

## Arts & Business Partnership Spotlight: Hospital Audiences



HAI performer at Employee Day at the Empire Insurance Company. Photo by Carl J. Frano

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As the pool of funding dwindles, nonprofit organizations are struggling to increase earned income possibilities in creative ways. By looking at existing resources such as staff expertise, rehearsal space, or human resource training from a new angle, many organizations are able to create programs that can pull in more dollars for their organizations.

For 30 years, Hospital Audiences has scheduled over 2,500 performances a year for disabled, disadvantaged, and elderly individuals at health related facilities in the City of New York. Last year, the organization launched a Corporate Arts Initiative which allows business clients to hire HAI as a booking agent for special events, utilizing the expertise of HAI's experienced program-

ming staff, as well as its talented and professional roster of artists. The income that HAI receives from this service is then funneled back through the organization to benefit its existing health services clients. A component of this project, the "fee for services" program, enables HAI to provide inexpensive entertainment on a larger scale for some of their existing clients.

Patty Reitkopf, Director of HAI's Performance Program, is pleased with how well this new initiative has been received. "Because we book so many groups a month, and have such a support network in place, the initiative was natural," she says. HAI's program staff of four is easily able to pull from its existing culturally and ethnically diverse repertory

of artists. The organization provides performance site coordinators to oversee each event, as well as sound equipment and vehicles to transport artists and equipment. Ms. Reitkopf points out that the benefit of HAI's connections and experience in planning cannot be underestimated. HAI takes pride in providing every kind of entertainment a client could want. In addition to the artists it ordinarily works with, the program staff holds auditions several times a year and is always on the lookout for new talent. "If you want a klezmer group," says Reitkopf, "I can schedule a klezmer group any time, anywhere in the City that's convenient for you."

"I can't say enough about that year," says Kathy Williams of Rudin Management Company, the first corporate client of this initiative. Rudin hired HAI to schedule a series of lunch time concerts outside its building at 1 Battery Park Plaza. "It was an excellent experience for the company," she says. "HAI has a unique roster of entertainers, and it really took the burden off of me. The concerts, which lasted about an hour and half, were free and open to the public, and brought a wide variety of people,

from the tenants of Rudin's building to residents of the area who wandered in to the Plaza to enjoy the music." Ms. Williams readily admits that the series wasn't something she could have put together as effectively on her own. She received a huge amount of positive feedback and is planning to use the service again this summer. "The tenants in the building enjoyed the variety," she says. "It made a nice break at lunch time, sitting there enjoying wonderfully talented people. I'm sure they went back as happy employees." From the Rudin series, HAI went on to present artists for Empire Insurance Company's employee day event, and is now overseeing the entertainment for the Westchester Association of Women Business Owners 20th Anniversary Gala.

HAI has also been able to turn this service around to benefit its existing clients. Through the "fee for services" program, HAI can arrange an extensive program to fit the budget of smaller clients. Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center, for example, paid \$1000 for a season of events scheduled through the "fee for services" program. Fees are determined on a case by case basis, depending on what the client can afford. "HAI has come to the rescue with a wonderful, inexpensive way to buy the services of really topnotch performers at incredibly low prices! I'm so glad we decided to become a part of [the] fee for services program," says Ellen Murphy, Volunteer Coordinator at RCPC. "It's one of the best decisions we've made this year for our kids." Although the program has been active less than a year, Ms. Reitkopf is confident that the project will continue to draw encouraging testimonials from both corporate and "fee for services" clients. In addition to the increased income, Ms. Reitkopf says the program has brought a new energy to the programming staff. "It is more work, but there is a positive new sense of mission. The staff has a whole new enthusiasm and expanded outlook."

The Corporate Arts Initiative is just one example of how arts groups can form mutually beneficial partnerships with business. For more information on HAI's Corporate Arts Initiative, contact Program Director Patty Reitkopf at (212) 575-7681. For information on Arts & Business Council partnership programs, such as the Arts to Business Databank, contact Program Associate Sari Pessah at (212) 727-7146 extension 22. □