket buying community. Then when we changed and started to do plays that were more relative to second generation audience members. In the history for instance in the Japanese community we found there were stories they didn't want told. They said this is our secret referring to a play about a mistress who had been with a family and she ran away and got killed. It was based on a true story and they said these are the kind of this we don't want to see on stage.

So you're like gosh! This one is too cutting edge, this one is a family secret what can we do? So we started to do several things and this was in 1995. One of my staff persons was Filipina and she really decided I am going to personally make sure that we start to engage this community. She started to visit the various Filipino based arts organisations and asked them, 'how can we work together?'

Many of them needed a space for their meetings, many of them needed some curatorial help they needed some dramaturgical support something to help shape their work. Some of them needed technical support, they didn't know how to do marketing and so we decided we were going to try and fulfill those needs.

We started to have workshops specifically for that target group bringing them in the theatre having them use the 'free at three' as a way to have their monthly events and then also at the same time opened up a pub in our theatre that we call Joe's Pub. It's a bar where we have live entertainment and we told them they could have it and do with it what you would about one or two days a week because we were programming it every day.

They started to bring in hip hop - Filipino based hip hop so that took care of the pub. Free at Three was the traditional theatre having their own kind of stage readings and then were helping the emerging groups with the technical assistance. We had all of these different layers moving forward with this community and this went on for a couple of years. Now we have traffic coming in and out of the building. Then we decided we would host a week long Asian Writers Conference.

You need to understand in America Asian/American, Latino/Americans are political terms they do not in anyway describe what those groups are. There's a lot of controversy in using them to describe various communities and these are things I had to learn as I said I come from Chicago the Southside, my entire life up until coming to New York had only been black people then all of a sudden I'm in the subway.

I had to broaden my life to understand what the different ethnic groups represent. And what does that mean politically within the Asian community understanding Filipino, Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese those were the four main groups that we were working with but their interests were very different. I couldn't think we're doing an Asian American play they're all coming – no they're not.

Who's the author, what is it about where does it take place, that's who's coming. So that became the focus. We had to do that for each of those groups in order for them to feel engaged but more importantly respected because everywhere else they're going they are being lumped together. Here is the one place where we can be sensitive and take the time to acknowledge those distinctions.

So with this Asian Writer's Conference we decided to present excerpts from every play the Public Theatre had produced over its forty five year history by an Asian American playwright which David Henry Hwang, Phillip Katanga, Jessica Hagadorn, Han Ong, amazing playwrights. This was quite an undertaking because this was part of the fabric of the Public. Our artistic director and our board of directors were on board. We had the funding to make this happen. We didn't have your multicultural arts programme where we could have got the money from your federal government this was all an internal commitment and decision.

For a week we produced these staged readings and had a reception after each reading and depending on the playwrights country of origin was the food that we had for the reception afterwards. They were amazingly successful and that was the first time that the theatre going community within that population really felt the Public's commitment to them. It was great we were giving them access to the space but to actually present their works and take the time to create the receptions and have a question and answer with the playwrights and do it for a week was really extraordinary. No one else had done that at that time this was about in 1998. This was an opportunity for us to acknowledge the contributions of Asian artists especially to the theatre community and it was standing room only for each night. It wasn't just the Asian Americans that came it was multicultural kind of effort that clearly our effort was to engage this target group.

Around 1998 we had internal discussions about doing a huge play that would really allow us to cement our relationships with this target population. The play we chose was Dog Eaters, I don't know if anyone has heard of it. It is a play by Jessica Hagadeorn who is a highly renowned Filipino playwright in American. This play was about her growing up in the Marcos regime. It's a brilliant play which had twenty cast members and was really wonderful.

We sat down with Jessica in 1998 and mapped out what to do you think we could do to really engage the Filipino community. Clearly this was a play that would be of interest to them we know it would be for the recent immigrants who just left. They want to see how do you treat that era and then the children of those who are now in their twenty's and thirty's. Also they wanted to see what happened and how they can understand their history more.

We knew there was some value to this choice. But we had to be smart about how do we use this as a tool to engage this community. So we went back to our 10 tools. Research we started to visit the video stores to find out that there was one artist, one actor, I don't if you get All My Children here but it's a soap opera. Okay it's a very popular soap opera in the US, and the star of it she's been on it since the first day. It would be like having the star of the most successfully soap opera in a play and of course everyone was going to flock and see it.

Fortunately, the casting directors chose the most successfully soap star in the Phillipines... Going to the video stores we found out if we had his name in all of our print materials they're going to run to the box office. So not only did we put his name we made a strip across the posters huge printing starring Joel Torres so you couldn't miss and were made sure that we distributed this posters to every single Filipino based video store that we could find in the five boroughs and New Jersey.

How did we find these, well I contacted NYU's Department of Asian Pacific American Studies and asked for students to work with us on this project. [We always need help look out to your resources.] NYU is across the street from the Public Theatre literally and so they were great. They joined in and helped us do a lot of this leg work. That was one important step that casting and we decided we're going to create a menu out events which were sold as a point of entry so this community can taste the product.

People need to take a peek so again go back to the menu. We have this dish we've never heard of it before, you say can I taste it? There is no tasting in the performing arts you know you have to just go. I think we have to create more commercials.

I have a friend who said, 'Donna there's no commercials with theatre you just have to go buy a ticket because we can't afford to do commercials on television not like you do for a show, or something'. How do you sample the work in a safe way? That's what we tried to create with our theatres.

We looked at all the components of the play to see how could we stretch the experience of it and I happened to be walking by a production table and noticed there were a lot of photographs on the table. I thought of mounting a photo exhibit. There were just photographs that were used as background material to give the actors a sense of context of the Phillipines in the 70's and 80's, but for me this was a photo exhibit. This is what happens when you are really fulfilling your mission.

It just happens that the photographer walks by and I asked her if we could we use these for a photo exhibit. The photos she had were part of a book being released, so of course the publishers were looking for a way to promote the book. She's happy because here's another way for her to promote the book. I'm happy because it provides yet another window into the work. It became a win win situation, no one loses.

We've got a way now to create this photo exhibit we've got the materials here photos show different images from the Phillipines we had easels around in the theatre we set them up we had Joel Torres the soap opera star as the host. What does that mean? It means he stood there and said 'Hi, Thanks for coming'. Who did we market it to? To all the galleries to people we found enjoyed the visual arts who may not have ever come to the theatre, but who were Filipino. That was our goal, trying to access them as many ways as possible, that was one item on the menu.

Back to Joes Pub... Okay I told you the Filipino community is doing their programming for Joe's Pub. We found out that many of the cast members for the show are performers who had done Miss Saigon on Broadway. A lot of the Broadway shows that had Asian actors were now in Dogeaters. We asked them if they could put together a musical review and call it Dog Eaters.

Now the review had nothing to do with the play but what we're doing was branding the word Dog Eaters. We had this wild zany show with them singing and dancing doing all kinds of crazy songs and performing hip hop. None of it had anything to do with the play but after each act the mc would say don't forget to get your tickets for Dog Eaters look on your tables there's a discount coupon for Dog Eaters. The audience and their friends - a group of young 18 to 25 year olds were coming into Joe's Pub having a good time and now getting exposed to Dog Eaters, in a way that's accessible to them. That was the second item on the menu.

The third thing we did was with the academic community. NYU as I told you had been very helpful. We asked them to sponsor a panel discussion where we looked up the historical context during that time and see what progressions and movements have happened and invited some of their faculty to participate.

They hosted that event and over 400 students came. Now we had the academic community buying into this because the event was sold at NYU with their teachers that they know talking about a topic which is part of

their CV anyway so they wanted to have a better understanding of it and we took actors who talked about it from their perspective. So that was another menu item.

Then we contacted the Asia Society. They had a membership drive and they were trying to think of ways to entice their members to do something that was unique instead of coming to see an exhibit. We suggested a pre performance discussion which we called 'On the Set of Dog Eaters'. The panel consisted of an important photo journalist, the playwright and someone from the Asia Society sitting on the actual set of Dog Eaters before the show at 6.30pm talking about the show. Then you saw the show and they you had a reception and this was marketed exclusively to the patrons of the Asia Society. That was another menu item.

Then we contacted the Asian American Writers' Workshop. They are a group of writers who publish and they have meetings and different events they suggested they have a party with the playwright Jessica and they came up with a name Dog Eat Dog party.

I thought that was a very offensive title but they came up with the name but who cares what I think, this was their party. They had this Dog Eat Dog with Jessica and asked here twenty questions so throughout you've got this group of Filipinos all dancing and then someone would go on the microphone and ask Jessica a question and she would answer it. Like how long have you been writing? What made you write this play? When was the last time you were in the Philippines? Really not substantial deep questions because it's a party.

One of my staff persons who went to the party when she was dancing someone came and tapped; her on the shoulder to buy groups so she's dancing and she's selling tickets at the same time. This brought in that whole literary community and now everyone is starting to converge and understand this is an important production this is about our history and this institution has made incredible gestures to engage us on many different layers.

So the result of the Dog Eaters was that it was sold out and extended three times. The audience was 65% Filipino the first time in the history of theatre in New York that we had that number from that community coming consistently to see a play at The Public. It was an extraordinary experience because it taught us the value of those tools – investment, research, commitment, building the bridge, partnerships and collaboration.

When we put all that together the results are going to be successful there is no way that it won't be a wonderful experience. Also Jessica did a lot of readings in bookstores we took her around to different communities, it helps when you've got a playwright that's alive because you can't do this with Shakespeare so it's really great when they're alive and understand what we're trying to accomplish because we took the time to educate our artists, again going back to our tools.

Another community that was a little more challenging to cultivate was the Latino Community. What I learnt very quickly was there was a little bit of conflict between the Cubans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and Ecuadorians. I just thought everyone got along I didn't know we are doing these plays one of them is by a Cuban playwright and because my staff person was Puerto Rican we were marketing to the Puerto Rican community.

They weren't coming at all and we were saying what's wrong? This is a great play with a great cast. We've met all the people everyone's got cups they've come here they've eaten what is missing. After asking more questions we found out who's the playwright – he's Cuban and you're inviting Puerto Ricans what is wrong with you, that doesn't work.

Okay, we had to do our research to find so where are the Cubans because we hadn't even thought of them as a target market it just hadn't even crossed our minds. We found where they lived all their buying habits and then started to market to them. One of the ways that we were able to engage them was through music and found that was our most successful tool for us to bring in the Latino community Puerto Rican and Cuban.

Two things happened. One, I was talking to one of my staff persons who knew the composer for the *I Love Lucy* show, Marco Rizzo. Have you seen the show? He is about 200 years old the compose and became 20

year's old, amazing the power of the arts! My staff person said if we could get him to come and play the Cubans will come out I said okay I'm going to trust you on this one.

It was a Free at Three programme we decided to link it to the play we were doing by a Cuban playwright, Dancing on her Knees. We had a three o'clock matinee because we understand that people are late coming we decided to programme it at five to make the Free at Three programme at five. So the play was at three and the Free at Three at Five.

Featuring this pianist who was simply playing melodies from scores he had written then we had a panel discussion with the playwright the musical composer and guess who – the woman I told you about before who got up and left. She now was part of the panel discussion talking about ethno music and Cuba was the theme.

The fusion of Cuban music and Bee Pop I think it is fascinating stuff, really amazing! This panel discussion was happening at five o'clock. Traditionally I find people come to things late so now six o'clock I'm starting to see some of the fabulous Cubans coming through the door, women with these minks on. 'What time is the programme?' 'Oh it started an hour ago but that's okay we were waiting for you'.

We finally got the programme going it was standing room only these are all free events but the value of that day was that after the matinee we had the cast members come on stage and talk about the play because we had a captive audience we had a room of three hundred Cuban Americans first time in the Public Theatre. So rather than have them come and say we got to hear Mario Rizzo play these great songs it was rather we went to the Public Theatre and we heard about a new play.

We had cast members describe the play, and then I went right up and said 'the box office is right this way and we have a special discount price for you today.' Literally sixty people followed me to the box office I was kind of way like the Pied Piper. That was one way we kind of broke that door getting through to that audience.

The second thing happened with music we got a phone call from a group called Dark Latin Groove. They no longer exist but they were very popular hip hop Latin group, very strong and smart and they said we want to do something with the Public Theatre so we thought okay you can do a Free at Three. Then we thought wait a minute we're doing another play by a Puerto Rican playwright maybe they can play and we could help people buy tickets and we could put this together these are the ways we started to collaborate.

We didn't realise how popular that group was until we had reservations for six hundred in a space that accommodated two hundred. We hadn't even counted the number reservations because we didn't think we would get that many.

*[End of case studies and beginning of the work-shop with Melbourne based discussions.]*