

**Audience Development Strategies:
Cultivating a future for dance audience patronage.**

**By Amy Rogers
A Master's Research Project**

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ABSTRACT

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This research project explores and identifies the evolution of audience development strategies for dance audiences. Through a review of literature this project will include an overview and description of best practices used by performing arts organizations, both past and present, for developing audiences. By conducting an in-depth case study this research project will analyze current audience behavior at a multitude of contemporary dance performances in a variety of venues presented by White Bird, a non-profit dance presenting organization in the city of Portland, Oregon. The case study will provide a demographic sampling by examining the results of three audience surveys conducted at White Bird performances. Conducting interviews with key informants at White Bird will assist in analyzing audience behavior. The culmination of results will strive to ultimately represent strategies for development of future dance audience patrons.

KEYWORDS: audience, audience development, dance, patronage, strategy

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Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine current and best practices in audience development, understand audience behavior through interviews and data analysis, and develop strategy for cultivation of patronage. Current strategies were examined across different performing arts sectors. By conducting interviews with key informants at White Bird, a dance organization located in Portland, Oregon, I hoped to gain a current and in-depth perspective on audience behaviors and what strategies are being used to influence their behaviors. Analyzing an audience survey of dance audiences through White Bird provided a demographic sampling and behavior analysis to help determine audience development strategies and therefore assist in cultivating dance audience patronage for the future.

Problem Statement

Lack of reliability of audience attendance in this county is creating one of the biggest problems dance organizations face while trying to maintain their current audience base and create any sort of future patronage. Traditional marketing approaches, subscription models, and audience experiences are no longer always reliable. As dance audiences have continued to dwindle, creating an unstable future for non-profit dance organizations and their patronage support, it is time to systematically analyze current audience development strategies. What is working, and what is no longer working? Several contributing factors have led to a shift in audience attendance and behavior. Business models that were once successful have faced scrutiny as a result of shifts in the economy and changes in the ways audiences receive information. Audience members have transcended traditional performing arts experiences with the allowance and emergence of social media use and interactions. Subscriber bases continue to be unstable and hard to maintain while single ticket buying behavior remains difficult to

establish. Dance organizations are faced with the decision of how to proceed so that patronage not only remains stable but continues to grow. Without this stability, the future of an organization faces uncertainty and their communities could lose the option and opportunity to experience dance.

This research project explores audience development strategies for cultivating a future for dance audience patronage. An in-depth literature on the history of performing arts audiences in the United States will contribute to developing new strategies. By analyzing data that was collected while surveying audiences, I have examined a demographic sample of dance audiences and used the information to analyze what types of audience development strategies could be used and implemented. I chose to focus this study at the dance organization White Bird in the city of Portland, Oregon as a good representation of a variety of dance audience members. By interviewing key informants at this dance organization, I hoped to learn about current development strategies and a current perspective of dance audiences. I used the information to analyze what types of audience development strategies could be used and implemented.

Main Research Question:

What audience development strategies could assist in building dance audiences?

Research Sub Questions:

1. What are changing factors in audience behavior?
2. How can an audience member be turned into a subscriber or donor?
3. What types of programs could be incorporated into performances that would encourage people to become a patron with a dance organization?

Definitions

Audience – the assembled spectators or listeners at a public event, such as a dance performance.

Audience development - work that involves expanding the audience of a particular art or organization.

Patron - a person who gives financial or other support to a person, organization, cause, or activity.

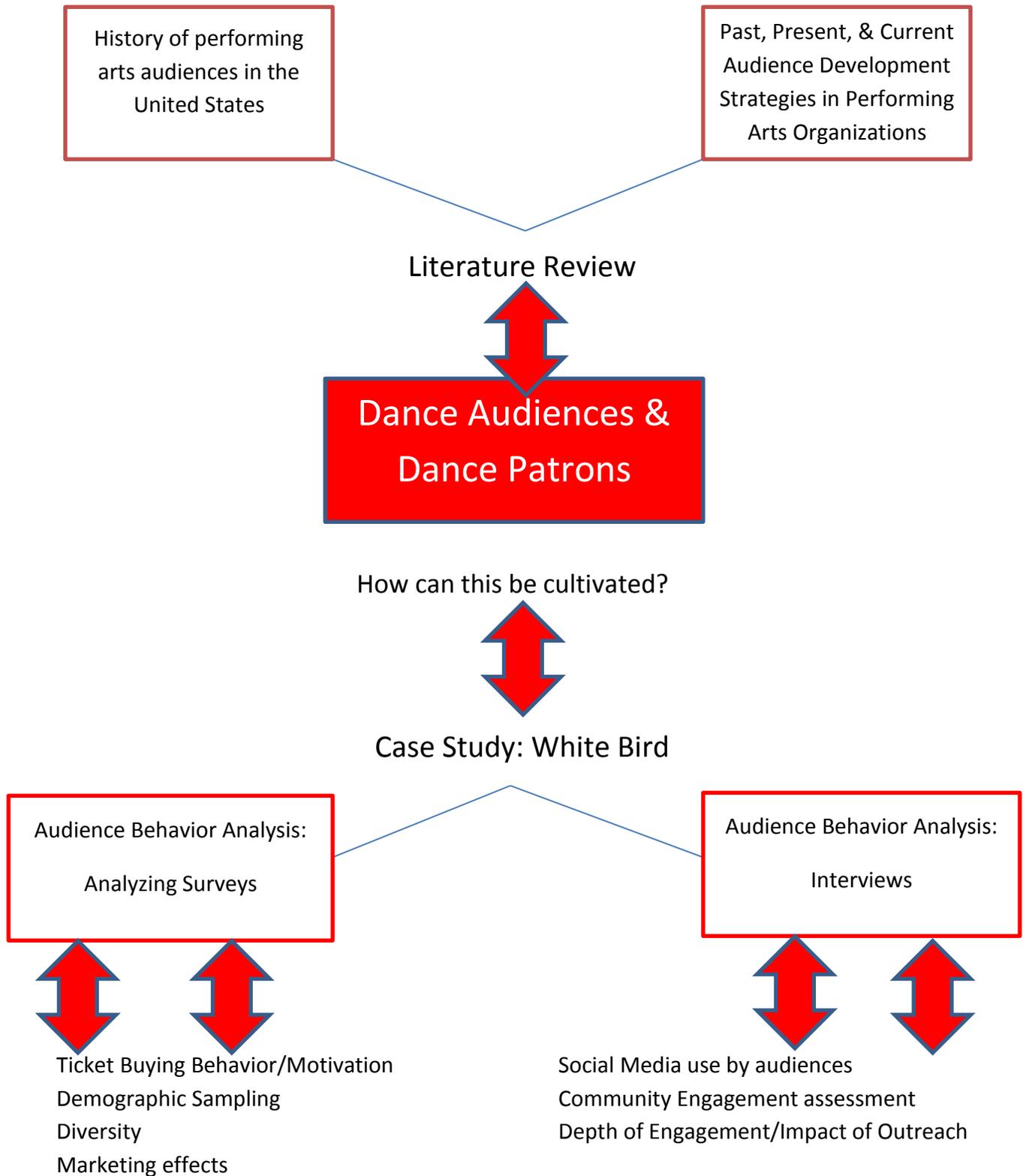
Patronage – the support given by a patron.

Subscription - the action of making or agreeing to make an advance payment in order to receive or participate in something. Patrons can purchase a subscription at the beginning of a production season at a less expensive price than purchasing individual tickets.

Conceptual Framework

There are questions that needed to be answered before this research project could provide useable strategies for dance audiences, such as: what is the history of dance audiences? Referring to my conceptual framework schematic as seen in Figure 1.1, I began by looking at the history of performing arts audiences as well as developments in performing arts organizations and evaluated what factors have led to changes in audience behavior. Subscription models that were created in the 1970's, which have always been a detrimental part of cultivating patronage among dance organizations, are not always viable. Since the 1980's, areas of "theory have given emphasis to the need for a more developed theory of audiences" (Bennett, 1997). In order to be successful, dance organizations must sell tickets to their performances. Typically, according to Stein and Bathurst (2008), "subscription tickets are sold at a discount to make them more attractive to a potential subscriber; the organization forgoes the full price of the ticket in order to secure future sales for all of its productions" (p. 277). Performing arts organizations today continue to watch subscription bases dwindle and are therefore continually finding new strategies

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework Schematic



that give audiences more options. New business models vary across different organizations but they all have the commonality of building these new approaches so that their organizations can continue to operate and survive. It's no longer safe to assume that incoming subscription funds are a part of an organization's stable revenue stream. As they face this situation, organizations have to look at their target audiences and decide the best way to move forward. Previous means of marketing and selling subscriptions have been drastically revamped and reconstructed, and going forward they will continue to be ever- changing to meet the uncertain demands of audiences. Upon researching this topic I found that many performing arts organizations have had to majorly restructure their audience development plans. Since a lot of organizations have suffered a decrease in their subscriber base there has been an increase in focusing on ticket buying plans that give audiences more options and flexibility (*Performing Arts Managers Conference, 2013*).

A new trend in the field of performing arts is the use of social media during a performance, a growing trend that allows audience members to participate in a virtual experience and take on the role of a live critic. By analyzing this topic I examined the aesthetic aspect of the audience experience and its relation to the emerging trend of social media use during a performing arts event, this will be discussed in section two of Chapter 2.

The perspective for this case study is largely seen through the lens of my perspective gained by my involvement with internal organizational experience at White Bird, due to internship and extended field research. By exploring past and present audience development strategies, I determined what type of questions I needed to ask while interviewing key informants at White Bird. The literature review I did influenced how I subsequently analyzed audience

behavior. Both of these research methods have contributed toward formulation strategies for cultivating future dance audience patronage.

Limitations

The main limitation with this research project is that it only examines one dance organization. While White Bird is one of the few dance organizations in this country that acts solely as dance presenters, the organization will likely have different audience survey outcomes than other dance audiences, which include a multitude of various dance types such as classical ballet. As such, while valuable lessons for audience development strategies can be learned, it is not possible to compare the findings to all dance organization in the United States. The opinions and statements received from interviews also do not reflect the opinions from top professionals of other dance organizations. That said, valuable lessons might be learned that can inform audience development initiatives elsewhere.

Benefits of the Study

Audience development is an emerging field among dance organizations, especially with the increase in need for building stronger patron support and a decrease in attendance. As a result of this research project, I am hoping to learn what new strategies could emerge by implementing and analyzing an audience survey.

Methodological Paradigm

According to Zina O’Leary’s book *The Essential Guide to Doing Your Research Project* (2010), the type of research I conducted is called social constructionism, also called interpretivist or constructivist. Theory and knowledge of my research aimed to “emphasize that the world is

constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation”(O’Leary, 2010, p. 6). A social constructionist researcher will “focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural setting of the participants” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). After I gathered information and analyzed it, I suggested steps for organizational improvement and other best practices in regards to audience development strategies. Many dance organizations have thought about how to build future audiences, and all of them have their own ideas. Therefore, a goal of the outcome of this research was to give organizations ideas to help affect a positive cultivation of a future patron base.

When using evaluative research, O’Leary (2010) outlines appropriate methodological approaches that should be used are provider perspective, recipient perspective, and wider community perspective as being important areas to approach. Provider perspective is “highly dependent on the complexity and diversity of the groups responsible for the provision” (O’Leary, 2010, p. 141).” This required me to interact with those responsible for overseeing the process that I researched. Recipient observation required me to look at those who experience the efforts put out by the providers. The recipients are like the consumers of what is being examined, their thoughts and opinions in regards to their personal encounters with the providers product is a crucial aspect to include in my research. The audience perspective was also important and the purpose of my case study required me to analyze audience surveys.

Surveys can be a great tool to use to capture opinions of those who attend a specific organizations performance. According to O’Leary (2010), surveying is “the process of collecting data by asking a range of individuals the same questions related to their characteristics, attributes, how they live, or their opinions through a questionnaire” (p. 181). It was an

appropriate method to utilize when approaching performance attendees because they could offer insight into the value and quality of their experience.

Research Design

Throughout this project I discovered new strategies for developing audiences for dance organizations. The best approach to developing suggestions for strategies is to research current audience members. The project includes an in-depth literature review and an in-depth case study with White Bird in Portland, Oregon. I selected this organization because of their unique capability as dance presenters to capture a variety of audiences with the different types of dance they present at a multitude of venues. The case study incorporates surveys to understand their current audience behavior, demographic, and general ideals.

The first part of this project is an in-depth literature review by looking at the historical context of performing arts audiences along with past and current audience development strategy in performing arts organizations. The second part of this project is an in-depth case study of audience development with White Bird. A case study is a “method of studying elements of the social through comprehensive description and analysis of a single situation or case, e.g. a detailed study of an individual, setting, group, episode, or event” (Creswell, 2014, p. 174). Because I sought to understand current audience behavior, I analyzed an audience survey that was given by White Bird at three different types of dance performances. The surveys included a variety of questions that aimed to capture a demographic sampling and collect information for marketing strategies that could assist in building a bigger subscriber base. By interviewing key informants at this dance organization I hoped to learn about current development strategies and a current perspective of dance audiences and use the information to analyze what types of audience development strategies could be used and implemented.

Date Collection and Analysis Procedure

I began my research by reviewing literature so that I would have the basis of understanding performing arts audiences. Through the literature review, I also familiarized myself with a variety of audience development strategies that exist.

Case Study:

To gather information for the case study with White Bird I analyzed audience surveys. Because I sought to understand current audience behavior, I reviewed an audience survey with three different types of dance performances. The surveys included a variety of questions that aimed to analyze demographics. The data analyzed from the surveys was measured qualitatively and supported the research question by providing a demographic sampling, input of the values audiences have, and information about current audience behavior. The researcher, along with White Bird, had access to the survey information through password protected computers in the White Bird offices. Once all the data was analyzed, put into categories, and thematically organized, it was qualitatively analyzed and interpreted. The analyzed data assisted in creating new strategies for audience development with dance audiences, specifically with White Bird. Theories and conclusions were drawn through a grounded theory approach.

Details Regarding White Bird

For this research project I chose to do an analysis of White Bird Dance. I decided to focus on this organization because I did an internship with them over the summer of 2013 and I thought it would be interesting to investigate them further. Also, I think they are a unique performing arts organization in their role as presenters. White Bird is a registered 501(c)(3) not for profit organization dedicated to bringing excellence in dance to Portland, Oregon. At the

conclusion of my summer internship I began what turned into a long term practicum lasting three additional quarters.

White Bird Dance was launched in July, 1997. It was cofounded by Paul King and Walter Jaffe. They recently celebrated their fifteenth anniversary with a special event, Feathered Follies, which included the first White Bird Dance Awards. Their mission/vision statement is as follows;

White Bird is committed to bringing the best Portland-based, regional, national, and international dance companies to Portland, Oregon and to fostering the growth of dance in the region. White Bird will do this through presenting established and emerging companies and choreographers, commissioning or co-commissioning new work, and collaborating with other arts organizations in Portland and the region to make dance performances possible.

White Bird strongly believes in making dance exciting, educational, and accessible to everyone, young and old, of all social backgrounds, and will seek to realize these goals through contributed income and sponsorships, which will facilitate outreach to schools and keep ticket prices affordable. As an advocate for dance, White Bird will strive to broaden audiences, develop new dance venues, and support both existing and new dance programs.

I think some of the key words in their mission statement are: fostering, growth, presenting, dance, Portland, and arts. When looking at the 2012-13 season and their programming decisions, I contend that they have supported their vision. The repertoire that White Bird presents consists primarily of modern and contemporary dance companies. They break the performances they present into three categories and also three series to which audiences can subscribe. Anyone can see all of the performance or subscribe to the all the series as a complete package, but they can also subscribe to an individual series. The three different categories are called; White Bird Dance Series, White Bird Uncaged, and White Bird Exclusive Event. The White Bird Dance Series is the largest of the three which included six different companies. The White Bird Uncaged series had four and the White Bird Exclusive Event had two. So, altogether, they presented twelve different dance companies to Portland, Oregon.

Another unique aspect about White Bird Dance is that they utilize three different venues in downtown Portland, Oregon: the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Lincoln Hall at Portland State University, and the Newmark Theatre. They use the larger venues for some of the larger, better-known companies, and the smaller venues for more intimate experiences.

In their mission statement, White Bird Dance states they want to present the best regional, national, and international companies. They definitely succeed in doing that. Their season runs from September to May and between the three different series they break up the companies rather evenly. I think the companies in the White Bird Dance Series are the more established companies with a strong repertoire in classical modern dance. I feel like the White Bird Uncaged series consists of companies that are more avant-garde and contemporary, somewhat representing the postmodern dance category. The third series represents companies with more alternative movement styles, like companies that incorporate a lot of props, acrobatics, and multimedia.

This organization has a strong artistic purpose to uphold and I can imagine that it is challenging to continuously find the companies to fulfill their programming needs. I feel like everyone involved in that decision making process would need to have knowledge of dance. Even someone on the managerial side who isn't involved with programming or artistic choices would need to have the ability of working with a plethora of artists and have knowledge of dance.

At the conclusion of my summer 2013 internship, I began what turned into a long-term practicum lasting three additional quarters. White Bird agreed to let me use their organization as a case study. In conjunction with the case study I began to produce a literature review that would support my research question and sub question. The following chapter focuses on literature that

explores audiences of performing arts and initiatives and programs that performing arts organizations use. The third chapter will be an in-depth overview of my case study, followed by a concluding fourth chapter that will discuss my findings and recommendations.

Chapter Two: Literature Review
Developments in Performing Arts Audiences

To begin to understand the types of strategies that should be cultivated for future dance audience patronage, I began with an overview of past and present developments in performing arts audiences and trends of performing arts organizations. By doing so, I chose to look at literature that explored performing arts subscriptions, marketing and new developments, transcending traditions, and participatory social media culture at performing arts events. I worked across literature on these topics to gather perspective and understand the relationship between all the sectors that culminate in performing arts organizations decisions for developing audiences. By studying a broad range of literature, I expected to find connections between performing arts organizations and their audiences, as well as evidence to support the changes that have occurred since the inception of traditional subscription models.

Part One: Looking at Performing Arts Subscriptions

In order to be successful, performing arts organizations must sell tickets to their performances. In other words, they need an audience! Aside from single tickets sales, many organizations rely on their subscriptions sales. Typically, according to Stein and Bathurst (2008), “subscription tickets are sold at a discount to make them more attractive to a potential subscriber; the organization forgoes the full price of the ticket in order to secure future sales for all of its productions” (p. 277). Performing arts organizations today continue to watch subscription bases dwindle and are therefore continually finding new strategies that give audiences more options. New business models vary across different organizations, but they all have the commonality of building new approaches so that their organizations can continue to operate and survive. It’s no longer safe to assume that incoming subscription funds are a part of an organization’s stable revenue source. As they face this situation, organizations have to look at their target audiences and decide the best way to move forward. Previous means of marketing and selling subscriptions

have been drastically revamped and reconstructed, and going forward they will continue to be ever- changing to meet the uncertain demands of audiences.

To have a better understanding of the current state of subscriptions, I wanted to look at what current organizations are doing, but also look at why they are marketing their plans the way they are. I wanted to find out where organizations are going wrong and find organizations that have found means for success. For this research project I also decided to focus on some performing arts organizations, and their current subscriptions, that all exist within in the same cultural district. The organizations I chose are Center Theatre Group, LA Opera, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. They all primarily operate in performing arts venues located with The Music Center in downtown Los Angeles. This choice was based on choosing to look at organizations in a thriving performing arts scene. “Standing at the center of LA arts and culture for close to 50 years, The Music Center is proud to be regarded as one of world’s premier performing arts destinations (2013).” Essentially, while they all have a different product to market, they are competing within the same community. I wanted to explore current trends and practices of these organizations to better dissect the problems of subscriptions.

Upon researching this topic, I found that many performing arts organizations have had to significantly restructure their subscription plans. Since a lot of organizations have suffered a decrease in their subscriber base, there has been an increase in focusing on ticket buying plans that give audiences more options and flexibility. In 2008, Chad Bauman, of the Mead Center for American Theatre, worked with Shugoll Research to redevelop the Mead Center’s subscription model and let go of the current failing business model. Over the prior five years, between 2002 and 2007, they had lost over 40% of their subscriber base (Bauman, 2013). What they did was develop different focus groups with targeted audiences: current subscribers, lapsed subscribers,

multi-show buyers, and single ticket buyers. During the focus group they presented alternative subscription models that were being introduced by other organizations and surprisingly they did not test nearly as well as the traditional model that was already being used. This told Bauman that by abandoning his current model he was not left with anything that provided a better solution. What he realized, and what many other organizations have realized, is that in short “we were killing subscriptions” (Bauman, 2013). Rather than creating subscriptions that cater to every type of audience group he looked at ways of marketing what they already had. With the Mead Centers 2012/2013 season coming to close they were able increase subscription revenue by 115%. The formula that could be attributed to that success includes combing great artistic product, best seats at the best price, and great customer service. While researching some of the current subscriptions of performing arts organizations in Los Angeles I noticed that they all advertise similar things, like great customer service. This doesn’t really directly affect a subscription plan but rather promotes the ease and benefits of having one. “Sometimes it isn’t the model that is dying; it is how we apply the model that is responsible for our underwhelming results” (Bauman, 2013). Some other trends organizations, like the Mead Center, are incorporating to create a successful formula include lengthening the amount of time of the subscription campaign, focusing on upgrades, creating personable relationships with subscribers, focusing on single ticket buyers, and continually testing out new offers.

The attitude of consumers is always changing, especially in the times of an uncertain economy. Studies show that more and more consumers are shifting to single-ticket purchases but this idea is still quite controversial. This philosophy can be greatly attributed to the person known as the father of the modern-day subscription series, Danny Newman. Although Newman passed away in 2007, his advocacy for subscription-based ticket sales is still used today.

Newman was the long-time press agent for the Lyric Opera of Chicago and he was well known for increasing the use of subscription programs to build audiences in the performing arts industry. The book he wrote in 1977 called *Subscribe Now*, which was published by the Theatre Communications Group, is now in its eleventh printing. In his book, which is called the arts marketing bible by some, Newman urged performing arts organizations to focus their efforts on subscribers. The “saintly subscriber” (Newman, 1977) could be seen as a loyal patron who would buy season tickets for all their shows as opposed to single-tickets buyers who likely don’t show up to new works or challenging fare. In 2011, the Theater Communications Group, Voss, Shuff, and Rose (2011) released a study showing that the number of subscribers at nonprofit theatres in America was down by about 15 percent over the last five years while single-ticket income remained relatively constant. Despite reports like this, people like Newman would probably argue that performing arts groups were simply not doing a good enough job at selling subscriptions and that there is no end of subscriptions in sight. As Newman (1977) explains:

One of the most exciting qualities of such subscription promotion is its potential for dramatic, affirmative, overnight changes in the position of an arts entity. Whether or not this happens is, in so many cases, in our hands. It’s up to us. If we attack dynamically enough and massively enough, we can win a vast new audience at once, eliminating unnecessarily wasted years. (p. 12).

Many established theatres need subscribers to make things possible. It makes sense that this subscribing audience should definitely still be a huge focus of marketing. Subscription business is what allows organizations to take risks. Nonetheless, many theatres are rapidly moving towards more flexible schedules and replacing certain subscription models with memberships programs. Marketing such programs draws attention away from the loyal subscribers and puts it towards the single-ticket buyer and population who have a greater desire to make decisions last minute.

There are so many viewpoints performing arts organizations have to consider when looking at how to market their subscriptions. Some argue that the decrease in patrons who buy subscriptions is due to the increase in discount ticket sellers and online coupons. With companies like Groupon and LivingSocial it isn't challenging to find a cheap deal on theater tickets. Consumers are coming to find that when purchasing tickets there are many options. While the mission of many performing arts organizations includes artistic integrity, they have to remember that they are also a business. Because theatres will end up having to sell a lot of tickets below list price it makes sense that they would keep the face value high. Many organizations are using a dynamic pricing based model to offset the discount ticket sellers and make more money off the shows that are in high demand. The development of new revenue streams and the implementation of dynamic pricing allows institutions to make up for lost revenue without sacrificing their ability to be accessible to their communities (Bauman, 2011). One benefit of having a subscription, which many organizations advertise in their marketing campaigns, is the ability to lock in a good price and avoid the chance of rising ticket prices. If you want to guarantee tickets to the upcoming hottest show in town, do so by buying the full season. Dynamic pricing means that high-demand shows will only be available to those who will spend a lot on a ticket. But smart marketers let their customers know that subscriptions and/or memberships allow them to have guaranteed low prices.

So what is the cause of all the changes in subscriptions? Was it the drastic change in the economy over the last decade? Is it the increase in the accessibility to watch performing arts online? There really isn't a definitive answer to questions like these, which is why arts marketers today have to consider how to effectively attract audiences to single performances and then encourage them to become a frequent attender. Some of the alternatives that organizations

market today includes mini-subscriptions, flex plans, and memberships. Single ticket buyers will always be important to theatres but most organization can not solely rely on them to fill the seats. Subscription campaigns over the last few decades have actually contributed to audience growth and to the existence of so many performing arts organizations as a result from them. Before 1961, when subscriptions were introduced, there were only four nonprofit resident professional theatres in the United States. Kotler and Scheff (1997) concur that in the 1960's and 1970's more than four hundred new theatres thrived by rooting themselves in the subscription concept. In the 1960's the New York City Ballet launched its first subscription series and was able to attract over 28,000 subscribers. This momentum caused other companies to see the success and thus numerous new professional dance companies were formed. Fragile arts organizations become successful and provided employment and artistic opportunities to a large number of creative people in the industry. As Newman (1977) explains:

Thus, we now have a constant enrichment in terms of professionalism in the performing arts picture, made possible by permanent institutions which would almost certainly have collapsed in their early stages, had not the people to whom they were dear fought for interests at every step, and had they not built subscriptions large enough to achieve their stability, viability, and longevity. Only in such a context can the arts flourish. (p. 8-9).

I think the question now isn't whether or not to have subscriptions; it's about how you market them, or what might be added in addition. One thing will always remain true and constant about subscriptions: they have benefits. This is the key to marketing them to new audiences. Most subscriptions include benefits such as discounts, seating priority, ticket exchange privileges, first access to performance outside of the package, and special opportunities like meeting the artists.

The subscription campaign is no longer a streamlined process and requires the involvement of everyone at every level in the organization. Obviously, campaigns vary across

different organizations depending on size and the structure. While the marketing team does a majority of the work they might also need the assistance of board members and other managers. It is essential that marketing teams be innovative. In the end, it's all about the sales and building loyalty. Once an organization has attracted a subscriber the next step is get them to renew. It's really a never ending process. Organizations have to look at the timing of their subscription marketing campaigns. They have to figure out the amount of time and money that will have to be expended and then determine how many subscriptions it will take to justify this outlay (Wolf, 1991). Placing a time limit on the availability and benefits is often used in the marketing campaigns and is a great motivator in securing subscribers' renewed commitment.

Now, I decided to look at the current subscription models of three performing arts organizations in downtown Los Angeles; Center Theatre Group, LA Opera, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The first organization I looked at was the Center Theatre Group who resides at the Ahmanson Theatre, located in The Music Center in downtown Los Angeles. They are considered LA's preeminent non-profit theatre company. Most of their season subscriptions state "Season Tickets. Your Way. Three Easy Choices." From looking at their materials closely I would say that they are accurate in saying the choices are easy. Like many organizations today, they offer different options as opposed to just the standard subscription package. The first choice is the full season ticket package, they advise this choice for people whose priority is seat location. The second choice allows you to design your own package. You select a minimum amount of shows and still get the same benefits as season ticket holders. The third option is called the Passport. For this option you pay an annual membership fee of \$100 and are then allowed to purchase full price tickets at 50% off for two separate performances. With this option you also get some

membership benefits. One thing the CTG really expressed through their marketing is their award-winning customer service. I'm not sure how they win awards for this but all of their subscription materials include that statement. They really want the ticket buyers to see how easy and stress-free it is. Another thing they advertise is that by having a subscription plan you are guaranteed low prices when shows get popular and ticket prices go up.

The next organization I looked at was the LA Opera which resides at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion located in The Music Center of downtown Los Angeles. The LA Opera is the United States fourth largest opera company. Aside from their standard full season subscription package they offer eight other packages. At what point do the amount of subscription plans offered need to be limited? How many is too many? In reading about the different options I began to get confused and overwhelmed. While they each state the different benefits you get of having a package I think their marketing campaign is too broad. They can reach different types of audiences but the package choices should be more streamlined and simple to choose from. Like the Center Theatre Group they advertise the value of having a subscription and the guarantee of locking in low prices but they don't stress ease and customer service.

Lastly I looked at the Los Angeles Philharmonic. But hold on to your seat, this one is complicated! The LA Philharmonic resides at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, which is also located in downtown Los Angeles. The Walt Disney Concert Hall, which opened in 2003, was designed to be one of the most acoustically sophisticated concert halls in the world. I'll start by saying that if you want to print out their season ticket brochure, it is thirty-two pages long. Part of the reason the brochure is so long is that they include a lot of information about the different genres of music, composers, programs, and so on. This is another reason why their subscription plans seem complicated, there is too much information. Like the other organizations they also

include all the benefits of being a subscriber. But there has to be a way of cutting down on the amount of information they include. Or is there?

Once I started to break down their subscription series I realized that part of the reason it seems so complex is because they offer such a large variety of performances and series. They offer over ten different types of concert series and over twenty-five different subscription series! It really makes me wonder if there is a simpler way to condense all the information without cutting certain artists or performances out of the series. An organization like this has such a vast programming structure that it would be hard to strategically be selective or leave something out. While they offer many different series that someone can subscribe to, they don't seem to focus on any type of single ticket membership programs or more customizable plans. It's almost as if this organization, despite the varied programming, has stuck to the more traditional subscription model.

The three organizations I looked at are all very different in terms of the type of performing arts organization they are, I thought that because they all operate within The Music Center they would collectively have a more cohesive subscription plan. Instead I found them to all have extremely different plans. While each of these organizations are competing for the same audiences I wonder if they've considered having a package that would allow patrons tickets to each of the separate venues? This type of package would allow a subscriber the opportunity to try a performance at another venue and perhaps take a liking to something new and different. For example, someone would have the opportunity to see a Broadway show, an opera, and a classical orchestra all within the same subscription.

Because of the wide range of subscription plans being used today, and the emphasis organizations are putting on having great customer service, the box office staff plays a crucial

role in the marketing efforts. It would be essential that all staff are regularly informed of subscription packages and programs while also being well trained in customer service so they can live up to the standards being laid out by the organization. Even the most service-oriented box offices will have conflicts that arise with the patrons. The managers of box offices have to be organized in their exertion with providing their staff with the most up-to-date information.

The possibilities of marketing are really quite endless and each organization appears to take its own approach. While some organizations continue to develop and try new approaches, some stick with more traditional methods. Measuring the success of marketing strategies for subscriptions takes time, but the shorthand results are in the numbers. The key is also for organizations to maintain subscribers once they have them, especially the renewing first year subscriber. Kotler & Scheff (1997) explain:

During the season, the organization should regularly stay in touch with new subscribers via newsletters and special mailings that may include critical reviews and performance reminders. New subscribers should also receive at least one customer-service phone call during the season asking them to evaluate the overall experience and their special benefits, and to express any concerns or suggestions they may have. The organization should follow up on all customer requests. (p. 273).

Some subscribers looking to renew might require a higher level of decision making and it's up to the organization to find ways that will "build enthusiasm and dispel concern" (Kotler & Scheff, 1997, p. 274). I've learned that it is really quite a complicated process that involves looking at so many different things that vary by each organization. Despite the shift in audience ticket purchasing behavior over recent years, organizations have to remember the value their subscribers bring not just financially but loyally as well. Performances cannot continue to exist without an audience and subscribers are guaranteed audiences.

Part Two: Transcending Tradition

Often there is a strong association with tradition when it comes to the performing arts audience experience. Whether it is the elegance of a venue or the prestige of a professional company; as an audience member there is typically an established practice that goes along with the attendance of a performing arts event. Even with the development of more contemporary performance spaces and the casual atmospheres that they provide there is still a role that we, as audience members, continue to adhere to. There is a long history with these sets of traditional practices that audiences have participated in for centuries. But times have changed and so has audience behavior; from the way we dress to the way we act. A new trend in the field of performing arts is the use of social media during a performance, a growing trend that allows audience members to participate in a virtual experience and take on the role of a live critic. By analyzing this topic, I examine the aesthetic aspect of the audience experience and its relation to the emerging trend of social media use during a performing arts event. Participatory social media use as means of audience engagement during events is a controversial topic among arts managers in the performing arts world. I find myself questioning the value of this type of audience engagement practice. Should the sanctity of tradition in the performing arts be protected or should the audience experience be transcended with the allowance of social media use during a performance? Or, as an audience member, have traditions in the performing arts experienced a conformity altogether allowing for a new set of standards to be implemented that will change what is considered to be traditional? While there is no definitive answer to these questions currently, as a future arts manager, I think it is important to explore the dispute of this topic and understand the benefits and repercussions that go along with social media.

When I think of traditions associated with performing arts events, I think of the ways in which audiences behave, interact, and engage during an event. There is also a designated experience that seasoned audience members might expect to have at a performing arts event; such as receiving a program, being ushered to their seat, and participating in a certain dress code. In some ways these traditions could be thought of as rituals. It makes me think back to my first experience with the performing arts, attending the ballet. As a child, about age 6, my mother took my sister and me to the annual performance of *The Nutcracker*. For me this experience encompasses the word 'tradition' in a few different contexts. There was the tradition of going to a holiday performance, getting dressed up in our best holiday dresses, and making the hour long drive to Santa Barbara to the Granada Theatre. Then on the other hand this was the beginning of my relationship with being an audience member at the ballet and therefore the beginning of my understanding of what traditional roles I was supposed to submit myself to. It's almost as if these traditions are universal languages that get carried on from generation to generation. As an audience member at a performing arts event we learn things like when to applaud, how to articulate theatre dialect, the orientation of a venue, and the respect of other patrons. While all of these types of 'rituals' still exist today there is an emergence of new ones that have evolved with the development of social media. One of the perceptual processes in the theatre, among other things, is a "form of social interaction" (Bennett, 1997, p. 91). As social media use continues to increase during performing arts events there will be a decrease in face-to-face interactions, a detrimental part of the audience experience.

As an audience gathers in the theatre they become a community that is sharing an experience, even if only for a few hours. But the experience is different for every individual, and what each audience member takes away from the experience is different too. Felner (2006) states

“Our personal histories always influence how we react as audience members in many ways. If you are watching a performance from a culture outside of your own, you may not understand its nuances, or point of view, or performance style” (p. 28). This perspective is interesting to connect to the use of social media during a performing arts event because it is a prime example of the plethora of opinions that could be shared by audience members. As Felner (2006) further explains:

Our personal histories, including our age, culture, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, education, and economic or social class, play a part in our response to a performance. Usually theatre attempts to bridge the space between audience members’ personal experience and the content of a performance through the creation of empathy, the capacity to identify emotionally with the characters on stage. Sometimes theatre artists choose to exploit these differences for social or political reasons. Whether through empathy or distance, the goal is always to increase our understanding of others like or unlike ourselves. (p. 29)

The reason I think it’s important to bring the analysis of audience behavior into this topic of conversation is that it directly relates to the examination of critiques, opinions, and discussions that are outcomes of social media use during a performance. Whether someone is experiencing a performance for the first time or the 100th time, their behavior will vary across the board. As performing arts organizations continue to pave a future for new audiences, and new traditions like social media use are being introduced and implemented during performances, it will be hard for the next generation of theatregoers to distinguish what the appropriate behavior for traditional spectatorship is. Although these new implementations are not being used everywhere and are still considered by some organizations to be a trial, it’s safe to say that certain traditions in venues where they are being used are already lost. While I gather that some institutions might never conform to this sort of change in audience engagement it can be assumed that many more will begin to follow this trend and see how their audiences respond. Performing arts organizations

and venues have to listen to the needs of their audiences, and resistance may be futile. The new generation of audience goers is a generation that lives in a more stimulated environment where the combination of polychronic behavior and a lower attention span require the want, and need, for a more constant participatory culture.

Social media is a virtual way that people create, share, and exchange information. The main type of social media that performing arts organizations are allowing audience members to use is called Twitter. Specifically, Twitter is an online social networking service and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read text based messages of up to 140 characters known as “tweets.” Performing arts organizations utilize other forms of social media but when it comes to the use of it during an actual performance they are using Twitter because it is like having a live conversation. Organizations that have chosen to experiment with this type of engagement during events have certainly received mixed reviews. Other types of social media, like Facebook, allow people to ‘check in’ places, letting other people know where they are and what they are doing. Performing arts organizations like this type of activity because it promotes their events. But when it comes to audiences members engaging in social during a performance you have to consider all the pros and cons and question what the value is in that type of engagement practice. While most organizations use social media in some capacity, why are certain ones feeling the need to conform to this type of audience engagement? I think they might feel pressure to keep up with the behavior of younger audiences but whether or not it is worth the risk is questionable.

With the rise in interest from organizations about experimenting with participatory social media at performing arts events there are a lot of debates amongst managers in the field, from managers of organizations to venue managers. What some performing arts venues are doing is

designating certain portions of the theatre for audience members who choose to participate in social media, these designated areas are referred to as 'tweet seats.' The Providence Performing Arts Center in Providence, Rhode Island is a performing arts venue that has experimented with tweet seats. The theatre sets aside a small portion of seats in the back for those who promise to live-tweet during a performance with a specific hash tag. They might offer impressions of the set, music or costumes, lines of dialogue that resonate with them or anything else that strikes them, really. The PPCA feels that it is important to jump on the social media wagon to engage a wider audience and that allowing tweet seats is a valuable tool; they feel that it makes the performance more personal. There are also cases of other theaters who are trying different digital ways to engage with patrons. In Boston, the Huntington Theater is introducing a "Twittermission" where an artist affiliated with the production, or someone from the theater's staff, answers questions about the show on Twitter during intermissions. The tweets are also projected on screens in the theater lobby. The Huntington Theatre however doesn't want to introduce tweet seats because they feel that when the lights go down in the theatre the art on stage should speak for itself. These types of experiments that are taking place are new and it may take a while before there can be measurable results in the box office, which if anything should be the driving force behind these practices. PPCA plans to run their tweet seat experiment for a year and then evaluate it, the patrons who sit in tweet seats also get their tickets free. In some ways it is kind of a way to tease people into supporting the arts. But there are traditionalists who gasp at the sight of smart phones inside the theatre and who might think that is degrading the art form. There are passionate perspectives on both sides of the issue. Measurability should be an important part of performing arts managers' evaluation process when determining whether or not there is any value or relevance for making these practices accessible to their patrons. Figuring

out how to measure the success of these practices will be a challenge in itself among the managers.

The National Endowment for the Arts has taken interest in this topic and regularly uses its Facebook page to ask followers their opinion on the matter. Their most recent post asked “Is it okay to live-tweet during a play, concert, or other live performing arts event?” There was mixed feedback but the general response was actually “no.” Some of the responses that were in favor of tweet seats included the idea of interactivity. On the opposite side of that people argued that intermission was a more appropriate time to engage in social media and that audiences needed to practice self-control. There is also the opportunity to use social media before and after the performance. Are people today so enthralled by social media that they can’t go a few hours without using it? The most common response elicited by the NEA’s question was that the use of cell phones during a performing arts event was just plain distracting. Some even thought that using cell phones in general at the theatre was wrong and that traditional etiquette was being lost. When audiences participate in more social media they are also losing out on personal interactions with others at the theatre, also part of the traditional theatergoing experience. When communication is done online as opposed to face-to-face it can have a profound effect on the interpretation of the message. As the New Media Consortium (2007) explains:

The context in which an interaction occurs has a profound effect on communication. In face-to-face encounters, factors ranging from psychological to environmental to cultural all have an effect on how the message is transmitted and how it is understood. Online communication is no less subject to context, and may bring with it additional contextual issues that will have an effect on the intended message. (p.1).

As an arts manager, one of the challenges that can come from participatory social media is figuring out a way to please patrons who believe in having a more traditional theatre

experience and balancing that with those who want to have an engaging experience via social media. Offering the opportunity for engagement during intermission is one way to find that balance. Some venues are designating a specific spot in the lobby for audience members to gather in, tweet, and participate in conversations via social media. This type of engagement creates publicity for organizations and venues and I believe they are the constituents who benefit most from it. On the flip side, aside from the benefits of promotion and publicity is the need for managing the negative effects of this practice as well. While Twitter has restrictive rules that will prevent the use of bad words it does not prevent an audience member from posting text in a negative connotation. This is a problem arts managers struggle with in general when it comes to social media use; it is a constant job to monitor the text that gets put online by people. The audience member who participates in these practices takes on the role of a critic, and arts managers have to remember that they are allowing these people to take on this role. Because they are critiquing an art form, or an artistic experience, their opinions are completely subjective. As an arts manager it would be a juxtaposition to make an audience members opinion of an art form not valid or erase it completely. This goes back to being able to correctly interpret messages that are put online; the context of someone's words could easily be obscured. Some arts managers are solving this issue by allowing audience members to post their critiques and when they have a negative experience or critique, the manager provides feedback and sometimes also provides a way for a more positive experience in the future.

Providing new opportunities for audience engagement with social media is a new practice for arts leaders and one that is not going away anytime soon. What was once standard practice of asking patrons to turn off their electronic devices is not the case anymore. Finding an answer as to whether or not these new means of engagement should be practiced is one that each individual

organization will have to ask itself. They also need to figure out why they are doing it. With many performing arts organizations struggling to maintain patronage they are seeking such practices with the hopes of boosting business. As arts blogger Curt Hopkins (2012) explains:

Twitter will not solve your problems. It won't solve your declining patronage. It won't update your unhip image. It won't make your aging subscriber base young again. Worked as part of a coherent strategy, by a staff and creative leadership that is not petrified by the very things that social media enforces (two-way communication, natural voice, access), it can certainly help. But as long as the generation of art tyrants who have the nation's theater in crabby lock-down retain their positions, this is unlikely to happen. Their attitude of artistic exceptionalism is a product of an anti-commercialist, arts-for-arts sake origin that went horribly off the rails somewhere along the line, until, today, criticism of any type is interpreted as philistinism. So, instead of an opening up, we'll have twitchy cure-alls like "tweet seats" sweeping the nation, failing and then being disavowed.

What works well with some demographics may not work well with other demographics.

It's also not necessarily safe to assume that the want for this type of participation is generational. Some younger audience members, like me, would not agree with breaking the traditional roles in the theatergoing experience. On the contrary, however, as an arts manager I would find it necessary to seek out what is in demand of my audiences and find the best way to balance out solutions. While participatory social media as means of audience engagement does indeed transcend the audience experience it also deteriorates it. Therefore, I would argue that the sanctity of a traditional performing arts experience is not being protected by arts managers who choose to allow the use of participatory social media at events.

Part Three: Learning About Audience Development

The audience for every performing arts organization is going to vary. While some organizations within the same area might share audience's members; ultimately the offering, experience, and outcome will be different. Figuring out what you want to know about your audience and how to cater to their wants, needs, and expectations is entirely up to each separate

organization. While each audience will continue to change year after year, there will be certain patterns and patrons that remain constant. Surveying and analyzing attendance records are among some of the strategies performing arts organization use today. Many assumptions about the typical profile of a performing arts audience member are made by looking at studies done in market research. According to Cuadrado and Molla (2000), “Since the 1970s several empirical studies of audiences have been developed in the performing arts field. Some of these have focused on an analysis of demographic and social features in order to obtain an audience profile” (p. 54). Conduction of regular surveys could assist in finding key audience development strategies. However, performing arts attendees have different goals when they attend different events.

Performing arts organizations need to continue to push the limits of what they can achieve with their audience and patrons. As Morison and Dalglish (1993) explain:

Today, in cities and towns where an initial base of artistic programming has been established, a reliable but small group of people continue to patronize cultural activity. But that group seems no longer to be growing. Existing data indicate that over the years audiences have grown as the availability of the arts has increased, but that, in any developed community, the per-capita size and the demographic characteristics of that audience remain about the same as they were when the revolution began in the 1950s. The arts, wherever they exist, still receive their basic support from the same relatively small crowd of affluent, well-educated people in the professions and managerial occupations who supported the nation’s cultural activity before mid-century. (pp. 5-6).

Capturing your audience demographic may tell you what you already know. The key might be trying to find out questions that will help solve loopholes in your patron base. To cultivate a future for audience patronage there has to be strategy that will assist in building a relationship with audience members who are outside the normal demographic. According to Morison and Dalglish (1993), “ audience development is the long-term process of encouraging and assisting an audience member to become increasingly more involved in the life of an arts institution” (p.

79.) Once data is collected about an audience and analyzed, interpretation can be made and meaningful insight can be drawn; thus creating new strategies for development. To build your audience you need to listen to your audience. “The key to building long-term relationships is the mastery of an art we all possess but don’t always utilize: the art of listening” (Walker-Kuhne, 2005, p. 21).

Many performing arts organizations now incorporate development work into their strategic planning. Some have a development manager or development department. Why this can vary from one organization to another about exactly what that job entails, the overall point could be to increase revenue, not necessarily meaning fill the theatre with more audience members. Therefore, audience development could be defined differently than it would be looking at a monetary business model. Bringing in cash-flow from a donor doesn’t mean that donor will be an audience member or buy tickets. As Walker-Kuhne (2005) explains:

I define audience development as the cultivation and growth of long-term relationships, firmly rooted in a philosophical foundation that recognizes and embraces the distinctions of race, age, sexual orientation, physical disability, geography and class. Audience development 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. Many institutions have been concerned that audience development efforts will somehow compromise or denigrate the integrity of the creative work being presented. But rather than compromise the artistic integrity, stretching beyond traditional boundaries and comfort zones requires that an organization strive for an even higher standard of excellence. (p. 10).

Audience development requires specialized marketing. Using traditional marketing techniques such as subscription campaigns, direct mail, and advertising in the press are not enough.

“Audience development is the merging of marketing techniques with relationship-building skills, because in order to have a lasting impact on your prospective audience, the relationship must be both personal *and* institutional” (Walker-Kuhne, 2005, p. 11).

Chapter three will present a case study of White Bird as a performing arts organization and their cultivation for developing a dance audience. This case study was conducted to further understand dance audiences and lead to strategies for developing dance audience. To conclude, Walker-Kuhne (2003) states that “understanding and then removing the barriers that prevent your target market from being engaged are of primary importance” (p. 171).

Chapter Three: Case Study

Introduction

To gather a deeper understanding of audience behavior, I chose to do a case study with White Bird. During the course of my case study, White Bird conducted an audience survey and I was given the opportunity to analyze select data that was gathered. By analyzing this data I hoped to gain insight into their audience demographics, ticket buying behavior and motivation, marketing effects and the diversity of their audience. By looking at the results of the survey I was also able to pull out selected data and look at specific information that could assist in building audience development strategies. During my case study I also conducted interviews with key informants at White Bird which included the following staff members:

Paul King, Co-founder/Development Manager

Walter Jaffe, Co-founder/General Manager

Chelsea Bushnell, Audiences Services Manager

Sarah Toor, Marketing Manager

Ryan Blum, Financial and Community Partnerships Manager

By asking a set of questions (Appendix C) I gathered information from several perspectives. This chapter will begin with an introduction and background on White Bird. In order to gain a better idea of the audiences at White Bird performances, I also attended several performances and observed audience behavior. Ultimately, I wanted this case study to culminate in the development of strategies for dance audience patronage.

White Bird Overview

Located in Portland, Oregon, White Bird is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to bringing excellence in dance to the city. Launched in 1997 by Walter Jaffe and Paul King, White Bird strives to make dance accessible to everyone. This organization acts as one of the few sole dance presenters in the country. During the course of their season, they present dance companies from around the world through three different series to three different venues located in downtown Portland. The dance companies that are presented are primarily modern and contemporary ballet, although some series incorporate other styles such as tango or hip-hop. The co-founders create contracts with each dance company they present and make the decision about which venue they will perform in. The venues range in size from 2,776 in the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, 880 seats in the Newmark Theatre (both part of Portland's) and 250 seats in Lincoln Hall at Portland State University. It's important to note that White Bird is not a physical space. The organization operates out of a home office. Because of this, it is vital for White Bird to have their audiences connect and understand who they are aside from the dance companies they present and the venues they use. There are currently five full time staff members and over 100 volunteers that assist with the organization in different capacities.

Part One: Analyzing Audience Survey Data

Over the course of my case study with White Bird conducted three different audience surveys at three different performances. They chose to survey an audience at a performance from each of the series. The performances they chose during their 2013-14 season to conduct audience surveys at were *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet* as part of the White Bird Dance Series (Survey A), *Stephen Petronio* as part of the Uncaged Series (Survey B), and *Les Ballets Trockadero de*

Monte Carlo as part of the White Bird Exclusive Events (Survey C). Once each survey was analyzed separately, a combined survey total figure was created for each of the categories. Each survey contained a similar set of questions. I was able to look at the survey data and analyze it. I compared the results from the three surveys to each other to capture a demographic sampling of the White Bird audiences. I then chose to look at specific data that would assist in audience development strategies. The next portion of this chapter will include several figures as well as a written evaluation of the data.

Capturing a Demographic Sampling

To begin with analyzing the survey data I started by looking at four specific categories that would assist in identifying a demographic sampling of audience members at White Bird dance performances. These four categories included; gender, age, annual household income, and completed education level. In order to build new development strategies, it is important to have an understanding of the key demographics of people that are attending the performances. Not only will this create the ability to cater to those who most attend, but it will also create the ability to build strategies to cater to those who least attend. The following figures were created to demonstrate the demographic sampling and prepare for analyzing of the survey data. Each set of figures lists the survey question that was asked of the audience members and is color-coded according to the categories; gender, age, annual household income, and completed education level.

Analyzed Survey Question: Please indicate your gender.

Figure 2.1: Audience Survey Data, Survey A: Gender
White Bird Dance Series: *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet*

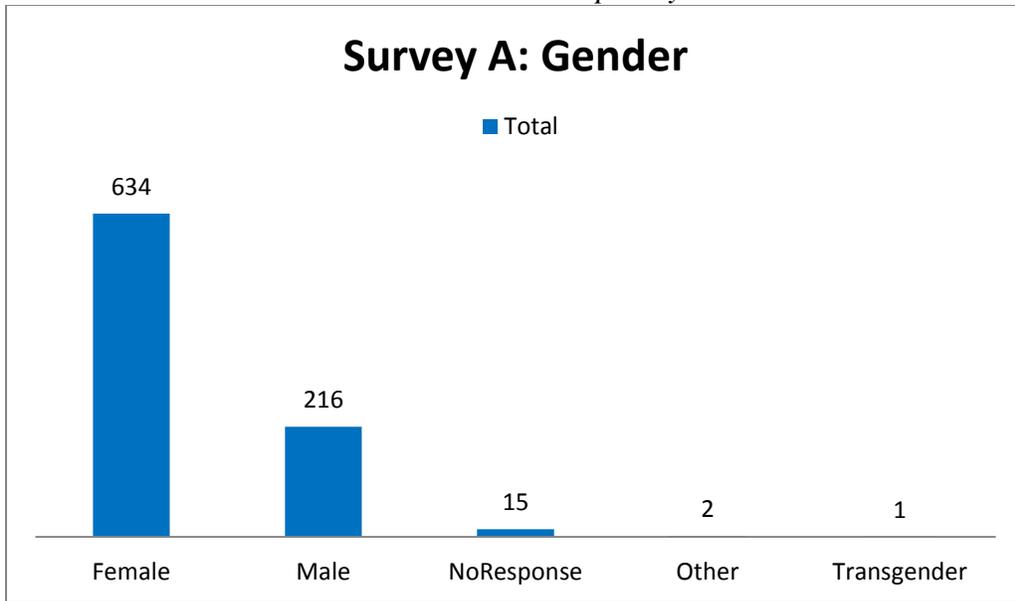


Figure 2.2: Audience Survey Data, Survey B: Gender
White Bird Uncaged Series: *Stephen Petronio*

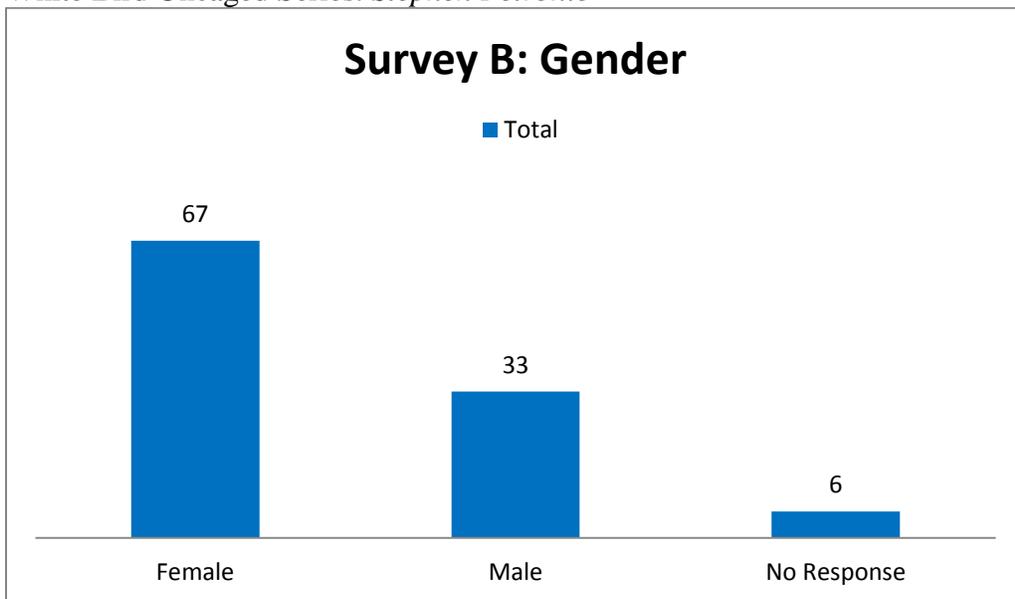


Figure 2.3: Audience Survey Data, Survey C: Gender
White Bird Exclusive Event: *Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo*

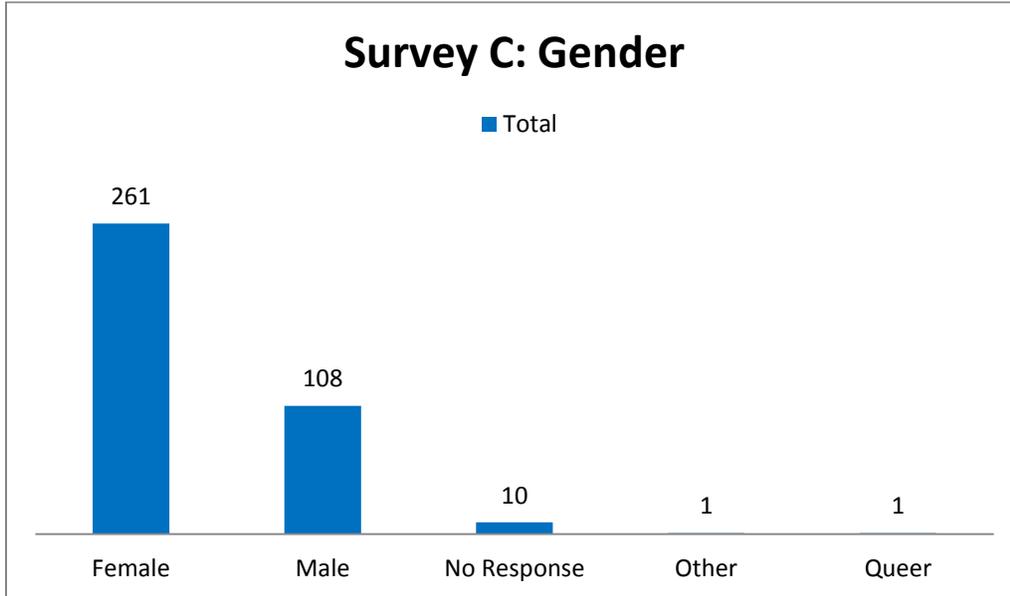
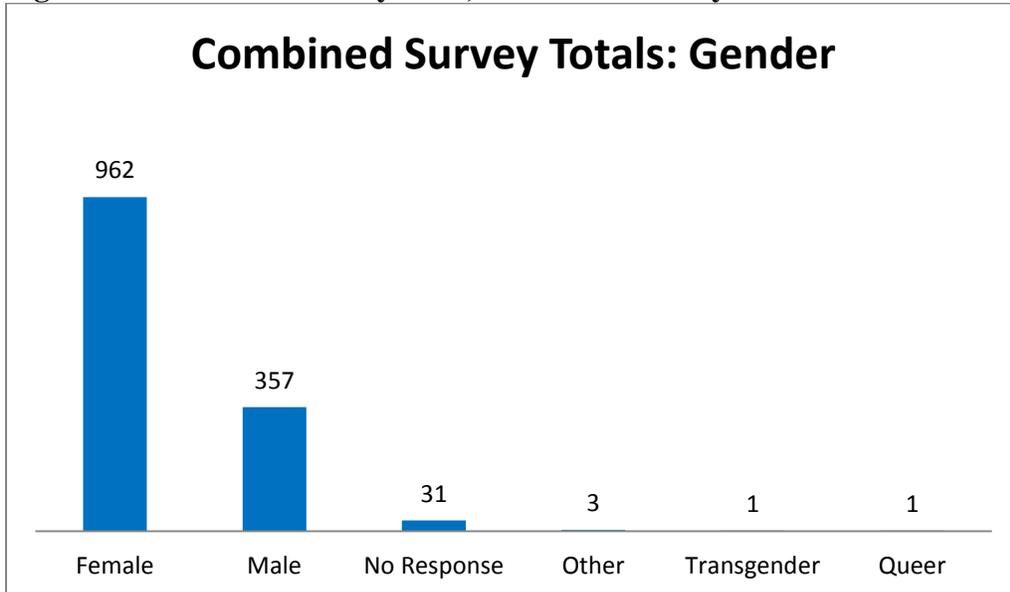


Figure 2.4: Audience Survey Data, Combined Survey Totals: Gender



Analyzed Survey Question: Please indicate your age range.

Figure 3.1: Audience Survey Data, Survey A: Age

White Bird Dance Series: *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet*

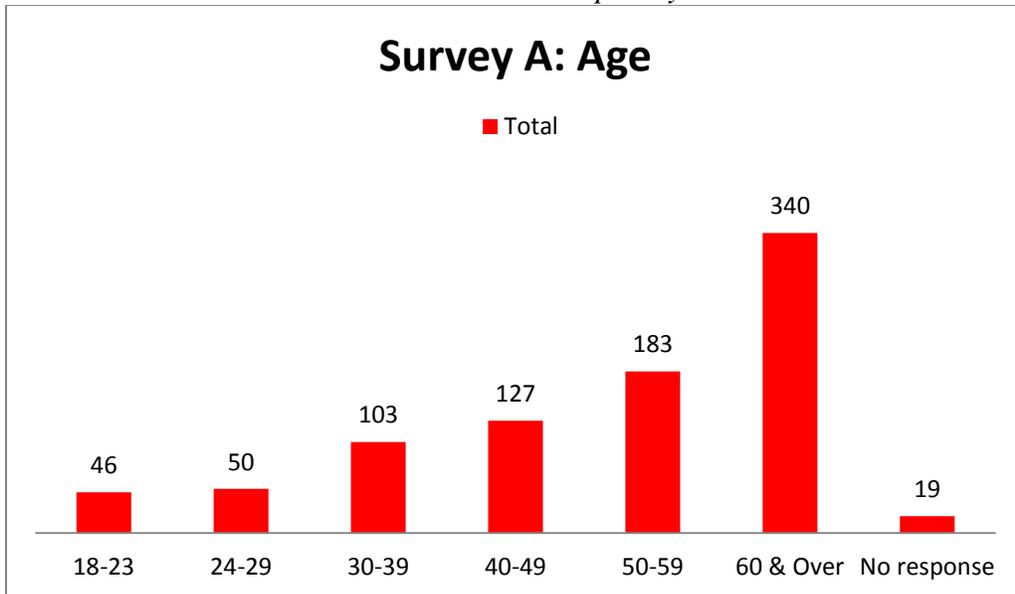


Figure 3.2: Audience Survey Data, Survey B: Age

White Bird Uncaged Series: *Stephen Petronio*

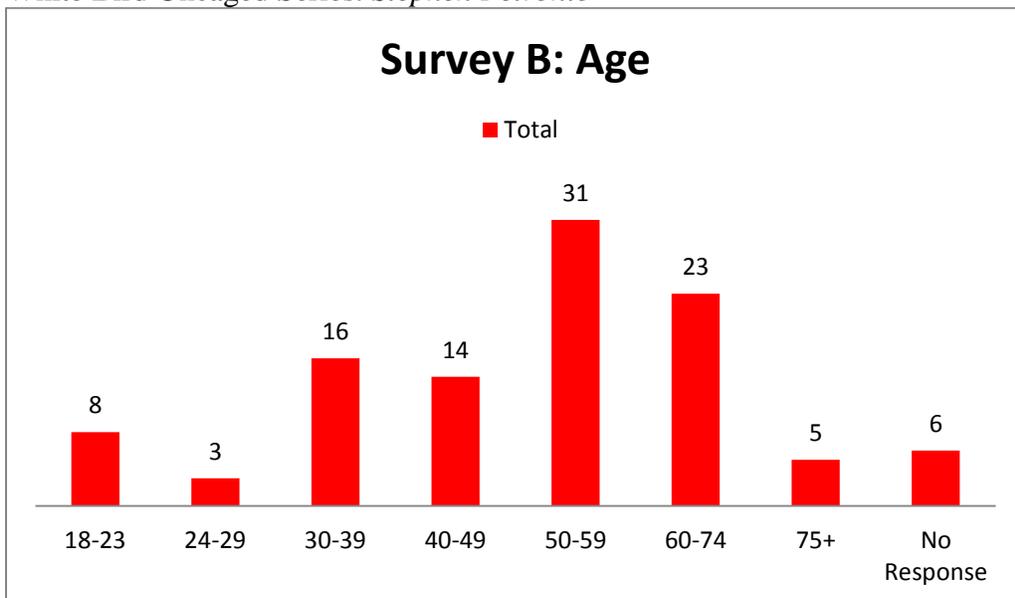


Figure 3.3: Audience Survey Data, Survey C: Age
White Bird Exclusive Event: *Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo*

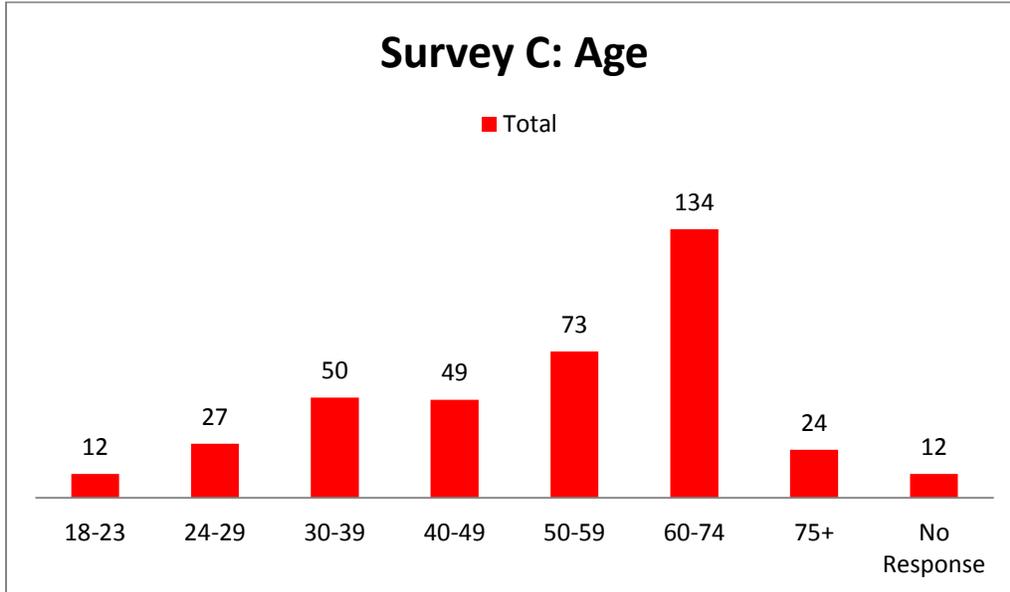
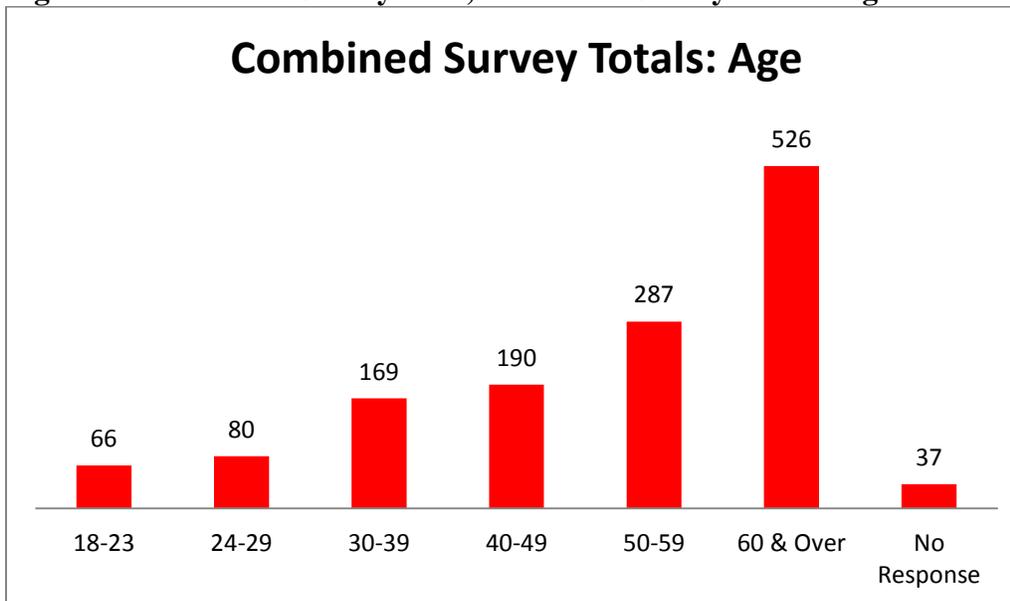


Figure 3.4: Audience Survey Data, Combined Survey Totals: Age



Analyzed Survey Question: What is your annual household income?

Figure 4.1: Audience Survey Data, Survey A: Annual Household Income
White Bird Dance Series: *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet*

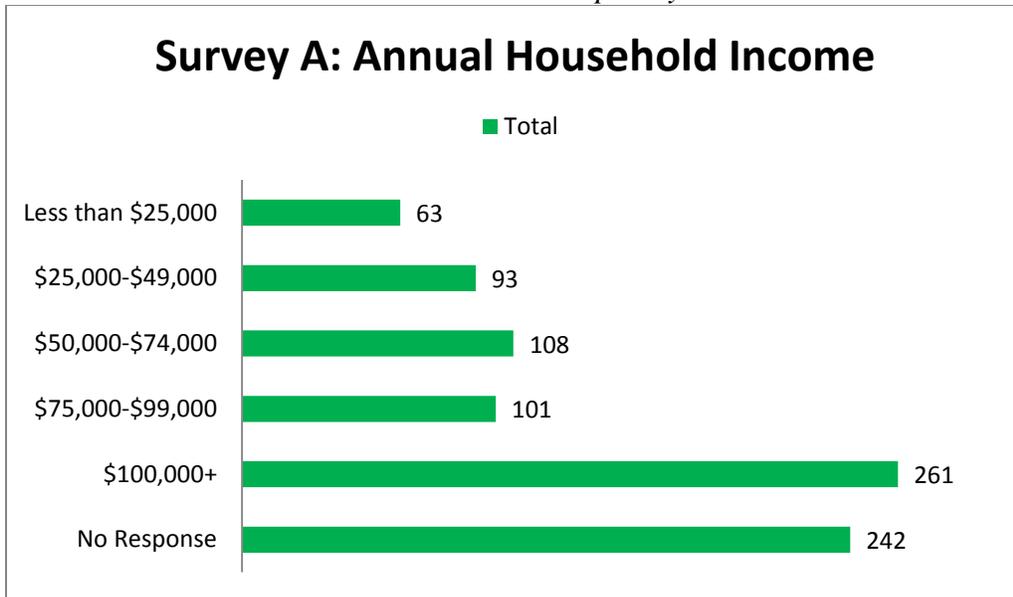


Figure 4.2: Audience Survey Data, Survey B: Annual Household Income
White Bird Uncaged Series: *Stephen Petronio*

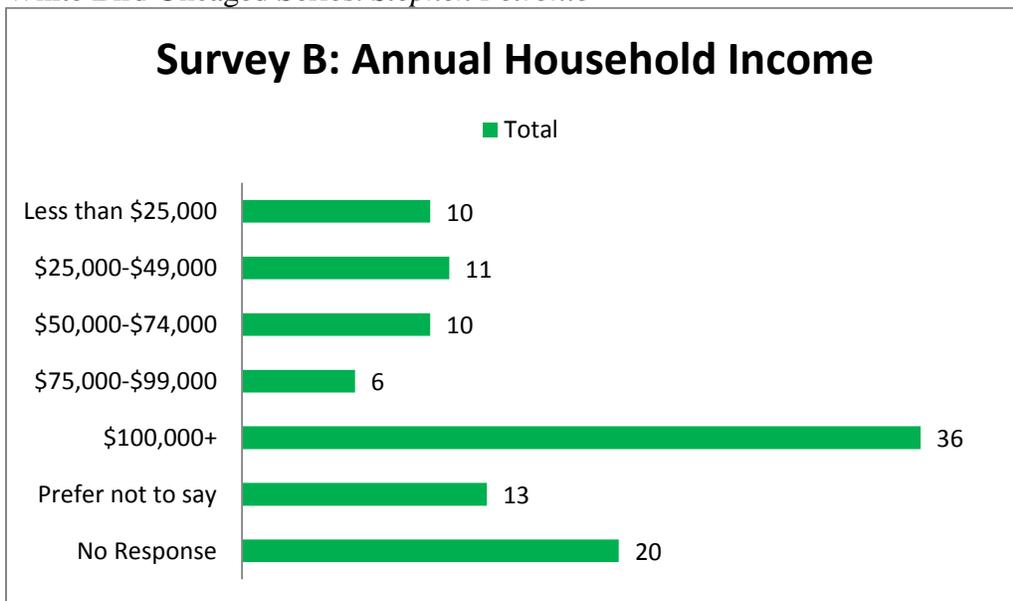


Figure 4.3: Audience Survey Data, Survey C: Annual Household Income
 White Bird Exclusive Event: *Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo*

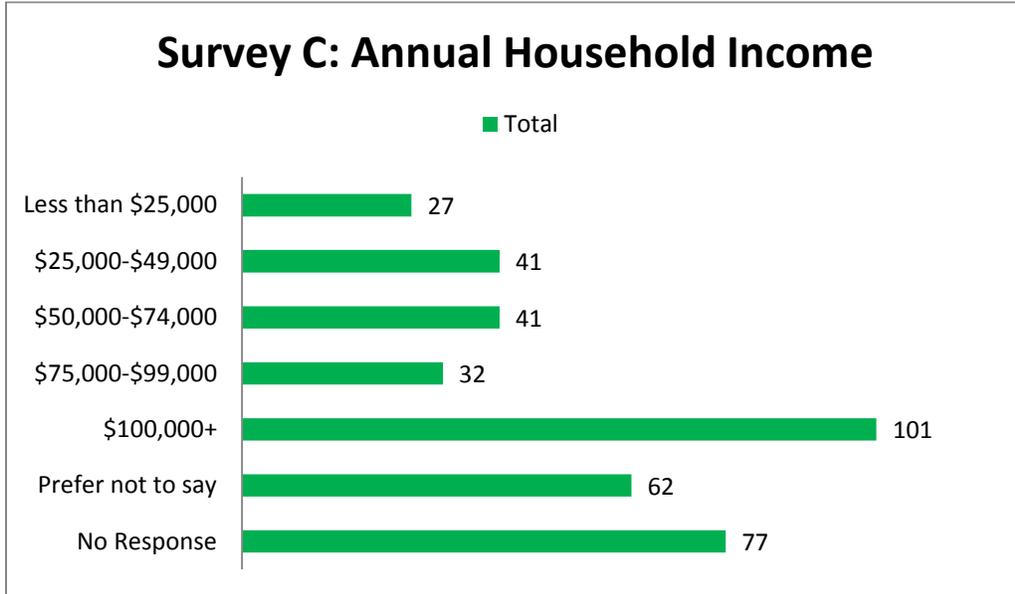
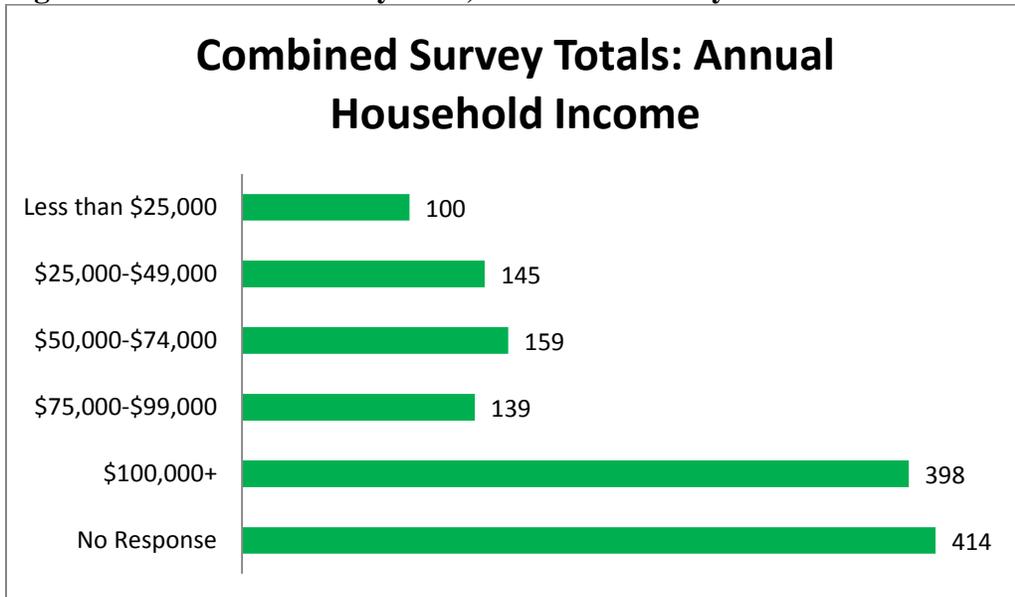


Figure 4.4: Audience Survey Data, Combined Survey Totals: Annual Household Income



Analyzed Survey Question: Please indicate your completed education level.

Figure 5.1: Audience Survey Data, Survey A: Education
White Bird Dance Series: *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet*

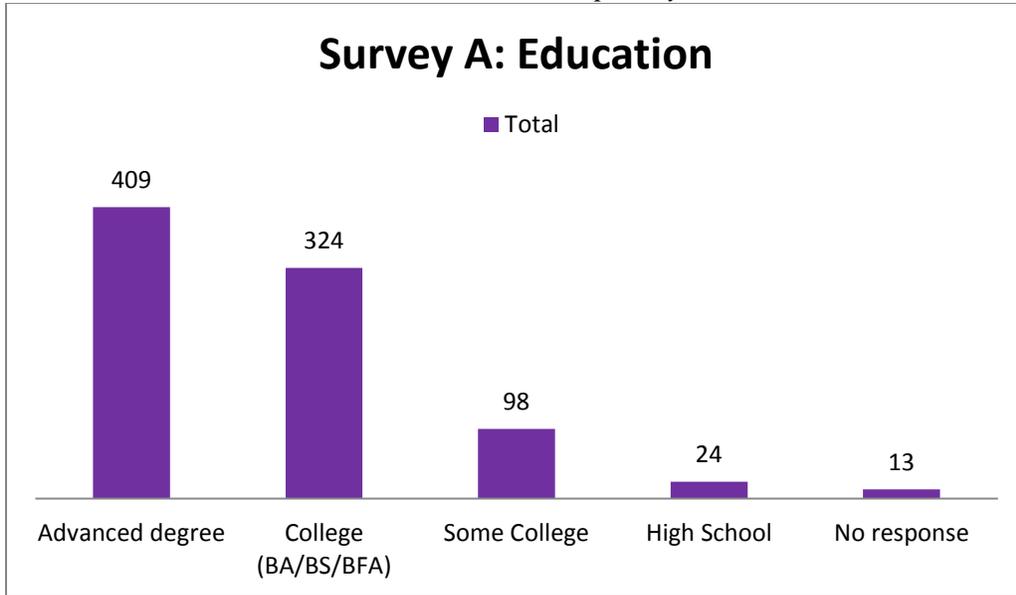


Figure 5.2: Audience Survey Data, Survey B: Education
White Bird Uncaged Series: *Stephen Petronio*

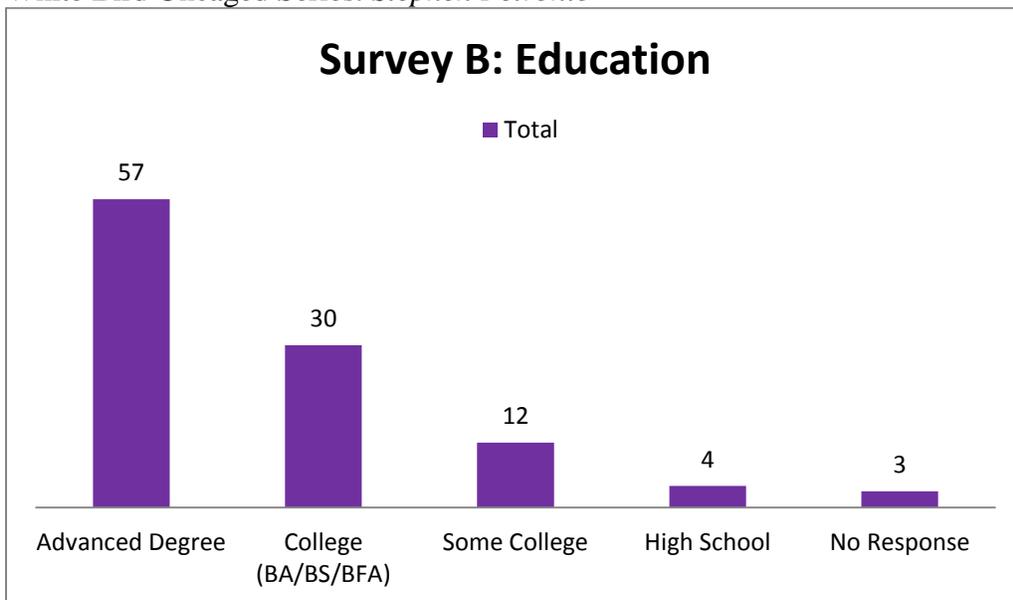


Figure 5.3: Audience Survey Data, Survey C: Education
White Bird Exclusive Event: *Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo*

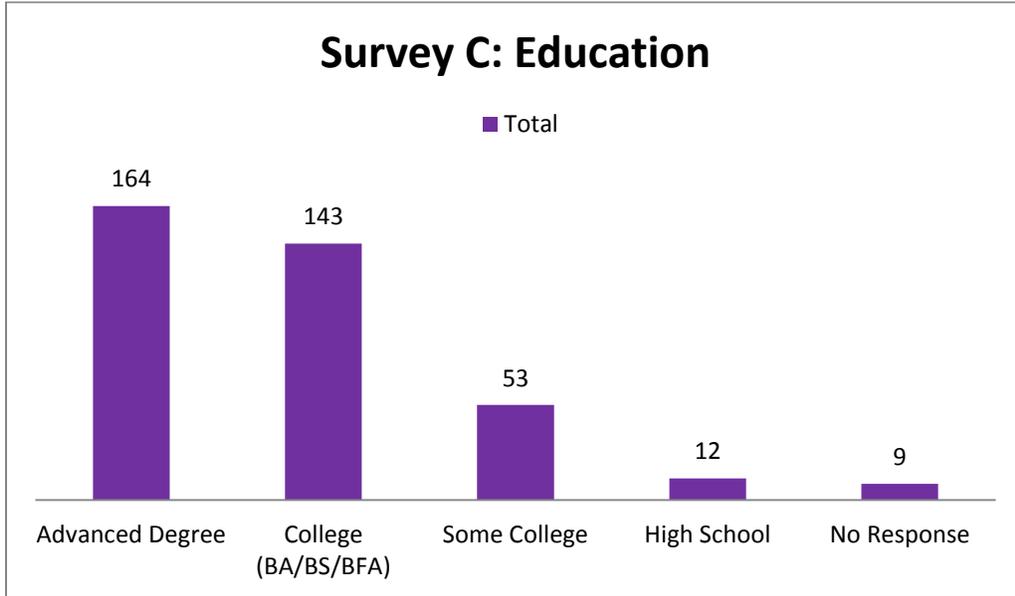
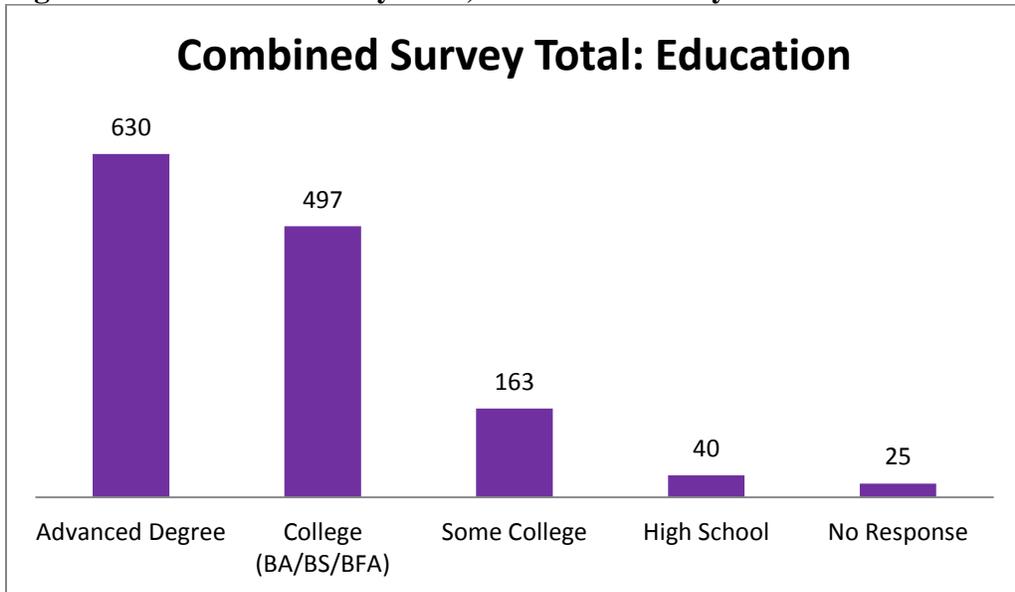


Figure 5.4: Audience Survey Data, Combined Survey Totals: Education



According to the data, of those who took the survey, the primary gender that attended performances was females, with males coming in second, followed by people who did not respond, and lastly people who identified as other, queer, or transgender (Figure 2.4.) The White Bird Dance Series survey (Figure 2.1) had about 73% female audience members, the highest of all the series. The White Bird Exclusive Event survey (Figure 2.3) had about 68% female audience members, and the Uncaged Series survey (Figure 2.2) had about 63% female audience members. Overall, the combined survey totals of females that attended these performances was about 70%, while men accounted for only about 26% of the audience (Figure 2.4.) Even if the audience members that marked 'no response' on the survey were accounted for as males, most of attendees would still be predominantly female.

While analyzing the age category, I discovered that primary age range of audience members who took the survey at these performances were aged 60 and over, followed by people aged 50-59, than by people aged 40-49, 30-39, 24-29, and lastly 18-23 (Figure 3.4.) The White Bird Exclusive Event survey (Figure 3.3) had the highest amount of people aged 60 and over, which was about 41%. The White Bird Dance Series survey (Figure 3.1) shows the performance was mostly attended by those who were aged 60 and over, which was about 39%. The White Bird Uncaged survey (Figure 3.2) showed that people aged 50-59 most attended, which was 29%. Both the White Bird Dance Series survey (Figure 3.1) and the White Bird Exclusive Event survey (Figure 3.3) had people aged 18-23 as the lowest, which ranged from only 3-5%. The White Bird Uncaged survey (Figure 3.2) showed the lowest range was people aged 24-29. But looking at the combined survey totals (Figure 3.4) the highest attended age range at 38% was people aged 60 and over while the lowest attended age at 4% was people aged 18-23.

It was interesting to analyze the survey data from annual household income category because it was one of the categories in which several people who took the survey marked ‘no response,’ more so than most other categories. The White Bird Dance Series survey (Figure 4.1) showed that 30% of the people have an annual household income of \$100,000 and above while only 7% have an annual household income of less than \$25,000. The White Bird Uncaged survey (Figure 4.2) showed that 33% of the people have an annual household income of \$100,000 and above while 5% have an annual household income of \$75,000-\$99,000. The White Bird Exclusive Event survey (Figure 4.3) was similar to the White Bird Dance Series survey in that it showed 26% of the people have an annual household income of \$100,000 and above while 7% have an annual household income of less than \$25,000. Overall, according to the combined survey totals (Figure 4.4,) the highest marked answer was ‘no response.’ About 30% of the people overall marked that as their answer while the second highest at 29% was people who marked their annual household income as \$100,000 and above. The lowest combined survey totals was 7% of the people who marked that their annual household income was less than \$25,000. It’s an assumption that people who make more money would have more disposable income to spend on a dance performance compared to those who have little disposable income.

The last category I analyzed for the demographic sampling was completed education level. The White Bird Uncaged survey (Figure 5.2) showed that this performance had the highest amount of people with an advanced degree, which was 53%. The White Bird Dance Series survey (Figure 5.1) and the White Bird Exclusive event survey (Figure 5.3) showed very similar results with a high amount of people having advanced degrees, which was between 43-47%. While looking at the combined survey totals (Figure 5.4) it showed that overall most people who attended these performances have an advanced degree, which was 46%, or have a college degree

(BA/BS/BFA,) which was 36%. All together over 83% of the people have some sort of degree, leading to assume that on average the people who attend these performances are educated.

How do people learn about White Bird performances? Analyzing White Bird's Marketing Techniques.

The next set of data I analyzed falls under the marketing category. Every performing arts organization is going to have their own unique set of marketing tools and techniques. White Bird included answers on their survey that were specific to them and ways that audience members might have found out about the performance. People who took the survey at these performances were asked how they heard about it. They were given the option to mark all the answers that applied to them. The answers included: White Bird E-Newsletter, White Bird Website, Print Ad, Web Ad, Poster/Flyer, Radio, Social Media, At a Street Fair, Word of Mouth, and Other. The White Bird E (Electronic)-Newsletter is sent out to people who are the White Bird email list, it is sent out once a month. The newsletter usually contains information about upcoming performances as well as other White Bird related news and events. The White Bird Website acts as a portal for people. White Bird uses their website to present information about several things including (but not limited to) all performances, ticket information, subscriptions, and information about the organization itself. The Print Ad refers to an advertisement in a print publication, like a magazine or newspaper. People who marked the Print Ad category were also asked to specify the source. The Web Ad refers to an advertisement that was seen on a website. People who marked the Web Ad category were also asked to specify the source. White Bird has a very extensive Poster/Flyer campaign that includes over 25 different routes/locations in and around the Portland area and select neighboring cities. Posters and flyers are created specified to each performance and includes an image of the dance company as well the performance information. Occasionally

White Bird performances are advertised on the radio through local radio stations. White Bird currently has three different social media pages through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. They are most active on their Facebook page where they usually post about performances. Some people may have heard about White Bird performances at a summer street fair. As part of their community outreach, White Bird participates in 3-5 summer streets where they have a White Bird tent and lots of advertising collateral. Word of mouth is the way in which people have heard about the performances though someone telling them about it. The last option for people to mark was 'Other.' People that marked this answer were asked to specify their choice. The following figures represent the survey data analysis of all the marketing strategies people who took the survey answered. The results shown on the figures represent the answers people marked the least down to the answers people marked the most, therefore the list of answers varies on each figure. Because people were allowed to mark all the answers that applied to them, no percentage totals were calculated in terms of the amount of people who took the survey but rather in terms of the percentages of the amount of total answers that were marked. The last figure of this section (Figure 6.5) represents an outlook of answers that people who marked 'Other' chose to specify.

**Analyzed Survey Question: How did you hear about tonight's White Bird Performance?
(Mark all that apply)**

Figure 6.1: Audience Survey Data, Survey A: Marketing
White Bird Dance Series: *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet*

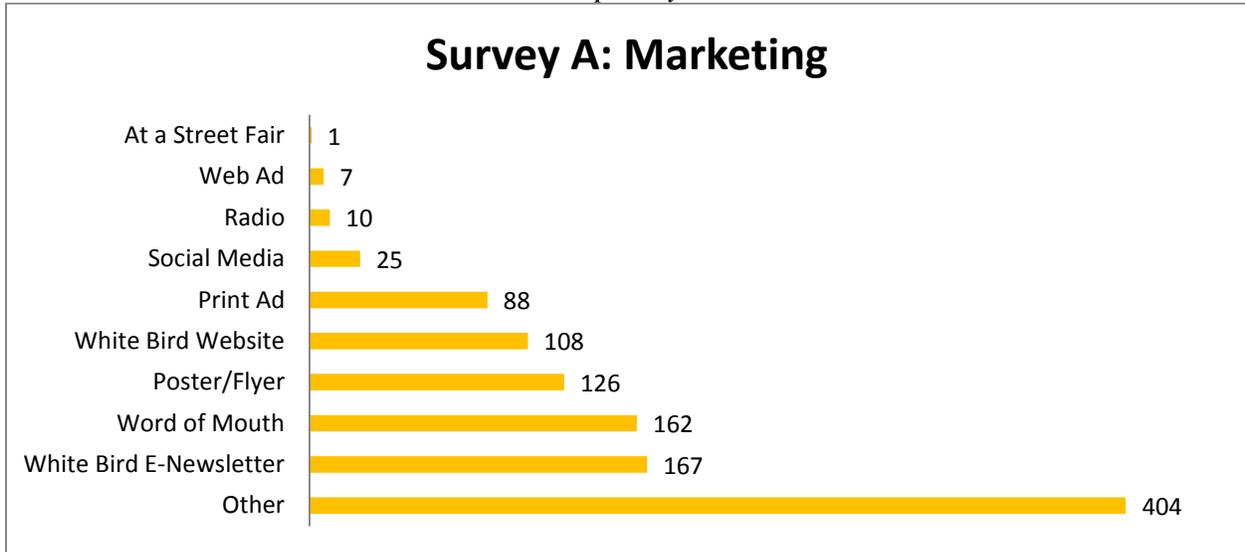


Figure 6.2: Audience Survey Data, Survey B: Marketing
White Bird Uncaged Series: *Stephen Petronio*

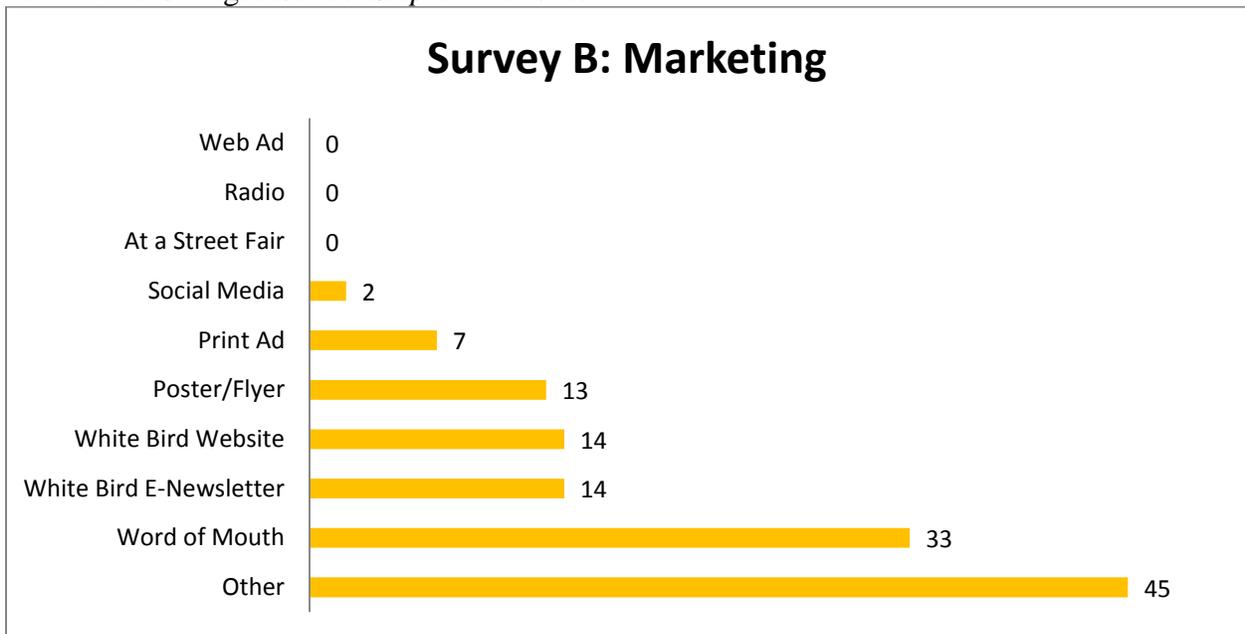


Figure 6.3: Audience Survey Data, Survey C: Marketing
 White Bird Exclusive Event: *Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo*

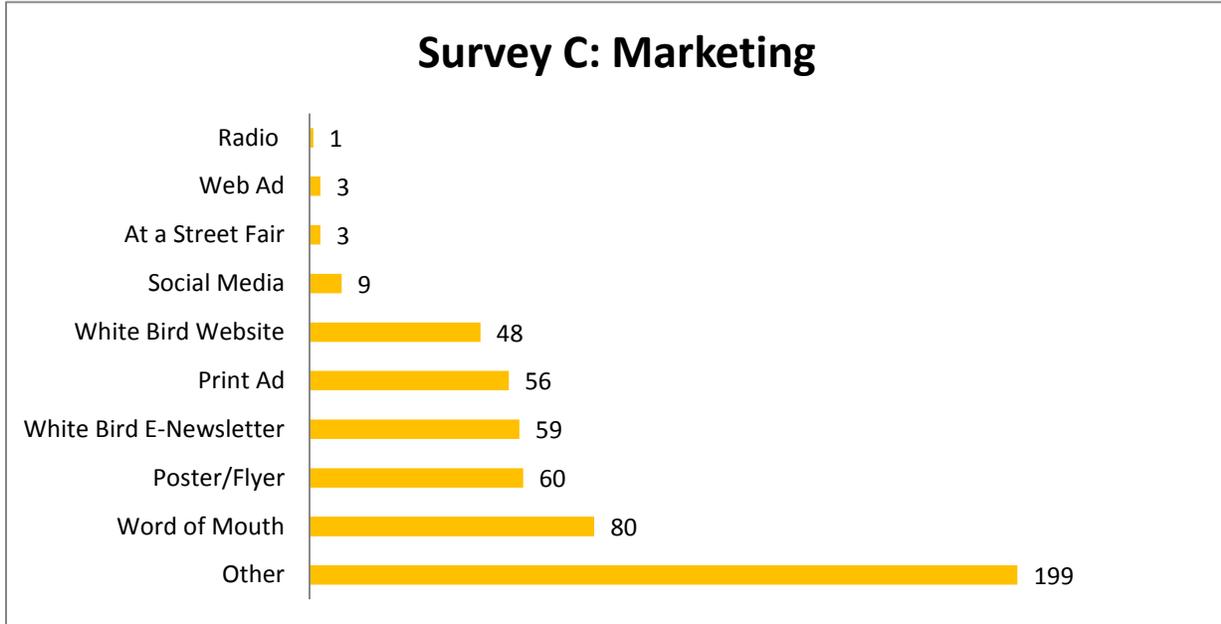


Figure 6.4: Audience Survey Data, Combined Survey Totals: Marketing

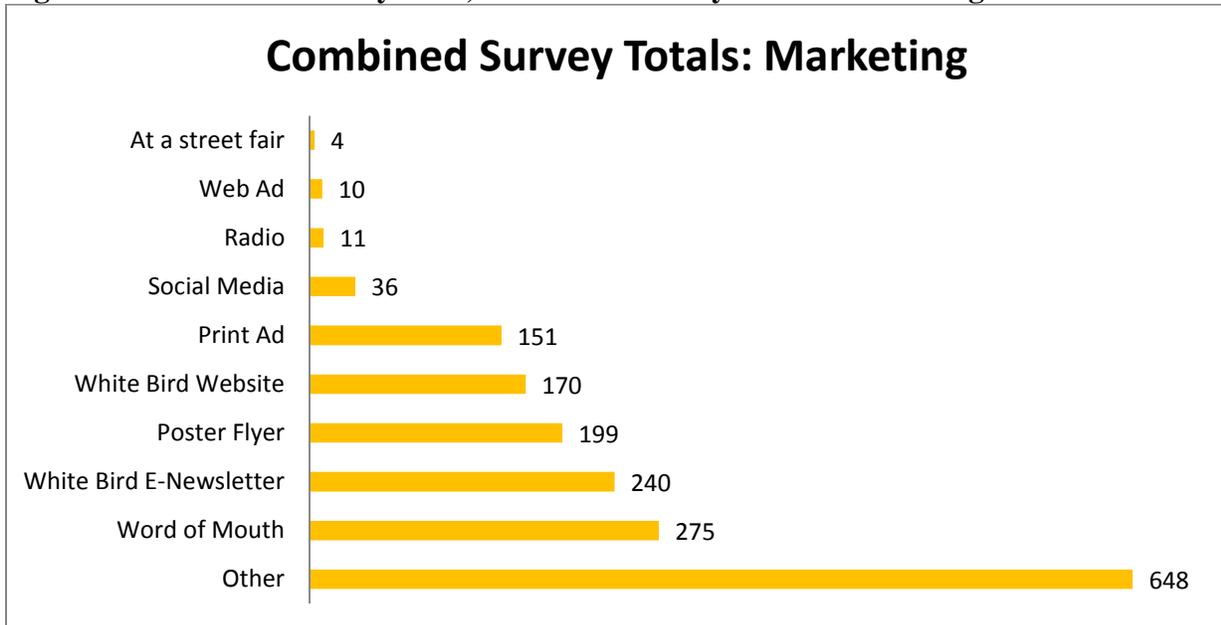


Figure 6.5 Audience Survey Data: Marketing ‘Other’ Responses

Survey A Other	404	Survey B Other	45	Survey C Other	199
Subscription	273	Subscription	20	Brochure	126
Invited to attend	51	Brochure	2	Invited to attend	23
Brochure	18	Gift	2	Subscription	22
Gift	7	Goldstar	2	Portland 5	7
Programa Hispanico	4	Invited to attend	2	Company Performing info	6
Volunteer	4	Involved in arts	1	Gift	2
Previous show	3	Reed College	2	Previous Performance	2
Dance Studio	3	School	2	Auction	1
Nest Tickets	3	Volunteer	1	Board Member	1
Friend	3	Know Performer	10	Dance teacher	1
Advertised at Venue	3	Not Specified	1	Email from WB	1
Comp	2			Grand Continental	1
WB program	2			Nest	1
Auction tickets	2			Not Specified	1
P5 website	2			Portland Tribune	1
Board Member	2			School auction	1
Volunteering	2			Student @ PSU	1
Cedar Lake Website	2			Volunteer	1
College class	2				
OBT	1				
Sponsor	1				
email	1				
Dancer	1				
Portland 5	1				
OregonianEmployee	1				
Zupans	1				
Spouse	1				
Alberta Street Fair	1				
El Programa Hispano	1				
Artslandia	1				
OBT Program	1				
PSU professor	1				
Holiday Pack	1				
Reed College	1				
Program Ad	1				

Upon analyzing the data about marketing I came across some common themes amongst the four charts as well as some unexpected themes. The most surprising result was finding that Word of Mouth was either the second or third highest chosen answer on all the surveys. The first survey data analyzed was for the White Bird Dance Series (Figure 6.1) where people marked 1,099 answers that applied to them. The most marked answer, with 404 responses, was Other. Among the other top responses were White Bird E-Newsletter, Word of Mouth, and Poster/Flyer. The lowest marked answer on this survey was At A Street Fair, which only generated one response. The White Bird Uncaged Series survey (Figure 6.2) generated 128 responses. While analyzing this data it was found that the most marked answer was Other, which 45 people responded to. Among the other top responses were Word of Mouth, White Bird E-Newsletter, and White Bird Website. The lowest marked answers on this survey were Web Ad, Radio, and At a Street Fair, which all generated zero responses. Looking at the data for the White Bird Exclusive Event (Figure 6.3) it was also discovered that just like the previous two survey results, Other was also the top response with 518 responses. Coming in after that was Word of Mouth, Poster/Flyer, and White Bird E-Newsletter. The lowest marked response here was Radio, which generated only one response. By combining the survey totals (Figure 6.4), I was able to see where the people were most finding out about White Bird performances as a whole, all together there were 1,745 responses to the marketing question. I found it surprising that Word of Mouth was all together the second highest response, coming in after Other. What is interesting about Word of Mouth is that is something in which there is no real control over from a marketing stand-point. However, it does show that people are talking about White Bird and sharing the information about performances with others, so this is essentially a good thing. The results of the analyzed data also show that people respond well to the White Bird E-Newsletter and

Poster/Flyers. An unexpected result on the combined survey totals was learning that Social Media was amongst the lowest marked answers, generated all together only 36 responses. Of all the responses tabulated that makes up only 2%. Given the emergence of technology and social media in the performing arts sectors, as mentioned previously, this is a marketing strategy that should be investigated further so that it could be used to fullest capacity and provide more beneficial results.

While looking at the results of the answers that people specified to the Other category (Figure 6.5,) among the top responses were Subscriptions, Brochures, and Invited to Attend. People who are White Bird subscribers most likely continue to learn about White Bird through subscription renewals and receiving the season brochure. People who were in Invited to Attend could be assumed to be people who marked Word of Mouth. If a person was invited to the performance, they could have heard about it through word of mouth.

Purchasing Tickets/Ticket Buying Behavior

The next set of data analyzed from the results of the survey incorporates how people purchased their tickets for the performance. The choices that were provided on the survey reflected ways in which people could purchase tickets for the White Bird performance. This included online, by phone, at the box office, subscription, and other. People were also asked if they use their cell phone to purchase tickets. Aside from answering yes or no, people were also given the option to mark whether or not would like to purchase tickets that way or mark that they do not like to purchase tickets that way. The following figures represent the data analyzed for ticket buying behavior.

Analyzed Survey Question: How did you purchase your tickets for tonight's performance?

Figure 7.1: Audience Survey Data, Survey A: Purchase
White Bird Dance Series: *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet*

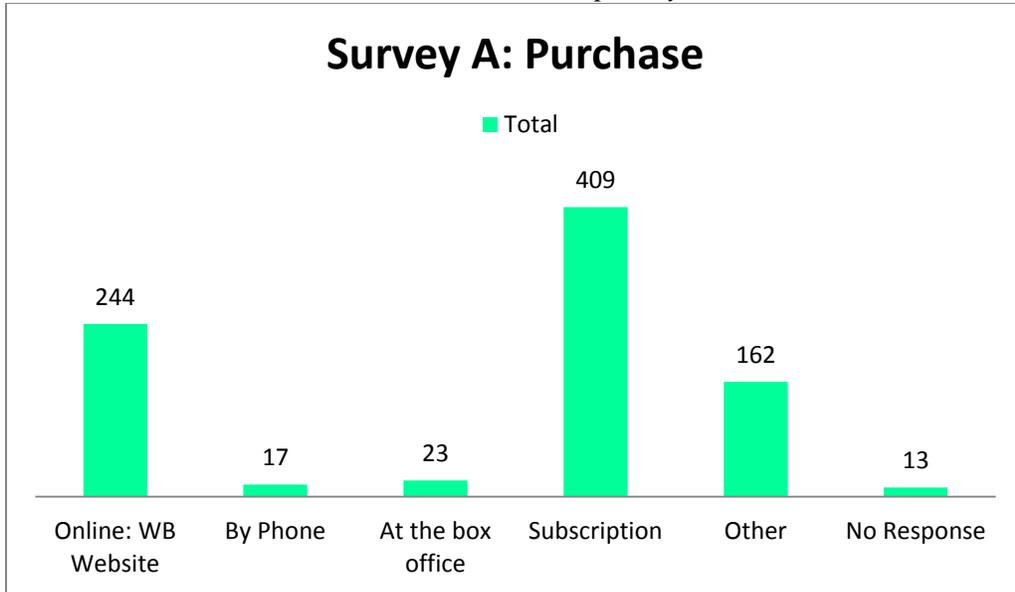


Figure 7.2: Audience Survey Data, Survey B: Purchase
White Bird Uncaged Series: *Stephen Petronio*

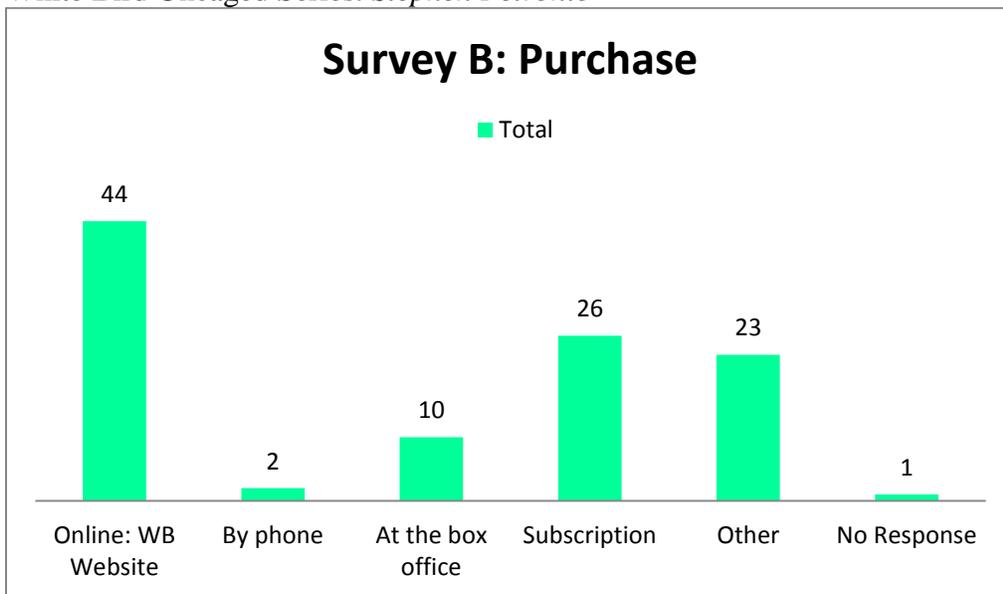


Figure 7.3: Audience Survey Data, Survey C: Purchase
White Bird Exclusive Event: *Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo*

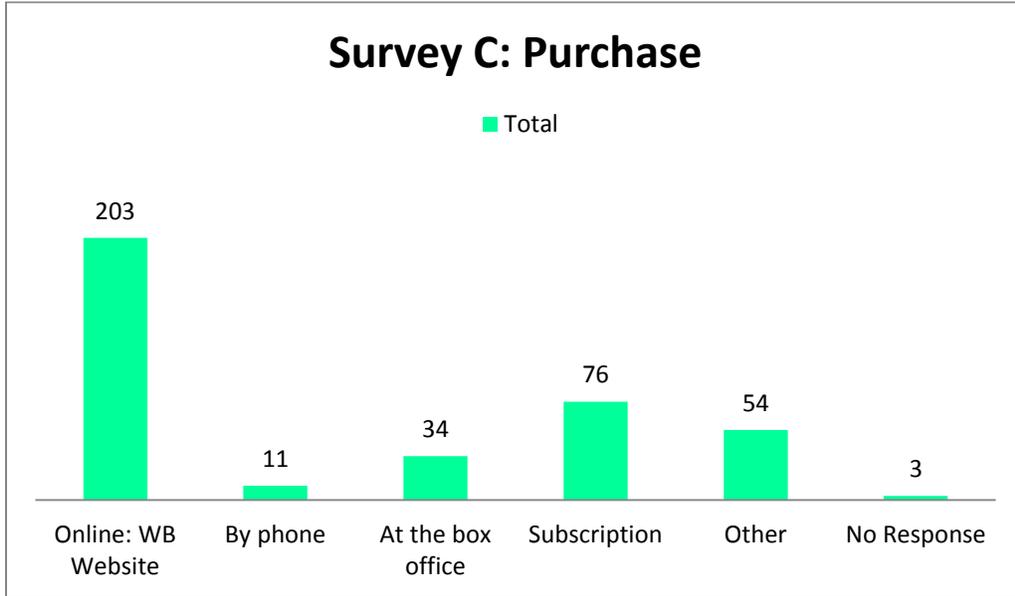
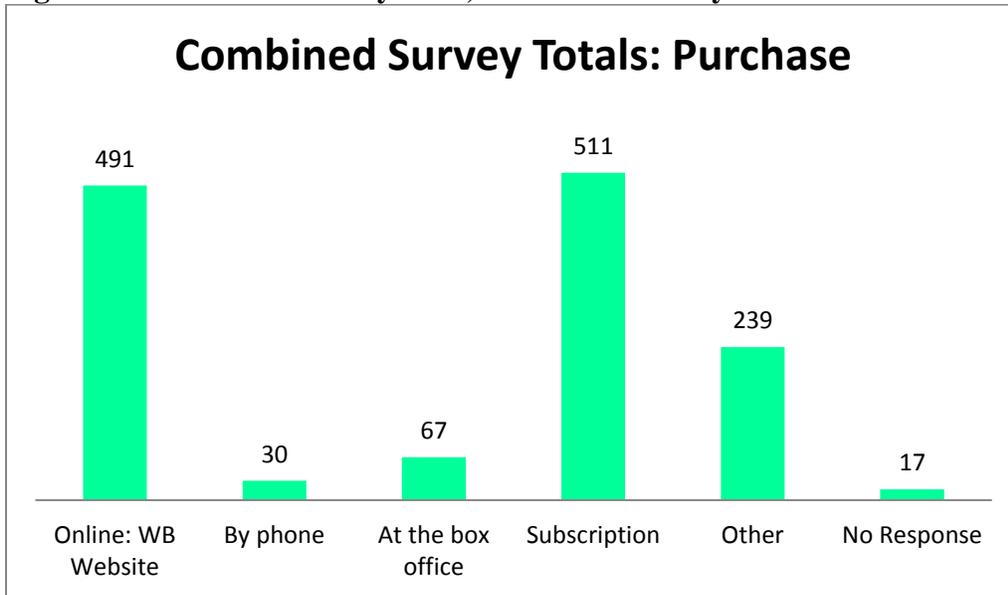


Figure 7.4: Audience Survey Data, Combined Survey Totals: Purchase



Analyzed Survey Question: Do you use your cell phone to purchase tickets?

Figure 8.1: Audience Survey Data, Survey A: Cell Phones

White Bird Dance Series: *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet*

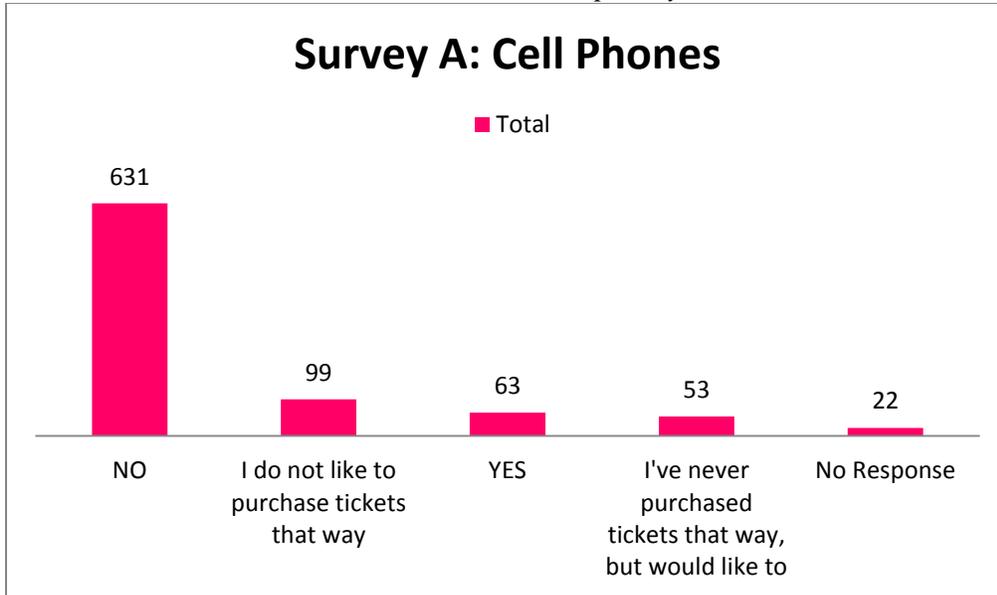


Figure 8.2: Audience Survey Data, Survey B: Cell Phones

White Bird Uncaged Series: *Stephen Petronio*

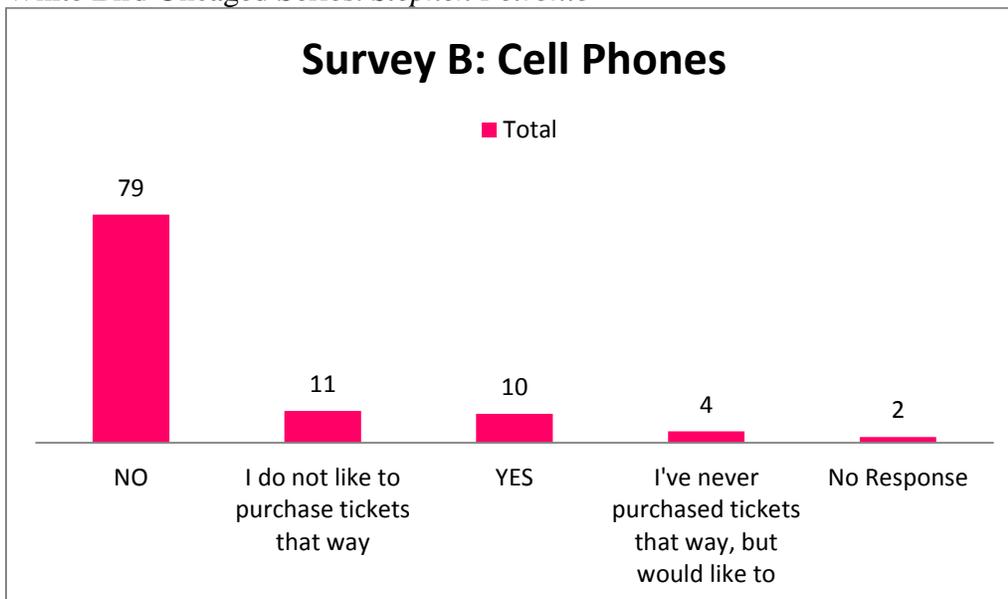


Figure 8.3: Audience Survey Data, Survey C: Cell Phones
White Bird Exclusive Event: *Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo*

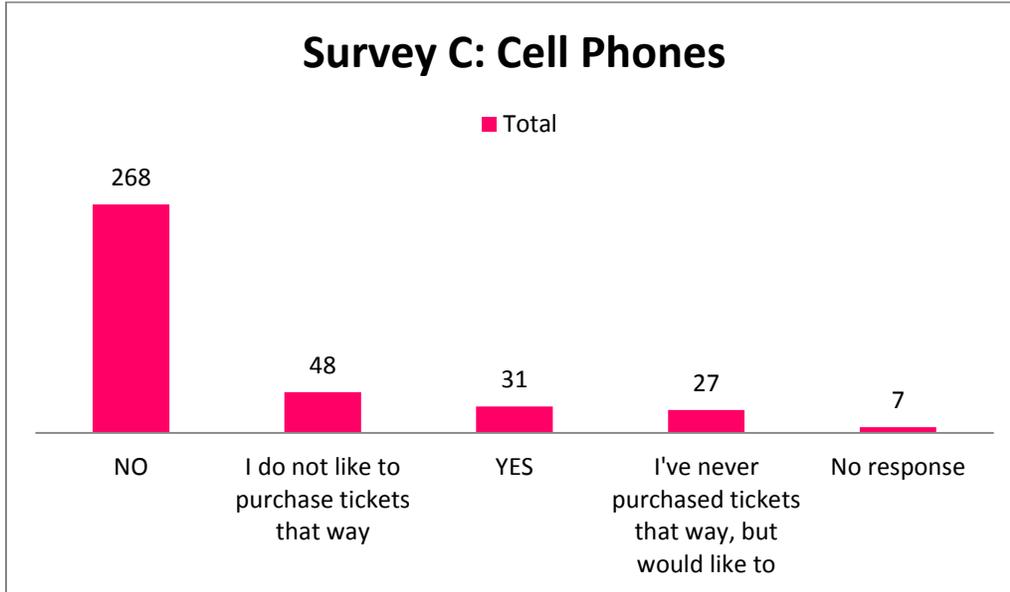
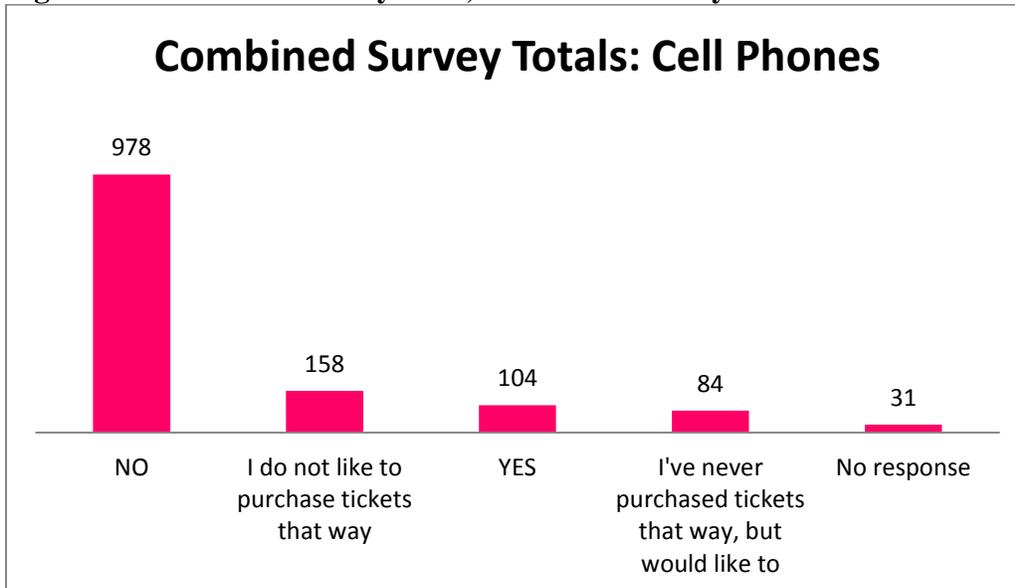


Figure 8.4: Audience Survey Data, Combined Survey Totals: Cell Phones



Analyzing the data from the results to learn about ticket buying behavior is important because organizations should stay current with how their audiences prefer to purchase tickets. According to the survey results from the White Bird Dance Series (Figure 7.1) the most common way to purchase tickets was through a subscription. This accounted for 47% of those who took the survey. The other two series, both the White Bird Uncaged Series (Figure 7.2) and the White Bird Exclusive Event (Figure 7.3), show that the top preference was Online: White Bird website. When looking at the combined survey totals (Figure 7.4) there is only a slight difference between people who marked Subscription (37%) versus Online: WB Website (36%.) White Bird has a relatively high subscriber base and continues to use a traditional subscription model. People who purchase their tickets online, through the White Bird website (the only way to purchase White Bird performance tickets online) have the added convenience of no added tickets fees. Actually, the only option of ticket purchases that gives the purchaser an added ticket fee is purchasing by phone where there is a \$3 per ticket fee added to the ticket price. This option was the lowest marked answer on the combined survey results, with 2% of people purchasing tickets that way. People who chose to purchase their tickets at the box office, the second lowest marked answer, made up 4% of those who took the survey. To purchase tickets at the box office, where no additional ticket fees apply, people have to go downtown Portland to the theatre venue. This may in fact be a more popular choice for ticket purchasing if it weren't an accessibility issue. While there are no added ticket fees here, there is mostly likely a chance people have to pay for parking on top of having to drive downtown. Purchasing tickets online could be more popular due to the fact that is easily accessible and convenient.

An interesting question that White Bird asked on their survey was whether or not people use their cell phone to purchase tickets. It is interesting to look at the results and analyze whether

or not this is an important feature for their audience members. While looking at the survey results for all the performances (Figure 8.1, Figure 8.2, Figure 8.3) it's clear to see that most people do not use their cell phone to purchase tickets. By looking at the combined survey results (Figure 8.4) the data shows that 72% of people who took the survey responded with No. People also had a high response by answering that they do not like to purchase tickets that way. While some people did respond that they don't purchase tickets that way but would like to, it may not necessarily be a high priority at this time to include a more cell phone friendly ticket buying option. At this time, White Bird does not have a mobile compatible website.

What is motivating people to attend performances?

The next set of data analyzed from the survey results came from asking people what their strongest motivation for attending the performance that night was. While this could easily vary according to any number of performances at any given time, there were definitely common themes among the results. It could be said that people who are subscribers most likely attend because they have season tickets and are motivated to go because they already have a ticket. Someone who subscribes probably does so because they want to see dance performances. The following figures represent the analyzed survey results showing peoples motivation.

Analyzed Survey Question: What is the strongest motivation for attending tonight's performance?

Figure 9.1: Audience Survey Data, Survey A: Motivation
White Bird Dance Series: *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet*

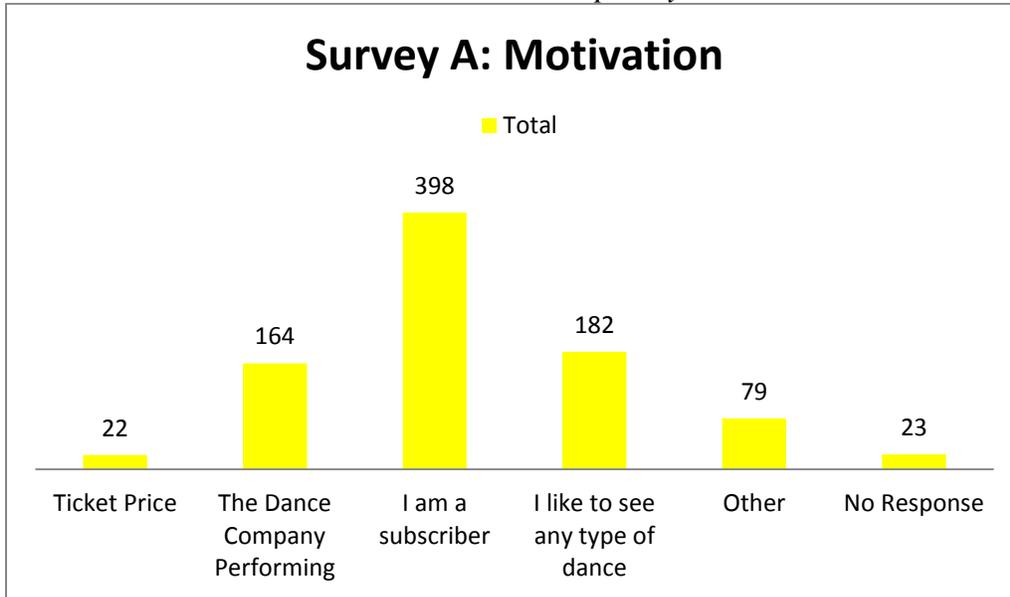


Figure 9.2: Audience Survey Data, Survey B: Motivation
White Bird Uncaged Series: *Stephen Petronio*

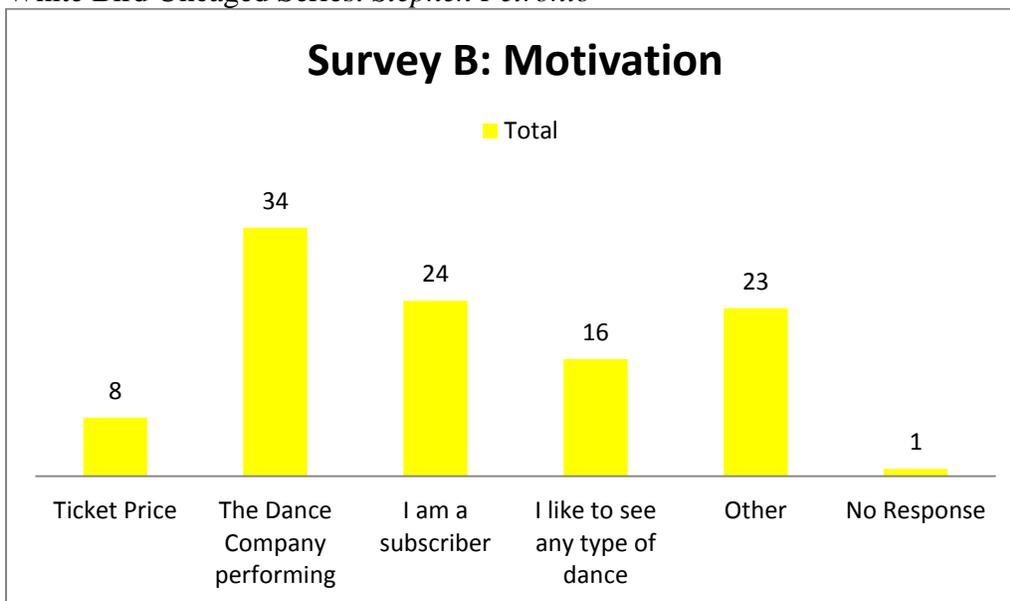


Figure 9.3: Audience Survey Data, Survey C: Motivation
 White Bird Exclusive Event: *Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo*

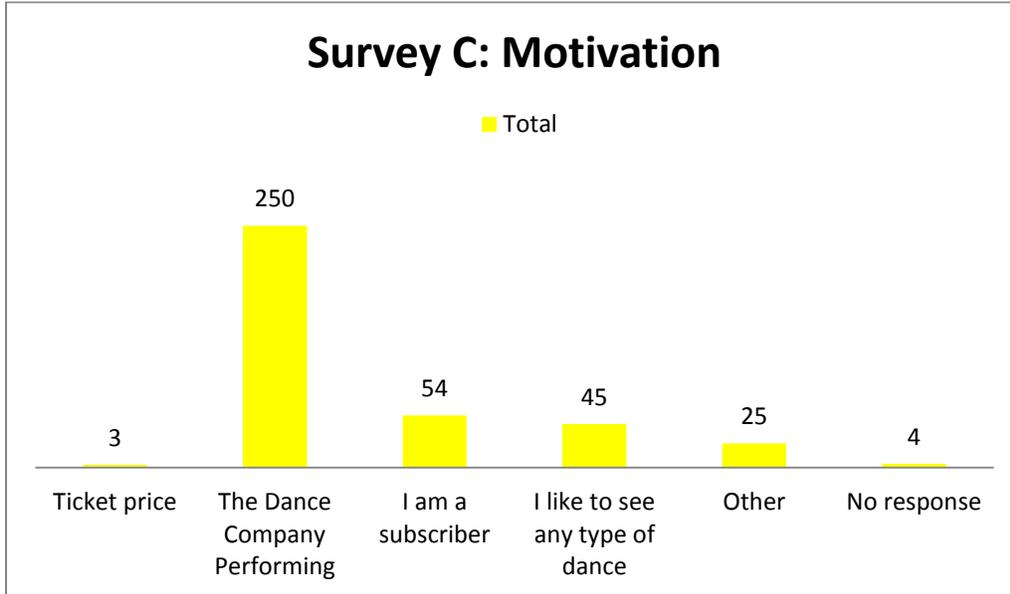
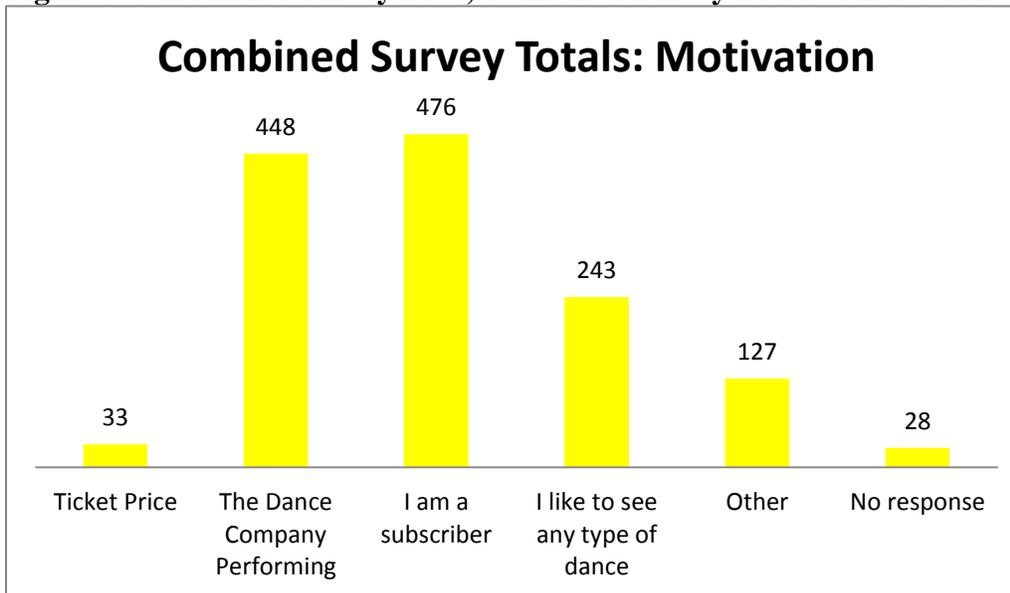


Figure 9.4: Audience Survey Data, Combined Survey Totals: Motivation



The results from the White Bird Dance Series (Figure 9.1) shows that people who attended were most motivated because they were subscribers. The second highest response shows that people who attended were motivated because they like to see any type of dance. People that marked this option are likely, in general, supporters of dance and were motivated to attend because they wanted to see a dance performance. The next survey results analyzed from the Uncaged Series (Figure 9.2) shows a different rank in motivation. Here, people who attended were most motivated by the dance company performing, followed by subscribers. The White Bird Exclusive Event (Figure 9.3) showed similar results where people who attended were most motivated by the dance company performing, followed by subscribers. When looking at the combined survey totals (Figure 9.4) the two strongest motivators, the dance company performing and subscribers, were very close in range. It could be said that people who were motivated to attend because of the dance company performing are familiar with the dance company because they are reputable. Therefore, White Birds programming is having a positive effect on the motivation for people attending performances.

Enhancing the Experience

It's hard to measure an audience member's experience. Here, the results of the survey data show what could be done to enhance the audience member's experience. While the choices for this question could be an assortment of things, White Bird chose to use answers that would enhance the experience through particularly engaging things. The answers included Pre-performance talk, Post-performances talk/Q&A (question & answer,) Expanded program notes, Panel discussion, and Other.

**Analyzed Survey Question: What could be done to enhance your experience tonight?
(Mark all that apply.)**

Figure 10.1: Audience Survey Data, Survey A: Enhance Experience
White Bird Dance Series: *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet*

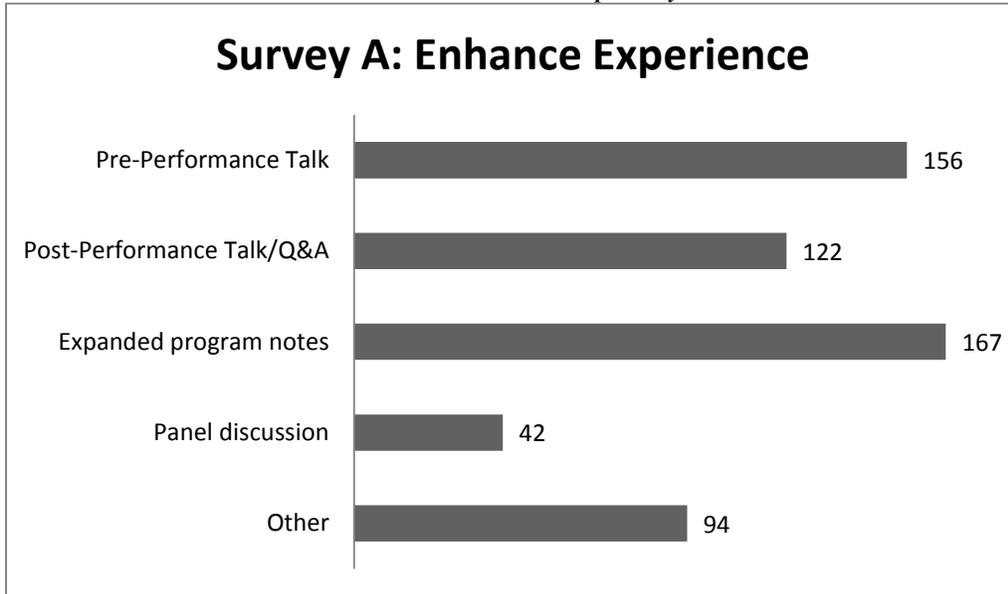


Figure 10.2: Audience Survey Data, Survey B: Enhance Experience
White Bird Uncaged Series: *Stephen Petronio*

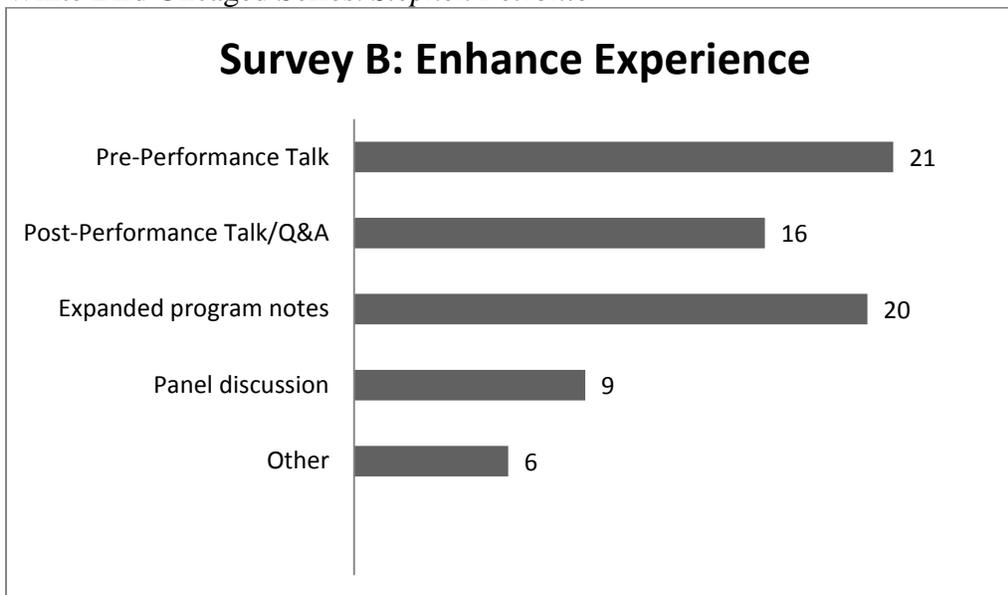


Figure 10.3: Audience Survey Data, Survey C: Enhance Experience
White Bird Exclusive Event: *Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo*

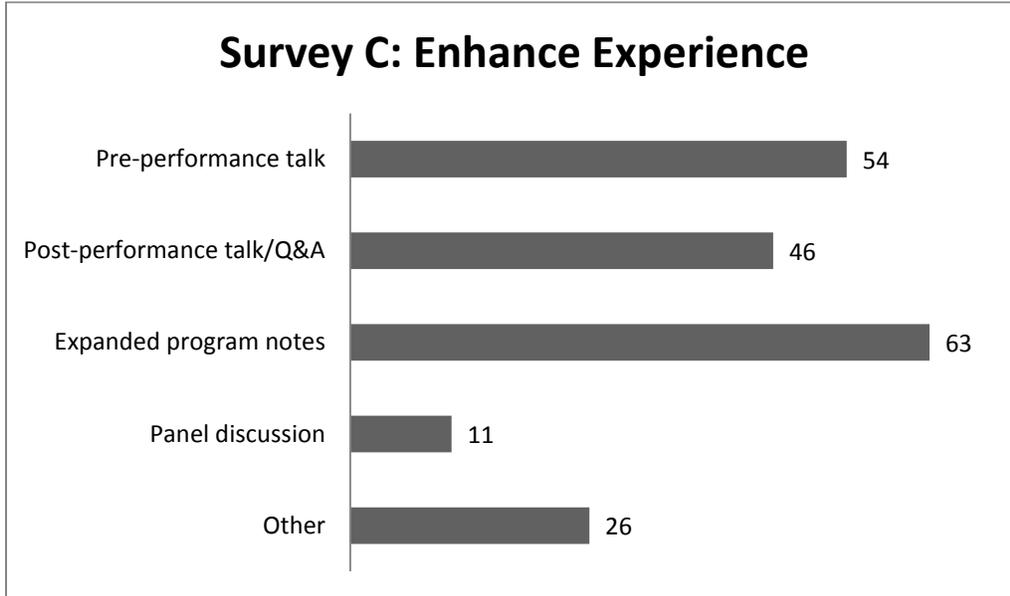
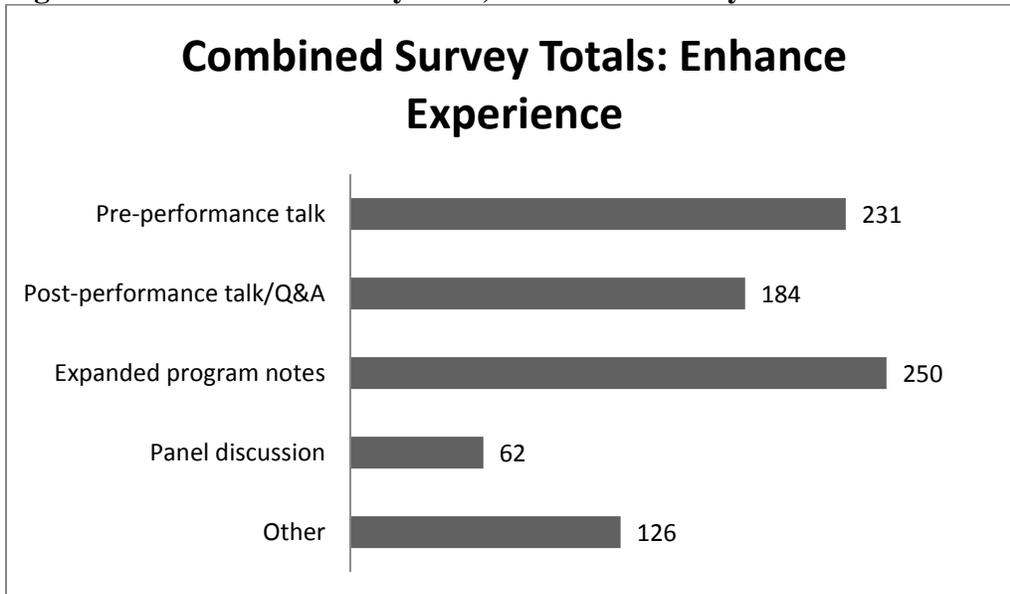


Figure 10.4: Audience Survey Data, Combined Survey Totals: Enhance Experience



People who took the survey were allowed to mark all the answers that applied to them, meaning that their experience could have been enhanced by one or more of the options provided. This does not necessarily mean if they chose multiple responses that they would want all of those enhancements in one night. Looking at the data for this question is important to audience development because it could lead to new marketing strategies as well as an expanded audience. People who responded by marking Other were asked to specify their answer, this led to other ways in which people who took the survey felt their experience could have been enhanced. While looking at the combined survey totals (Figure 10.4) it is shown that people's experiences could be most enhanced through expanded program notes, which accounted for 29% of the responses given. Some of the answers that were given by those who responded with Other included meeting the dancers, and going backstage. These types of responses, including the expanded program notes, could interpret that audience members want more of a personal connection to the dance companies performing.

Repeat Business

While many dance organizations are non-profits, it's important to remember that they are in fact, a business. Like any other business, repeat customers are vital to success. The next set of figures examines whether or not people who took the survey had previously attended a White Bird performance. By analyzing the data from this question I took it further to see what percentages of those who had previously attended were subscribers versus non-subscribers. This is important in the sense that out of the people who HAVE attended a White Bird performance, how do you further target those who are NOT subscribers to become subscribers? Furthermore, how do you target those who are subscribers to become donors?

Analyzed Survey Question: Have you previously attended a White Bird performance?

Figure 11.1: Audience Survey Data, Survey A: Previous Attendance
White Bird Dance Series: *Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet*

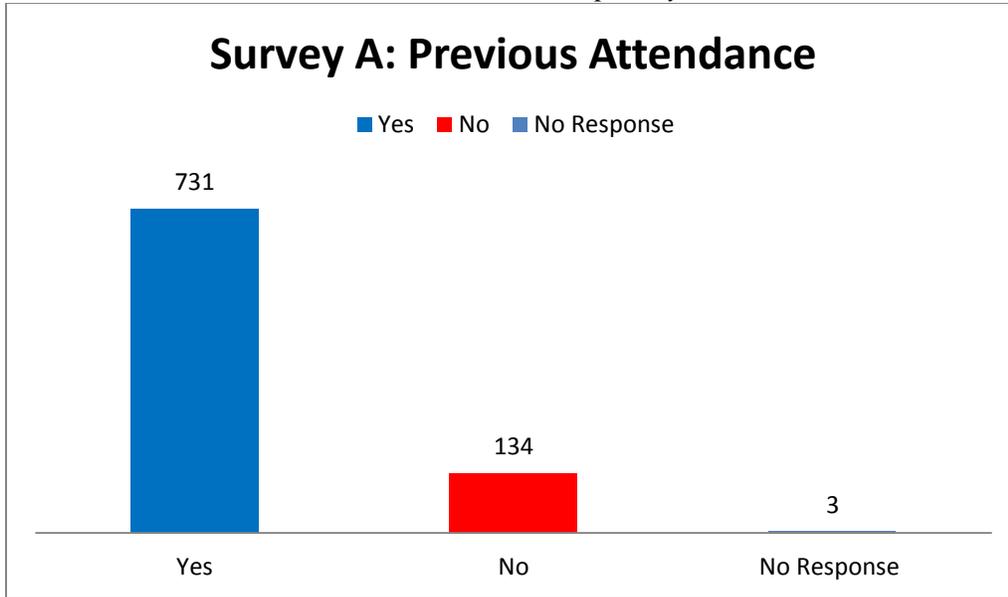


Figure 11.2: Audience Survey Data, Survey B: Previous Attendance
White Bird Uncaged Series: *Stephen Petronio*

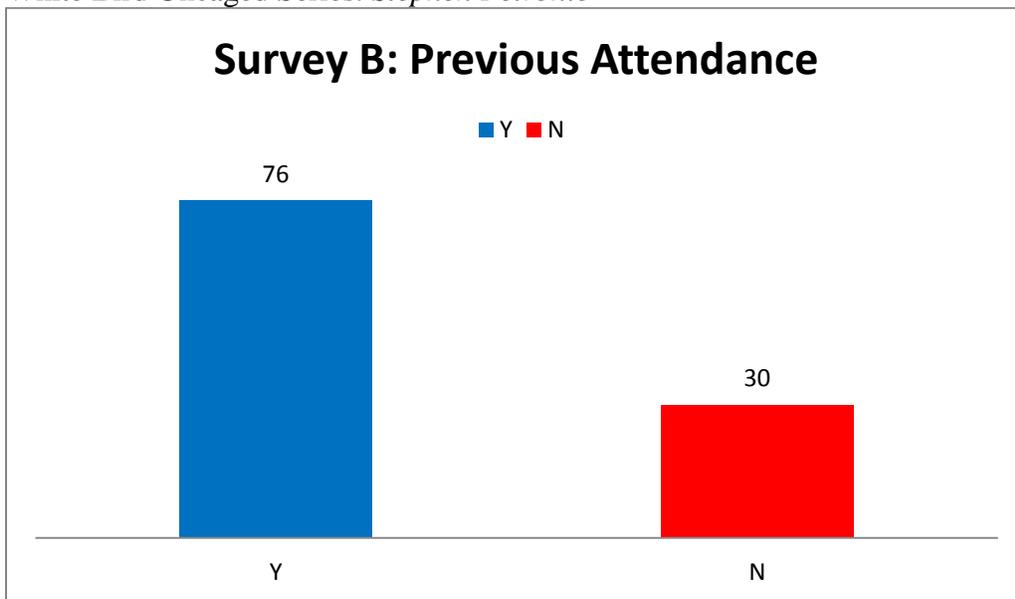


Figure 11.3: Audience Survey Data, Survey C: Previous Attendance
White Bird Exclusive Event: *Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo*

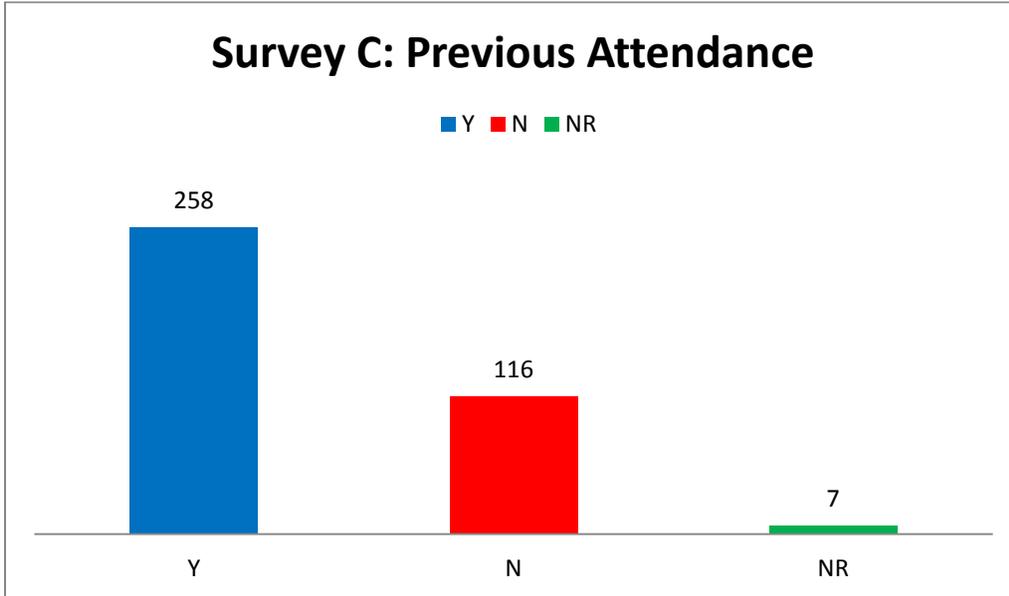
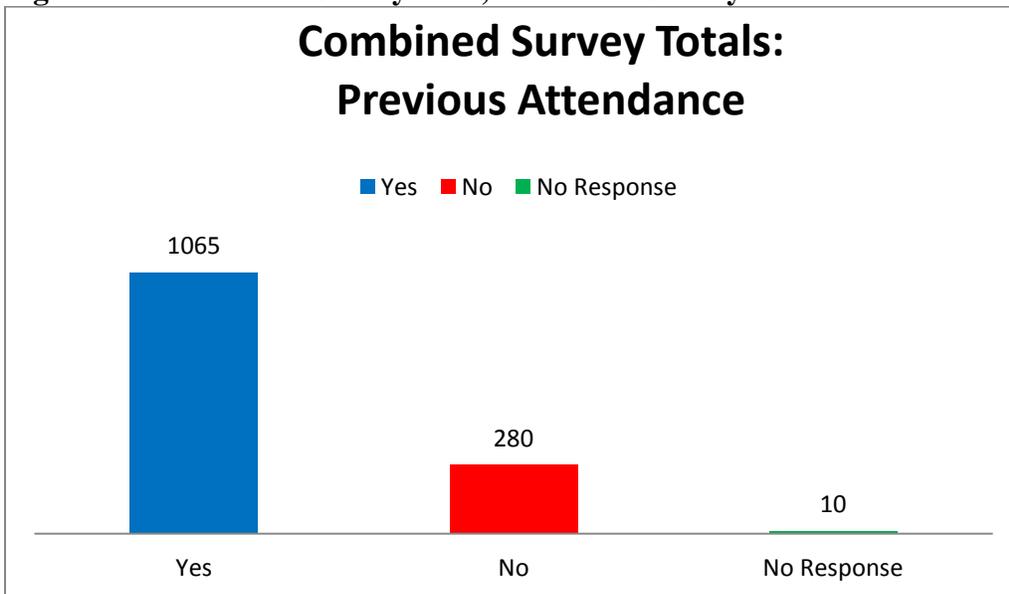


Figure 11.4: Audience Survey Data, Combined Survey Totals: Previous Attendance



According to the results of the White Bird Dance Series (Figure 11.1) a majority of people had previously attended a White Bird performance. Out of those 731 people who had previously attended, 263 were subscribers, and 466 were not subscribers. That means a large number of people who had previously attended a White Bird performance could be potential future subscribers or donors. The White Bird Uncaged survey results (Figure 11.2) also showed that most people had previously attended a White Bird performance. However, this series had a larger number of non-subscribers (45) versus subscribers (31). Similar results were found by analyzing the White Bird Exclusive Event survey results (Figure 11.3) where out of the 258 people who had previously attended, 164 were not subscribers and 92 were. Taking that information into account, it could be said that more non-subscribers attended the White Bird Uncaged performance and White Bird Exclusive Event. This could be a key piece of information to have in building audience development strategies.

Part Two: Interviewing Key Informants

Like many performing arts organizations, White Bird has a mission to fulfill that goes beyond filling the theatre auditorium with people and selling tickets. Creating an audience that consists of loyal patrons, and that will include future patrons, has to be done with efforts that span across several sectors. By interviewing key informants at White Bird I was able to gain insight on these sectors from the perspective of professionals with working knowledge on a dance organization. Some of the topics I covered in my interview included community engagement, educational outreach, audience demographics, marketing, and audience development.

Engaging With the Community

The community engagement put forth by White Bird all have different goals and outcomes, but overall the point is to engage the community while supporting White Bird's mission. Paul King, co-founder of White Bird, began by saying "when Wally (Walter Jaffe) and I started White Bird, we always felt that it was so important that our mission and vision is not only bringing the best of the dance from around the world to Portland, but to have the artist and the work, the art, connect with our community. Our job is to bring artist and audience together and deeply connect with the community. That's sort of the very basic building blocks of our value system, of what we do." Each company that White Bird presents is contractually required to do some sort of community engagement such as a master class or an additional performance provided to schools. Paul continued to say that "in a way, community engagement is more important than the work we bring on the stages. It's really the essence of why we do what we do." Ryan Blum, Financial and Community Partnerships Manager, believes that community engagement does in fact affect audience patronage. Ryan stated that "it lets audience members know that they're not just particularly participating in a one-time engagement, that they're actually part of the broader cultural fabric." He adds that "White Bird doesn't really have a particular physical space. So it's important that people understand that their participation is part of a larger organization and it's their attendance and the things they do beyond the performance that make them part of White Bird. Just coming to a performance doesn't necessarily guarantee that they see themselves as part of that audience." Unlike many dance organizations that have a physical space, White Bird is faced with the challenge of creating an audience that can identify with their organization by name. Some of the ways this is done is by engagement like participating at summer street fairs, community dance experiences, educational programs, and

fundraisers. Walter Jaffe, co-founder of White Bird, believes that community engagement is “essential,” and that one of White Bird’s goals is to “make more connections with different communities.” By having a presence in the community and providing educational outreach opportunities Walter believes that it is “especially important for retaining our audiences and building new audiences.” Dance organizations that have a mission to stand by strive to have a greater purpose, aside from making money. Paul believes that “in a way, community engagement is more important than the work we bring on the stages. It’s really the essence of why we do what we do. This is no way to make money, it’s not about money. There is a larger purpose and Portland is such an amazing city that is so open to change and to caring about each other that I think it is possible for one or two people or a small group to make a difference.” It’s important to think about the effects an organization can have on people and continue to find reasons as to why the mission is important. In terms of engagement Ryan went on to state that “whether or not that creates the audience of the future it certainly lets them know there are more opportunities besides the broader popular culture offerings on various mediated forums. So I think it’s pretty essential.”

Audience Demographics/Diversity

It can be assumed that by diversify an audience; there is a chance of having a larger audience. The more people an organization can reach out to, the more people are likely to connect with the organization and attend a performance. Walter stated that “the goal is to broaden the base of our audience. To make it more diverse in all senses of the word, not just racially or ethnically but also interest wise. I think we are seeing more people who don’t have dance experience or background knowledge coming to our shows, which is exactly what we want to try to do.” Diversity and demographics can incorporate a plethora of things. Chelsea

Bushnell, Audiences Services Manager, spoke about the audience in terms of demographics and went on to say that “it feels like it’s pretty mixed, and our subscription base has stayed pretty much the same over time. It’s definitely people who are interested in the arts. People that attend our events tend to attend a lot of other arts organizations in town as well; theatre and ballet.” Chelsea thinks that White Bird’s audience demographic is probably “more middle age, not so much on the younger side.” When asked if the demographic has seen much change over the years Chelsea said “I don’t think it has, for us personally. Portland has grown a lot. Portland has changed a lot in the last 10 years. But I don’t think our clients or patrons have changed necessarily.” This is more reason to continue building strategies that can assist in creating a more diverse audience. Paul agrees that their audience demographic “has remained pretty constant,” and that “we have a pretty diverse audience in lots of different categories.” He continues by saying that “you have to go to segments of the community that are in different areas, that live in different places in the city,” and that “what we realize is that we need to go in the communities to reach them.” One thing White Bird has strived to do is diversify their audience through community engagement. To better explain this Paul stated that “Le grand continental (one of White Birds community engagement activities) is a good example. We wanted to celebrate the diversity of Portland, which is sometimes hard to feel, see, find. But we made a real effort to engage with Pacific Islanders, lots of different Hispanic populations, African Americans, and just segments that we just don’t see very much in a community project. That was really important to us.” White Bird is active in continuing to broaden their community engagement and actively seeks ways through creative approached to do so.

Marketing

Marketing approaches are one thing that requires constant attention and change. Simply put by Paul, an organization has to ““Adapt, change, or die.” Sarah Toor, Marketing Manager, talked about the most important marketing tools by stating “starting with most valuable; to also valuable. (1.) Web and printed material together, working in tandem. Printed material with web being pretty different venues for people, and you get a wide range of ages that way. And they would also ideally back each other up, look and feel the same and answer questions. (2.) Email blasts, sending out reminders, building excitement around shows, promoting ticket sales. We see a lot of conversion around email blasts. (3.) And then social media, as sort of a fun way to engage, and more of an added value for patrons. We don’t get a lot of conversions through social media but we haven’t tapped into it a lot” Social media is perhaps an avenue that needs more strategic planning by White Bird. While it’s a relatively new marketing tool, compared to others mentioned, social media is becoming more and more vital for performing arts organizations to tap in to and explore. Sarah goes on to say that social media “can be valuable, and I think it could help to boost audience attendance.” Walter agrees that “we have to focus more on social media and different ways of reaching audiences than we used to which was really though print advertising and posters and flyers.” When asked about what types of marketing are valuable to their dance organization Walter went on to say that “it continues to be posters and flyers but we also need to have more extensive materials on our website, and direct people more to the website. Social media is essential. Images and video are totally essential. Images have always been important, video is more important than ever.” He believes that it’s all about “personalizing the experience.”

Audience Development

Like marketing, ways in which dance organizations need to find new audience development tools is constantly changing. I talked to Chelsea about changes in audiences over the years, she stated that “the recession didn’t help. That was huge, and there’s increased competition. There are more and more events and things going on vying for people’s attention. Those are probably the two main things. It’s like we’re competing with ourselves....there’s just a lot going on, people are really paying attention to how they spend their money.” When asked about audience development strategies and whether or not they’ve changed in the last several years Paul stated “absolutely....the newspapers are going away. It’s all changed, everything’s changed. Every day it’s different.” Paul goes on to talk about audience development by stating “Is it a challenge? It’s totally a challenge. It’s really tough to sell these tickets and get people in. To cut through the den of exposure and attention grabbing forces that are out there. What our job is, is to be relevant every day in our community....it’s defiantly challenging and it’s changed tremendously.” I talked with Ryan about the same topic and he stated that organizations “are really challenging themselves to come up with appealing engaging strategies to develop activities that will bring people in. It’s not enough to put the news out there, or put the event in the public domain, that just doesn’t work anymore. People have too many things vying for their attention and time.” Considering all the different things that are out there vying for people’s attention Ryan believes that “competing against that panoply of offerings, one has to differentiate oneself.”

By examining the information found throughout this case study I was able to gain insight into a professional dance organization. The opportunity to speak with these key informants

combined with the analyzed survey data completed within the context of this case study will provide further findings and recommendations in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Findings and Recommendations

This research project examined current and best practices in audience development through a literature review and explored audience behavior by conducting interviews and data analysis through an in-depth case study at the dance organization White Bird. Current audience development strategies were examined across different performing arts sectors. This project aims to assist in building audience development strategies for cultivating a future for dance audience patronage. The project attempts to act as a guide for arts administrators and emerging arts leaders to understand the methods behind creating new strategies. More specifically, this research project is intended to be a source for dance organizations seeking to build and enhance their audience.

By creating a conceptual framework I was able to lay out a guide for which this project could unfold. I started with the main concept of dance audiences and dance patrons at the core of my concept. I aimed to answer my research questions by exploring further. The project began with a literature review to give a better perspective into the performing arts audience and developments within the performing arts sectors. The next step was to perform a case study and investigate a current dance organizations strategies and initiatives in developing an audience. Throughout this research project the following question and sub questions were explored: what audience development strategies could assist in building dance audiences? What are changing factors in audience behavior? How can an audience member be turned into a subscriber or donor? What types of programs could be incorporated into performances that would encourage people to become a patron with a dance organization?

Findings

Changing factors in audience behavior can be attributed to one of the main trends seen throughout this research project. That trend is the emergence of social media use by performing

arts organizations as means for engagement, marketing, and participation. As described in Chapter Two, performing arts organizations are increasing the use of social media and technology in many ways. By increasing the use of social media they are focusing more on audience engagement and less on traditional performing arts experiences. Marketing through social media helps to cultivate a relationship with their audience members and community. This assists in building a relationship with a patron, or future patron. Across the board there is an overall increase in technology use as means for connecting with audience members. This is demonstrated in marketing and engagement efforts through email and e-newsletters. While traditional performing arts experiences have decreased in some ways, there is still a want and need for them thus forcing organizations to balance out their efforts.

This research project has illuminated the significance of needing to understand an organizations target market and demographic. It is often assumed that all performing arts organizations share the exact same audience demographic and target market. While some parts of the equation can often times be similar, each organization has their own unique audience. One thing that many audiences have in common is the want and need for personal connection to the organization; community members want to feel connected to the organization. People who are spending money or donating want to know who their money is going to. Because of changes in the economy over the last decade, people are more concerned than ever about their finances. Along with that connection, audiences want to feel engaged and have the ability to participate somehow.

Despite efforts made by organizations to try new approaches for growing their audience, one thing remains constant; overall there is a need for younger audiences. Education programs and outreach can be effective but there is still a lack of younger audience members, subscribers,

and donors. Especially those aged 25 and younger. This need can be seen through the survey results, as well as mentioned in interviews. New strategies are used by organizations to continue to build younger audience and create future patrons, but the success is not easy to measure and the results continue to be inconsistent. Audiences, both young and old, all want options and choices, especially when it comes to purchase. With technology use on the rise, people are constantly engaged and given choices. Performing arts organizations can no longer rely on one streamlined method of purchase and subscriptions/memberships.

Recommendations

Dance organizations need to get to know their audiences. This can be done through regular surveys. By conducting regular surveys, every two years or so, an organization can compare previous findings. Once an initial survey is conducted the results should be thoroughly analyzed and documented. Without that, there is no basis of results for the next survey conducted to go off of. This could make it difficult for success of audience development strategies to be measured. A step beyond conducting an audience survey would be conducting one or several focus groups. A focus group could be selected in several different ways, depending on what the organization wants to focus on. Like a survey though, the results should be heavily analyzed and documented. By conducting similar focus groups every time, the results can be compared and progress could be tracked.

Understanding who their audience is can provide an organization the opportunity to give them the type of choices they are looking for. There are ways to provide choices and still keep things streamlined and simple. Organizations need to learn how to be flexible and provide alternatives to one standard subscription package. One way to do this is to create a flexible plan

or package with more choices. If staying with one subscription model the option of upgrades could be offered. A subscription could also be specifically designed for students or young professionals, thus creating a strategy for developing a younger audience. As seen in this research project, it is also not also the subscription model that needs to be change, it's how that subscription is marketed. Again, this can be examined by getting to know who the audience is specifically and learning what they want! Finding new and creative ways to build a younger audience can be a challenge. One innovative way is to have a junior board. These junior board members can contribute to developing strategies for creating future and younger patrons.

Dance organizations need to learn how to best engage with technology and social media. When choosing to use social media, a detailed marketing plan is essential. There needs to be purpose and directions behind all social media use. The results of the social media use needs to be measured and evaluated on a regular basis. Many organizations often do not have the staff or time to devote to such tasks. Because it is essential and important some organizations have an intern devoted specifically to social media. This can often times benefit both parties and can be done remotely by an intern. The success of emails and e-newsletter should also be tracked. This will allow the organization to see what is working and what could be improved upon. Because accessibility to events can be discouraging to potential audience members, providing key information about transportation and parking is helpful.

Community engagement, events, and personal connection are essential. Establishing an organization as part of the community can be done so by doing annual events, contests, and/or participatory outreach programs. Encouraging the formation of a club or special group devoted to the organization could be done by devoted audience/community members. Adding personal touches is important to incorporate into marketing collateral or thank you letters. A hand written

note thanking a donor makes for a special touch. Conducting a case study with White Bird helped me understand the importance of relationship between a dance organization and their audience, and that partnerships and community engagement are crucial. The synergy between the two entities is important in the success of the organization.

This research project was limited to the case study of one dance organization. While valuable lessons can be applicable to other dance organizations through the case study and literature review, additional case studies of similar nature would provide further strategies. Avenues for future research would include a focus group selected from the surveyed audiences. Additional avenues for expansion would be an in-depth case study on dynamic pricing specifically for ticket sales by dance organizations, as well as a comparison of dance audiences versus other performing arts audiences. The significance of extending this research project would assist in more strategies for dance audience development.

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Interviews

White Bird

- Paul King-Co-founder/Development Manager, 23 April 2014.
- Walter Jaffe-Co-founder/General Manager, 23 April 2014.
- Chelsea Bushnell-Audiences Services Manager, 15 April 2014.
- Sarah Toor-Marketing Manager, 15 April 2014.
- Ryan Blum-Financial and Community Partnerships Manager, 15 April 2014.

Appendix A: Interview Recruitment Letter, White Bird Management Personnel

Date

Amy Rogers
XXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXX

Dear <POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEE>:

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Audience Development Strategies: Cultivating a future for dance audience patronage*, conducted by Amy Rogers from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to explore and identify the evolution of audience development strategies for dance audiences.

Reliability of audience attendance in this county is creating one of the biggest problems dance organizations face while trying to maintain their current programming and creating future patronage. As dance audiences have continued to dwindle creating an unstable future for non-profit dance organizations and their patronage support, it's time to take a look at current audience development strategies. This research project aims to explore audience development strategies for cultivating a future for dance audience patronage. By interviewing key informants I hope to collect information to analyze what types of audience development strategies could be used and implemented. I chose to focus this study on White Bird in the city of Portland, Oregon as a good representation of a professional dance organization. Interviews with key staff members will aim to address specific topics of: (1) community engagement and impact; (2) impact of education outreach; (3) current and future audience development strategies; (4) marketing.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your leadership position with White Bird and your experiences with expertise pertinent to dance audiences in Portland, Oregon. **If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to participate in an in-person interview, lasting approximately 30 minutes, during February through May 2014.** If you wish, interview questions will be provided beforehand for your consideration. Interviews will take place at the White Bird office. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. In addition to taking handwritten notes, with your permission, I will use an audio tape recorded for transcription and validation purposes. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (323)828-3011 or arogers6@uoregon.edu, or Dr. Patricia Dewey at (541)346-2050. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to **Research Compliance Services**, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541)346-2510.

Thank you in advance for your interest and consideration. I will contact you shortly to speak about your potential involvement in this study.

Sincerely,

Amy Rogers

Appendix B: Interview Consent Form, White Bird Management Personal

Research Protocol Number: _____

Audience Development Strategies: Cultivating a future for dance audience patronage.

Amy Rogers, Principal Investigator
University of Oregon Arts and Administration Program

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Audience Development Strategies: Cultivating a future for dance audience patronage*, conducted by Amy Rogers from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to explore and identify the evolution of audience development strategies for dance audiences.

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Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be carefully and securely maintained. **Your consent to participate in this interview, as indicated below, demonstrates your willingness to have your name used in any resulting documents and publications and to relinquish confidentiality.** It may be advisable to obtain permission to participate in this interview to avoid potential social or economic risks related to speaking as a representative of your institution. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. I anticipate that

the results of this research project will be of value to the cultural sector as a whole, especially White Bird. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (323)828-3011 or arogers6@uoregon.edu, or Dr. Patricia Dewey at (541)346-2050. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to Research Compliance Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541)346-2510.

Please read and initial each of the following statements to indicate your consent:

_____ I consent to the use of audiotapes and note taking during my interview.

_____ I consent to my identification as a participant in this study.

_____ I consent to the potential use of quotations from the interview.

_____ I consent to the use of information I provide regarding the organization with which I am associated.

_____ I wish to have the opportunity to review and possibly revise my comments and the information that I provide prior to these data appearing in the final version of any publications that may result from this study.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. You have been given a copy of this letter to keep.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your interest and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Amy Rogers
XXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXX

Appendix C: Research Instruments

Interview: White Bird Management Personnel

APA Reference: Last, F., (Year, Month, Day), Personal Interview

Interview Date:

Interview Time:

Interview Location:

Interview Name:

Interview Title:

Interview Organization:

____ Recruitment Letter Sent

____ Written Consent Obtained

____ Audio Recording

____ OK to Quote

____ Member Check

____ Thank You Note Sent

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Describe what you would consider to be White Bird's current audience demographic.
2. In the last 10 years, do you think that demographic has changed? Please explain.
3. How does White Bird engage with the community?
4. In your opinion, does community engagement effect audience patronage? Please explain.
5. In your opinion, does educational outreach help create future patrons? Please explain.
6. What type of audience development strategies do you think have worked in the past but no longer work today? Please explain.
7. Do you think it's important for audience members to understand the mission of White Bird? If yes, please explain.
8. In your opinion, what are major contributing factors that have led to a decrease in dance audience patronage over the last decade? Please explain.
9. In your opinion, what are the most valuable marketing tools a dance organization should use? Please explain.
10. In your opinion, do you think social media helps to boost audience attendance? Please explain.

Appendix D: Research Timeline

Arts and Administration Program Master's Research Timeline, 2013-2014

Fall 2013 (AAD 631)

- Complete full research proposal, meeting regularly with research adviser
- Draft detailed research instrument
- Draft human subjects documents and complete CITI training
- Create general outline of final document
- Submit human subjects application

Winter 2014 (AAD 503, 601)

January

- Submit human subjects application documentation (if not completed in fall)
- Refine research instruments
- Convert proposal into chapter drafts
- Plan with your advisor the dates that chapter drafts will be due; submissions of chapter drafts will be worked out in agreement with your advisor over the next several months

February/March

- Begin data collection and analysis
- Prepare detailed outline of full document
- Begin to submit chapters

Spring 2014 (AAD 503, 601)

April

- Complete data collection
- Continue with ongoing data analysis
- Write full first draft of final document, submitting chapters to advisor for review and feedback according to plan

May

- Thursday, May 1: Deadline for draft of full document to be submitted to advisor
- Week of May 5: Feedback from advisor prior to student research presentations
- Friday, May 16: Student presentations of master's research
- Monday, May 19: Deadline to submit text and images for inclusion in student research journal
- May 19-30: Continue revisions to full document
- Friday, May 30: Deadline for full draft to be submitted to advisor

June

- June 3-11: Submit final document and PDF