

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sports Marketing for Modern Dance? Contemporary Ballet? Yes, Says NPAFE

And for ALL the Performing Arts, says this DC nonprofit with its new multi-million-dollar campaign

Washington, D.C., March 9, 2017: The National Performing Arts Funding Exchange (NPAFE) today announced a three-year \$5,750,000 campaign for direct corporate financial support for the Performing Arts. The funds would go straight to performing artists all around the United States.

The Washington, DC-based nonprofit claims that its planned three-year money raise is the nation's first sustained effort to bypass donations, grants, and individual gifts that traditionally have underpinned performing artists.

Instead, NPAFE is centered on direct corporate funding commitments, usually coming out of a company's marketing budget. In return and over a sustained period of time, NPAFE, performing artists themselves, and their 30+ million high-loyalty audience actively associate the sponsor's brand with the proven creativity and entrepreneurial excellence of the nation's broad community of professional performing artists.

"We are hardly reacting to the rumored arts funding cuts by the Trump Administration," points out the nonprofit's CEO Cliff Brody. "NPAFE was set up more than a year ago to do something concrete about the decades-long shrinkage of grants and contributions to the performing arts."

Following the sports marketing model, NPAFE offers the corporate sector clarity in a space that it has found otherwise very difficult to penetrate. Brody explains that companies have traditionally been uncertain about whether, no less where and when to allocate funding directly to performing artists. They simply don't have the resources to figure out who to sponsor, who has a real following, when they are performing, or who will be in the audience.

That is why, Brody concludes, that most companies opt to give money not to performing artists and instead to easily-identifiable "name" theaters like the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and their equivalents all around the country. "That happens even though everyone in the audience at every one of these venues comes to see the artists, not the theater. That's backwards. And worse, almost all the branding potential is lost."

Brody outlines three primary elements of NPAFE's model. First is a careful inventory of where performing arts excellence really lies locally as well as nationally. Second is an equally careful analysis of the audiences loyal to that excellence. Third is a realistic assessment of the ROI when marketing money is spent to reach those audiences.

There was plenty of data lying around pointing to that ROI, says Brody, but no one ever paid any attention to it, no less studied it carefully. It turns out that the ROI for reaching and tapping that audience loyalty is much higher than in sports marketing.

"And it is a high class audience, too, with lots of disposable time and lots of disposable income."

He pulls out his pocket bible of numbers: over one-half (56%) of those with an interest in the performing arts say they would "almost always" or "frequently" buy a product sponsoring arts or cultural events over one that does not. In contrast, only about a one-third (36%) of NFL fans, one-third (34%) of America's Cup followers, and less than one-fifth (17%) of the Olympic Games audience choose products based on their sponsorships.

"And listen to this: almost one-half (48%) of Americans with an interest in cultural events indicated that they hold more trust in companies that sponsor these events compared to those who do not, while only 16% of Olympic Games enthusiasts claim more trust in those sponsors."

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Brody then adds with a smile: “And then there’s the exclusivity.” With NPAFE, corporate sponsors can get exclusivity and personal one-to-one messaging, he says. All live, in real time, plus audiences reading everything in the program about who made the performance possible. “With no brand dilution or shared positioning at all, and at an actual dollar outlay a mere fraction of the ever-more-diluted and increasingly more expensive sports marketing model.”

Brody also asserts that at best, corporate sponsors get only one benefit from sports sponsorships, and then only if they’re lucky: brand association with often transitory athletic excellence.

NPAFE offers sponsors, he says, something quite different: lasting inter-generational recognition by a broad swath of today’s kids, their parents and their grandparents that the sponsor’s brand is empowering today’s generation, the next generation, and generations after that, to reach for the stars and actually get there.

“If you doubt how that magnetism works for brands, think about why ‘Dancing With The Stars’ retains its magic,” says Brody. People tune in to see the creativity, the movement, the sensuality, the hard work, and especially the risk-taking that audiences everywhere know to be intrinsic to modern dance, contemporary ballet, so much of theater, and certainly of musical artists composing their own works.

“We’re not talking about dreamers who want to be performing artists. NPAFE centers on the ones who have buckled down to do the hard work of attracting live, loyal audience following and verifiable professional recognition.”

NPAFE’s national inventory of scheduled events, declares Brody, opens the way to local, multi-city and national branding across place and time, not just one event. That means no more guesswork, he adds, about who actually merits corporate sponsorship and who has the track record to reflect favorably on the brand. “Each of these performing artists and groups has been carefully curated and are acclaimed for their creativity, audience following, and entrepreneurial success.”

Does all this mean NPAFE’s \$5-plus million campaign will succeed?

“You never know unless you’re willing to risk trying,” Brody answers. “Our WeWork-sponsored performance last November proved the model. It’s time to make more corporate sponsors look great whenever and wherever they support the performing arts.”

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About NPAFE - The National Performing Arts Funding Exchange. A nonprofit focused on expanding funding resources for the performing arts, the National Performing Arts Funding Exchange links business world sponsors directly to performing arts companies and artists acclaimed for their creativity, their entrepreneurial commitment to excellence, and their grit. Each of these sponsorships is structured to complement the sponsor’s own image, brand, and marketing.

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