

## Statement on the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts Round 1 Grantees Announced and Round 2 Request for Proposals Issued

**New York City, January 13, 2009**—The Civilians, MAPP International Productions, Roadside Theater/Appalshop, and STREB have been selected to participate in the first round of the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts, a program open to producing and presenting organizations in theatre, dance, and jazz that supports the design and prototyping of innovations that address major challenges. Designed and managed by EmcArts with a generous \$1.5-million grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF), the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts was created specifically to address the new, urgent priorities that have arisen in conjunction with major shifts in the operating and funding environment for the arts, challenges that cannot be resolved by business-as-usual practices. The partnership with DDCF provides funding for three Lab Cohorts, each comprised of four participating organizations. *The application deadline for the second round is Friday, February 20, 2009, and information may be found below, in the attached RFP, and at [www.EmcArts.org](http://www.EmcArts.org).*

### Cohort 1 Innovation Lab Grantees—Project Descriptions

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The projects proposed by the Cohort 1 Innovation Lab grantees share a focus on shifting and deepening relationships such that community members move from passive observers to engaged participants through increased interaction with the creative process and the artistic results:

**The Civilians**, a New York theatre company that crafts works based on actual experiences, is developing a new media initiative designed to enhance audience interactivity during the production and dissemination phases of its projects. The initiative will focus on expanded online content, radio programming, and publications, with an eye toward deepening the organization's relationship to its current audiences and expanding its reach with younger audiences.

**MAPP International Productions** plans to build the social media capacity of its website to include interactive portals to each MAPP artist, with blogs, chats, photos, video, and audio content that connect community members and patrons directly with artists who are making new work. Based in New York City, MAPP produces the work of risk-taking performing artists and brings those artists and their works to the stage and into other public arenas. By using social media to get people personally involved in the artist's creative process, MAPP aims to encourage public dialogue about culture, creativity, and society, as well as to generate funding directed to the needs of specific artists' projects.

**Roadside Theater/Appalshop**, a Kentucky-based theatre company (part of Appalshop, the Appalachian multi-disciplinary arts and education center), intends to explore ways to use the multi-arts approach of its new experimental theatre initiative, Thousand Kites, as a model for conceiving and creating work across the entire Appalshop organization. Thousand Kites is a community-based forum in which incarcerated people, corrections officials, the formerly incarcerated, grassroots activists, and ordinary citizens can dialogue about the U.S. prison system. The program combines live play development and presentation with other media efforts, including radio, video, and new media innovations. Bringing this synergistic paradigm to full scale across all operational aspects of Appalshop's work will enable its different divisions in theatre, film, and radio to expand beyond their self-contained discipline-based structures, create



centralized systems, and give wider access to the company's work. The expectation is that such significant structural changes will result in a deeper institutional connection to audiences.

**STREB**, a Brooklyn-based extreme action company that presents the choreography of Elizabeth Streb in an open-access studio setting, plans to use the Lab to assess the viability and foment the implementation of projects that address the company's greatest challenge to date: audience diversification. STREB operates out of the STREB Lab for Action Mechanics (SLAM), a multi-purpose facility that houses the company's school, performance and rehearsal spaces, a flying trapeze rig, offices, and a technical shop. SLAM offers a range of access points to its community, from performances to open rehearsals to weekly classes to rental spaces for artists. Because being an open-access venue with high-quality programming did not yield audiences as diverse as the company envisioned, STREB plans to use the Lab as a proving ground for possible audience diversity-oriented projects.

### **About the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts and Round 2 Applications**

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Most arts institutions operate using constantly stretched resources and consequently struggle to implement truly new ideas. At the same time, however, the capacity of American arts organizations **to innovate – to find new pathways to mission fulfillment that are discontinuous from previous practice and that result from shifts in underlying organizational assumptions** – is and will be a leading indicator of sustained marketplace success and viability. The Innovation Lab was designed to serve as a catalyst for the journey to these new pathways: to help arts organizations challenge core operating assumptions, engage in intense planning on a practical innovation project, create a sense of organization-wide investment in change, and test innovative strategies with grants that help organizations prototype new practices.

Ultimately, the three-phase Innovation Lab provides a strong framework within which new strategies can be explored and prototyped in relatively low-stakes environments before a full launch. The four participating Cohort 1 Lab organizations will each identify a cross-constituent Innovation Team to plan, experiment, and implement their innovation within a year's time. As part of the Innovation Lab, these teams will participate in a five-day Intensive retreat designed to accelerate their projects. Lab participants will receive ongoing facilitation support throughout the program and use \$25,000 of seed grant money to prototype and evaluate their innovative strategy before the final roll-out.

For the first pilot round of Innovation Lab grantees, a limited number of proposal requests were solicited. Two additional Cohort application rounds in 2009 are open to a broader group of professionally managed producing and presenting organizations in theatre, dance, and jazz nationally. ***The Round 2 application deadline is Friday, February 20, 2009.***



**EmcArts Inc.** is a New York-based nonprofit service organization for learning and innovation in the arts. To learn more about the Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts or EmcArts' other innovation services, please visit <[www.EmcArts.org](http://www.EmcArts.org)> or contact **Melissa Dibble, Director of Client Partnerships**, at <[MDibble@EmcArts.org](mailto:MDibble@EmcArts.org)> or (212) 362-8541, ext. 24.

**The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's** mission is to improve the quality of people's lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and the prevention of child maltreatment, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke's properties.