



Jazz Arts Group - Jazz Audiences Initiative November 2009

What is the Jazz Audiences Initiative?

The **Jazz Audiences Initiative** will tackle fundamental questions about how and why people engage with jazz. Jazz artists and presenters nationwide will learn new ideas for building audiences, and infusing the art form with new energy. Over the next 21 months, the project team will research and test new strategies for overcoming barriers to jazz participation and for building jazz audiences through more targeted marketing and programming efforts.

Why is this Work Necessary?

Relatively little research has been done on jazz audiences and what they value. We know that jazz audiences are aging, jazz media outlets and festivals are fading, jazz organizations are struggling, and jazz musicians are overly burdened. In addition, the jazz field lacks meaningful opportunities to network and learn as a professional community.

Simultaneously, we know that in general, audiences crave participative, interactive and intimate experiences that they help create. They make last minute decisions to attend events, and subscription buyers have declined drastically. As more people look to create a “work-life” balance, they are interested in modest ‘perfect moments’ as a result of experiences that are authentic, community-based and unforgettable.¹

The long-term sustainability of jazz depends on new knowledge and insight about the needs, attitudes and motivations of existing and potential audiences.

What Work will be Undertaken?

The Jazz Audiences Initiative will be comprised of three main tracks:

Track 1: Investigate and create deeper understanding of the musical tastes, and perceptions of jazz and music preferences, with particular attention on the language used to describe the music. This work will qualitatively explore the potential jazz market in Columbus. Research will begin by exploring how people construct preferences for different forms of music and especially jazz, and what language they use to describe it. This will involve comparing what styles of music people *say* they like, with how they respond to various types of music played when they actually hear it. In other words, we’ll see how their perceptions align with their actual tastes. This research will create a new vocabulary for describing jazz and will reveal how jazz artists and presenters can communicate about jazz more effectively.

Track 2: Develop new segmentation models for current jazz audiences and potential jazz audiences. This track will have two components: 1) survey current jazz audiences in a number of cities nationwide to understand their attitudes and behaviors related to jazz – knowledge and experience, modes of engagement, consumption patterns, preferences and tastes – and develop a new model of jazz audiences; and 2) develop a simpler ‘market model’ for prospective jazz audiences by surveying music lovers in Columbus who do not attend live jazz concerts. These new tools will inform the development of new marketing and programming strategies to broaden the audience for jazz.

Track 3: Nurture and Sustain a Community of Practice. A vital element of the Jazz Audiences Initiative is developing and sustaining a learning group of project partners and jazz stakeholders to discuss and debate the use and implications of the research findings. To support this work, an online community will be created with discussion threads, message boards, research posts, music samples, and other data related to the project. The intent is to host meaningful conversations that support the project, and to translate research findings and lessons into support for the

¹ From *Insight Required*, by Gerri Morris and Andrew McIntyre, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, www.lateralthinkers.com

everyday work that happens in arts organizations. The jazz field is lacking in networking and convening opportunities and the “community of practice” will help fill that void during the Initiative and into the future. The community of practice will convene in Columbus in June 2011.

What Results are We After?

1. New knowledge and strategies for broadening, deepening and diversifying participation in the performing arts, specifically jazz, will be replicable and grounded in statistically accurate research protocols.
2. Presenters, producers, artists, and organizations in Central Ohio and across the U.S. will be able to engage current and new audiences using information that is unique, and values-driven, particularly in the genre of jazz.
3. New language and messages will be created to help presenters, producers, artists, and organizations describe their work in ways that align with the needs, values and behaviors of current and potential participants, especially in the genre of jazz.
4. A multi-dimensional community of practice for jazz professionals supports ongoing dissemination of information and diffusion of effective new ideas and practices.

How is this Work Possible?

The Jazz Arts Group of Columbus, Ohio will lead this research and development project with the following research partners (preliminary commitments): Jazz at Lincoln Center, San Francisco Jazz, Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, University of Florida Performing Arts, University of Iowa Hancher Auditorium, Wexner Center for the Arts, and Dave Powers, a jazz musician.

Financial support has been secured from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Matching funds have been requested from The Columbus Foundation, Nationwide Insurance, the Ohio Arts Council, and the Greater Columbus Arts Council. The Jazz Education Network (JEN) and AllAboutJazz.com will provide in-kind support for disseminating the new knowledge.

Who will do the Work?

Christy Farnbauch, Strategic Links, LLC, has been hired as the project director. JAG staff members, Bob Breithaupt, Carol Argiro and Scott Vezdos, will actively participate in the work. The team of highly skilled professional researchers with national and international credentials in helping organizations understand and use audience participation trends and data will include:

- o Alan S. Brown, Principal, and Jennifer Novak-Leonard, Senior Research Consultant, WolfBrown
- o Joe Heimlich, Professor and Specialist, OSU Extension@ COSI, and Senior Research Associate, Institute for Learning Innovation
- o Jerry Yoshitomi, Chief Knowledge Officer, Meaning Matters, LLC