

Greg Sandow

Time to join
the rest of the world

Keynote talk
at the fourth annual
Conference on Arts Marketing,
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In September, I attended the opening of the new season at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, in Washington, DC (where I live).



It's the home of:

- The National Symphony Orchestra
- The Washington National Opera

And it's...

- The most important performing arts institution in Washington, DC
- One of the leading performing arts centers in the US

Some things about it:

- It's set apart from the rest of the city
- You can't get there by public transportation
- It's so grand inside that people are dwarfed





It embodies the old model of the arts,
in which...

- Art is grand and important
- Art is far above us
- Art is far away from everyday life

The performance I heard was an opera
by a contemporary American composer.

(I won't mention his name, or another name later
on, because I want to criticize ideas, not
people.)

The audience was:

- Older
- Almost entirely white
- Financially comfortable

These are the people attracted by the old model of the arts.

I saw more examples of the old model at this performance:

- The opera was like operas of the past
- It was comfortable for the older audience
- But it wouldn't say much to a younger one

- And there were self-congratulatory speeches — praising all of us for supporting the arts

What's wrong with
the old model?

- It's wrong on a human level
- It's wrong artistically
- It's wrong politically
- It's bad for ticket sales
- It's not sustainable

How the old model is wrong on a human level:

It excludes people.

To see how the old model excludes people, here's what many of us in the arts might believe:

- We believe that art shows the central meaning of life
- We believe that we're the ones who understand art
- And so we must believe that others don't understand

The others who don't understand might be different from us.

They might be...

- Younger
- From a different social class
- From a different race
- From a different ethnicity

These are the people we're excluding.

So here are some hard questions...

- Do we think we understand the central meaning of life better than people who don't know the arts?
- Do we think we're better than they are?

Something ironic...

- We exclude others by invoking the highest artistic ideals

Something sad...

- We devalue art that others may make on their own

How the old model is wrong artistically:

- It cuts us off from the art of our time.

To see why that is, let's step back, and look at the big picture.

In our time...

- Art has migrated away from the arts
- It's now found in many other places

Here are some of them:

- Pop music
- Film
- Graphic design

- Television
- Fashion
- Children's books

Because of all this:

- The arts no longer represent all art
- We mislead people when we say that they do

And if we limit art to what the arts recognize as art...

- We don't breathe the air everyone else breathes
- We cut ourselves off from the world
- We cut ourselves off from the art of our time

Some very varied illustrations:

- A quote from a prominent US arts advocate
- *The Wire*
- Go-go drumming on the streets of Washington, DC
- The American Visionary Art Museum

A quote from a prominent US arts advocate...

He said:

- “The arts are our family photographs”

Some of his examples...

- Because this arts advocate comes from the southern US, he said novels by William Faulkner were his family photographs
- Because he lives in New York, plays by David Mamet are his family photos
- And because he's gay, plays by Tony Kushner

But he might also have chosen:

- The blues and country music, because he's from the southern US
- The movie *King Kong*, because he's from New York



- And songs by Judy Garland or the Pet Shop Boys, because he's gay

For most people, these might seem like more natural choices.

So our family photos — the things that show us the meaning of life — go far beyond the arts.

My second illustration: *The Wire*.

- An American TV series shown on HBO, from 2002 to 2008, and seen in many other countries



Much of the show was about drug dealers.

They became as smart as legitimate businessmen.

Because *The Wire* was on commercial TV, it wouldn't be included in the arts.

Which means it wouldn't be considered art.

And yet it has...

- The depth and texture of a great novel
- Deep social criticism

- The show showed how illegal drug sales became one of the main social institutions in an American city
- And then it looked at other social institutions: the police, labor unions, politicians, and the press
- They didn't seem to serve the social good any more than the drug dealers did

Here are two quotes from David Simon, the creator of the show...

- “The Wire made the argument, from its first season, that the modern world is becoming increasingly indifferent to individual catharsis and individual dignity, and human beings are worth less.”

- “The idea that these massive institutions—school systems and police departments and drug trades and political entities and newspapers—might actually become utterly unfeeling to the people they're supposed to serve and the people who serve them seems to me to be the paradigm of the 20th century, and I think it's going to continue.”

You don't have to accept David Simon's view.

But if *The Wire* isn't art, then why is Balzac art, or Flaubert, or Dickens?

My third illustration: go-go drumming...

Go-go is a style of funk dance music created in Washington, DC in the 1970s, and still iconic there.

At a go-go show:

- The music has a special go-go beat
- The drums never stop playing, even between songs

Go-go is often performed on the street...



Wait — that's not go-go! That's my wife and son, at a baseball game in Washington.

My son is three. His name is Rafael.

We call him Rafa, because he's partly named after our favorite tennis player, Rafael Nadal.

Who of course is Spanish, and who the world calls Rafa.

But there's a reason for showing you that slide.

After the ballgame, we saw three groups of go-go drummers on the street outside the stadium.

Which reminded me to talk about go-go drumming here.

On the street, these drummers play on plastic buckets, because many of them don't have real drums.

If you're online, [click](#) to see a video.

That's an iconic Washington sight. Especially in the half of the city that's African-American.

But go-go hasn't been noticed in the arts...

...until the Go-Go Symphony emerged.

Party with a Thunderous Funky Orchestra



Photo by Joshua Cruse

The Go-Go Symphony:

- Includes go-go drummers, go-go rappers, and go-go dancers — plus classical soloists and a full symphony orchestra
- Plays music specially composed for it, combining go-go and classical styles

- With a smaller classical ensemble, it had a huge triumph in dance clubs
- Now it gives full symphonic performances in an edgy performing arts space, the Atlas Performing Arts Center



- Which doesn't look like the Kennedy Center!

- The performances draw big crowds
- People dance
- And the shows get rave reviews, including one from a classical critic

My last illustration: the American Visionary Art Museum, in Baltimore...



- This certainly isn't the Kennedy Center!

- It shows art made by artists without formal training — artists, as the museum says, who have “intuitive, self-taught artistry”
- For me, it redefines the familiar term “outsider art”
- Which at this museum no longer looks marginal, but seems as strong as art by artists who’ve been officially recognized

How the old model is wrong politically...

This follows from what's wrong artistically, as we can see if we ask:

Why has art migrated outside the arts?

Art has migrated outside the arts because society has changed.

In our society, we now have...

- A new majority culture
- Ethnic and cultural diversity
- Popular culture that's varied, deep, and complex
- A new sense of individual empowerment
- A new sense of inclusiveness and participation

In a society like this, it's natural for people to make art on their own.

So here's the political problem.

After all these changes...

How can we ask the world to think old-model art is vastly important — and to give it vast amounts of money — when it speaks to just one part of our culture?

Especially when...

- It's the part of our culture that the old elite loves
- The elite seems to believe everyone else should share its taste
- Money for any kind of culture is tight
- And in the US, there's an emerging non-white majority, which has vivid cultures of its own

Why the old model is bad for ticket sales...

This should be obvious:

If we're speaking only to one part of our culture,
we're not reaching our largest potential
audience

A study done some years ago for Lincoln Center, the big performing arts center in New York, showed that...

- Many people didn't go to Lincoln Center performances because they didn't know what was being performed
- They didn't know what was being performed because they didn't read New York's elite newspaper, the *New York Times*
- Lincoln Center concentrated its publicity and advertising in the *Times*
- So it wasn't reaching most of New York

Why the old model isn't sustainable...

This also ought to be obvious.

- Our existing audience is shrinking
- Our culture continues to change
- Younger people, with their new culture, are emerging in dominant roles
- Non-white people — in the US, the coming majority — are emerging in dominant roles

Because of all this...

- The audience for the old-model arts will continue to shrink
- In the future, it may will disappear
- It will be replaced by a new audience

The new audience:

- Has a new culture
- And won't want the old-model art

The new model

Art, as I've said, has migrated away from the arts.

And so in the new model...

- The arts join the rest of the world
- They stand side by side with the art happening everywhere

Advantages of the new model:

- It gives a truer, more complete picture of the world we live in
- People in the new culture can embrace it
- They'll want to come to what we offer them

About the traditional high arts...

- People today have nothing against them
- People now mix high art and popular art
- They're open to Mahler, or Greek tragedy
- But they don't want to be told they *have* to like those things
- Or that high art is more valid than the other art happening today

To join the new world...

- We have to be open to it
- We have to celebrate it
- We have to learn from it
- We have to include it in what we do

Here are more ways to do this, from:

- The Baltimore Symphony
- The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, at the University of Maryland
- The National Symphony Orchestra

The Baltimore Symphony...

Featured black performers at its opening gala this year, many more of them than we usually see at a symphony concert.

Here's who they were...

- Jazz pianist Marcus Roberts, who played Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*
- A black actor who heads a Baltimore theater, and narrated Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*
- A choir from a historically black college in Baltimore, which sang Copland's *Old American Songs*

The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, at the University of Maryland...

Opened its season with a three-day festival, which included more than 40 performances.

Among the performances were...

- A “sonic massage,” in which the audience was soothed by sounds created by the performers
- Thirty two-minute plays, produced in an hour by an experimental theater company
- An “Opera Jam Session,” produced and performed by voice students at the university

- A performance by a student orchestra that plays music from video games (and whose concerts are the most popular musical events on campus)
- A performance by an amateur concert band from the community
- And other classical, pop, jazz, dance, theater, and unclassifiable events

The National Symphony Orchestra...

- Opened its new season with a performance that didn't only include classical music
- The second half of the concert featured a Broadway star, singing Broadway show tunes

And here are some other examples...

A touring Tim Burton art show...

- Burton is one of the world's leading film directors
- His films include *Edward Scissorhands*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Batman*, *Mars Attacks*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
- Drawings and models for his films were featured in a blockbuster show, which toured to the world's leading art museums
- It made the case for Burton as one of the world's top visual artists

Second example:

The Costume Institute, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (which is in New York, and is the leading art museum in the US)

- The Costume Institute's exhibitions include fashion and popular culture
- One showed how superhero costumes have influenced couture

Third example:

The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), in New York (one of the most important art museums in the US)

- MOMA for the first time added an app to its permanent collection
 - The app was the iPad version of a pop album, Björk's *Biophilia*
- The museum has also done shows about the links between visual art and pop music in New York

Fourth example:

The “American Voices” festival at the Kennedy Center

- This was conceived and curated by Renée Fleming, one of the world's top opera singers
- It included vocal music in many genres: classical, pop, Broadway, country, R&B, and pop
- For each genre there were performances, panel discussions, and master classes

Fifth example:

The Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), in New York

- For decades, BAM has built a large audience for performing art outside the mainstream
- It commissioned a piece from Sufjan Stevens, one of the stars of American indie rock
- Stevens wrote 30 minutes of orchestra music for this piece
- The institution hired orchestra musicians to work with Stevens, so he could learn how to write for them

Sixth example:

The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, in
London

- They play one-hour late-night concerts for a large, cheering young audience
- Plus many smaller performances for younger people in clubs
- At all these performances, they play their normal classical repertoire

How they got their young audience:

- They rebranded themselves for younger people as “The Night Shift”
- At these performances, they introduce each piece by talking to the audience
- They invite the audience to cheer, boo, drink, eat, and take photos

Here are two videos that show how they do it...

- If you're online, click [here](#) for a video about their club performances
- And click [here](#) for one about their rebranding:
 - They made that video because they were looking for people from their audience to pose for them in advertising

- They did all this with no reference to pop music
- But pop and jazz support acts play before and after the club performances
- The OAE publicizes who the pop and jazz artists are

- That reinforces their branding
- And shows they live in same world their audience lives in

Marketing to the new model

Disclaimer!

- I'm not a marketing professional

Fear and trembling!

- That's what I'll feel if I talk about detailed marketing techniques

But marketing to the new model isn't only about marketing techniques, such as:

- Email
- Advertising
- Brochures
- Data mining
- Social media

It's about marketing attitude.

Once you have the right attitude, you'll know what techniques to use.

And you'll figure out how to use them.

What do I mean by marketing attitude?

- You have to market the right things
- You have to speak the language of the people you're marketing to
- You have to go out and find these people

Marketing the right things...

- Things that speak to the people you want to reach
- Things that fit in their world
- Things they'll be curious about

What marketing the right things *doesn't* mean...

It doesn't mean pandering.

So you should never pander to anyone:

- You shouldn't do things only because your new audience will like them
- You shouldn't do art you don't believe in

One way not to pander...

- Do things that you *don't* know your audience will like
- Things that *don't* fit in their world
- Maybe even things you're sure they won't like!
- And tell them you're doing this

What you get from that:

- Your audience will know that you're serious about art
- They'll know you're honest
- They'll know you respect them

Your ultimate goal should be...

To attract people to *anything* you do.

But you can't do that...

- If they're not interested in you
- If they don't trust you

And so you have to show them you're in their world...

By doing some things you know they *will* respond to.

About what to market...

Two more examples:

- The Indianapolis Museum of Art
- Wordless Music, a concert series in New York

The Indianapolis Museum...

- Presents itself as more than just a museum that shows art.
- It says it shows “Modern, African, and Fine Art”
- Which sounds focused, interesting, unusual

- It also says it has gardens, and a nature and art park
- Which gives people more reasons to visit

Wordless Music:

- Is a concert series in New York
- Gave a concert of contemporary classical music for orchestra
- Sold out a 1000-seat church for two nights

- The concert featured music by John Adams and Gavin Bryars, important classical composers
- And also music by Jonny Greenwood, lead guitarist in Radiohead

- Greenwood has real classical composer credentials
- His piece was not a rock piece
- But his name attracted the very large audience...
- Which loved the entire concert

About speaking the language of the people you want to reach...

- It's not just the words you use
- You have to open yourself to their world

Which means you have to:

- Be informal
- Be transparent
- Give people ways to participate

I think we know what informality is.

So I won't talk about that.

But here are some examples of transparency:

- The Indianapolis Museum of Art website
- The CEO of a successful online company
- A theater company in Seattle

The Indianapolis Museum of Art website...

Has a “Dashboard” page, with statistics about the museum:

- How many Facebook fans it has
- How many members it has
- The size of its endowment
- The number of people who visited this year
- The number of people who visited today

49,314

Fans

Fans on Facebook

Number of the IMA's Fans on Facebook

OCT 1, 2014

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10,180

memberships

IMA Member Households

Active member households.

APR 16, 2014

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\$326,327,451

Total Size of the IMA's Endowment

The year to date (June 30, 2012) gross value of the IMA's endowment.

NOV 7, 2012

[MORE](#)



Museum Admissions

An interactive map of admissions by zip code

[MORE](#)

392,979

visits

Attendance YTD

Visitors to the IMA this year.

[MORE](#)

Today's attendance

410

entrances

Today's attendance

The number of people who have entered the

[MORE](#)

- These numbers are updated in real time
- So everyone can see if the museum is doing well or badly

The CEO of a successful online company...

- Tweeted often about his business
- One day was annoyed because his car was taking too long to repair
- He tweeted about that...
- And got the biggest response he'd ever gotten

What he learned from this:

- People were interested in him, not just in his business

A theater company in Seattle...

- Picked four playgoers to review its productions, on its website
- The first reviews were negative
- But they drew many visitors to the site
- So more people paid attention to the company
- And admired it for its honesty

And now here are some examples of participation:

- Imogen Heap, a British pop star
- The Pittsburgh Symphony

Imogen Heap...



- Sent out videos showing how she was making her albums
- Asked her fans for graphics to use in packaging and marketing
- Asked her fans for sounds to incorporate into songs on her latest album
- She used dozens of those sounds

The Pittsburgh Symphony...

- Played three short contemporary pieces on the first half of a concert
- During intermission, the audience voted on which piece they liked best
- The winning piece was repeated at the end of the concert

I was there, and I've rarely seen an audience get so involved in a performance.

- There was much discussion of the three pieces, and much debate about which was best
- People cited specific musical details, to say why they made their choice
- Some even voted for a piece that *wasn't* their favorite, because they thought it wasn't going to win, and they liked it

And about finding the people we want to reach...

- They're not looking for us
- So we can't wait for them to come to us
- We have to go into their world

Here's something that doesn't go into their world...

And so it can't work in the new model:

- Newspaper advertising by the New York Philharmonic

Alan Gilbert
Music Director

NEW YORK
PHILHARMONIC



BATIASHVILI PLAYS BRAHMS

Alan Gilbert conductor
Lisa Batiashvili violin

Tue, Oct 14 7:30pm

Christopher ROUSE *Thunderbolt*
World Premiere New York Philharmonic Commission
HAYDN Symphony No. 103 *Drumroll*
BRAHMS Violin Concerto

nyphil.org/batiashvili

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Esa-Pekka Salonen conductor
Jeremy Denk piano

Thu, Oct 16 7:30pm*
Fri, Oct 17 8:00pm
Sat, Oct 18 8:00pm

BEETHOVEN King Stephen Overture
BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 1
STRAVINSKY *The Firebird* complete

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Alan Gilbert conductor
Lang Lang piano

Tue, Oct 21 7:30pm **ONE NIGHT ONLY**

MOZART Piano Concerto No. 17
MOZART Overture to *The Magic Flute*
MOZART Piano Concerto No. 24

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The concert is made possible with generous support from the Anne Blau and Stephen Keller Foundations

"The superb wit and simple elegance of his playing showed just what a delight Mozart can be."

playback.com



BRONFMAN AND BRUCKNER

Alan Gilbert conductor
Yefim Bronfman piano

Thu, Oct 23 7:30pm*
Fri, Oct 24 8:00pm
Sat, Oct 25 8:00pm
Tue, Oct 28 7:30pm

BARTÓK Piano Concerto No. 3
BRUCKNER Symphony No. 8 (Ed Nowak, 1890)

nyphil.org/bronfman

"Yefim Bronfman is a fearless pianist for whom no score is too demanding."

— The Wall Street Journal

All concerts are at Avery Fisher Hall unless otherwise noted. Performances and programs subject to change.

Christopher Rouse is *The More-Than-Knows Composer-in-Residence*.
Lisa Batiashvili is *The Mary and James G. Wallich Artist-in-Residence*.

Photos: (top) Andrew Hahn; (middle) Joseph G. Szymanski; (bottom) Lisa Batiashvili, Jeremy Denk, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Lang Lang. (right) Alan Gilbert. (far right) Alan Gilbert.

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All Concerts begin one hour before concert time. \$11 Open Rehearsal at 9:45am

- There's nothing interesting there, unless you already know orchestral music
- The Philharmonic isn't going to people. It's waiting for them to see the ad in the newspaper
- But the new audience isn't looking in the newspaper for symphony ads
- It may not read newspapers at all

Here are some ways to enter the world your audience lives in...

- Create events, apart from your performances and exhibitions
- Turn your performances and exhibitions into events
- Make some noise — do other things that people will notice, both online and out in the world

Some examples...

- Pop-up performances, or flash mobs
- Colorado Symphony marijuana concerts
- The Hamburg Philharmoniker
- The BBC Proms concerts
- A “prosthethically amplified” string quartet

Pop-up performances, or flash mobs...

Advantages...

- People who haven't been thinking about you at all suddenly see how terrific you are

But two questions...

- How can you stay in touch with people who've never had contact with you before, but loved your flash mob or popup?
- Do you do these events just once, or can you build them into something with ongoing benefits for you?

Colorado Symphony marijuana concerts...

- The state of Colorado, in the US, made marijuana legal
- The Colorado Symphony gave concerts to celebrate
- They invited the audience to smoke
- Got national, maybe international attention

The Hamburg Philharmoniker...

- Played Brahms with musicians scattered to 50 locations around Hamburg
- The conductor led the musicians on video, from a church tower
- 10,000 people came to the 50 sites, to hear the musicians live
- The event had corporate sponsorship, and got wide media coverage in Germany

At the BBC Proms concerts...

- People waiting on the street to buy tickets were interviewed on video
- The videos were shown on the Proms website
- The Proms announced when and where they'd do more video interviews
- People came to those locations, specially dressed to be in the videos

A “prosthethically amplified” string quartet...

- Sensors recorded the body movements of the musicians
- On a video display, the audience could see tiny physical reactions the musicians had, to moments in the music
- And in that way could track the musicians' changing involvement with the music

- This was presented at an indie art space in New York
- But any music organization might benefit from doing it
- It would show the world that they're thoughtful, creative, and surprising

In all of this, am I talking about marketing?

You may think I'm not...

- But if you do the things I'm talking about, you'll know how to market them...
 - Using traditional marketing techniques
 - Using social media
 - And using new methods you'll discover for yourselves

Now (with fear and trembling!) I'll offer examples of genuine marketing, done by word of mouth...

- Students at the University of Maryland
- Lara Downes, a pianist in San Francisco
- The marketing campaign for the blockbuster *Hunger Games* film
- Eric Haeker, an entrepreneur in his 20s

Students at the University of Maryland, who played in the school's symphony orchestra...

- Organized the places where they lived — dorms, fraternities, sororities
- Got students living near them to come to a concert...
- And doubled the size of their audience!

I know that this is labor-intensive.

And I know it's easier for amateurs to do, than for professionals, who'd have to be paid.

I also know that even for the students, an effort like this would be hard to sustain

But if someone found ways to keep it going...

And if they had the right programming...

Couldn't they build a sustainable audience?

Moving on to Lara Downes...

- She produces a concert series in a jazz club
- And fills the club with people who don't normally go to classical music events

She first built her audience from:

- Family friends
- Parents whose kids went to school with her kids
- Her husband's professional colleagues

- She encouraged these people to bring their own friends
- And because the concerts were terrific and unusual...
- She built a loyal core audience

About the *Hunger Games* marketing campaign...

- The film was based on a series of hugely popular books
- So the producers thought the film would be a huge success, marketed in standard ways
- But they wanted more

- They promoted the movie to fans of the books
- Long before the film came out, the fans were talking about it
- So the film was even more successful than it would have been, with only a standard marketing campaign

Finally, Eric Haeker...

- Described his events as “live electronic chamber music,” with “DJ interludes, and an aqueous video immersion”
- Classical musicians played classical melodies with a dance beat
- These events drew large crowds in Philadelphia and Washington

One way that Eric promoted them:

- He organized what he and others have called “social media street teams”
- These teams would have 10 to 20 people in them
- All these people would promote the events to their own social media networks

- People started talking about the events to each other
- More and more people started talking about the events, as the street teams kept promoting
- This helped draw the large crowds

I know that these things aren't what marketers have normally done.

And large organizations might not be equipped to do them.

But if you work for a large organization, you might ask yourself...

How can I adapt these techniques?

And now, to conclude...

Let me take a step backward.

I'll ask you again:

What is your ultimate marketing goal?

I think it should be...

To attract people to any art you want to present.

To do that, you have to be bold.

Here are two famous quotes about being bold, from:

- Steve Jobs, who made Apple the triumphant company it is now
- Diana Vreeland, who as editor of *Vogue* magazine was a leader in both fashion and magazine publishing
 - And who became the first curator at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Steve Jobs said:

- “People don't know what they want until you show it to them.”

Diana Vreeland said:

- “You’re not supposed to give people what they want. You’re supposed to give them what they don't know they want yet.”

So in the end...

We're back to the timeless model of the arts:

- Art should be new
- Art should be revelatory
- Art should take the lead

And that's where we have to be...

- But we can't take the lead until we're in the race
- We won't be in the race until we're in contact with our current culture
- And that's why we have to join the rest of the world

Thanks for reading this!

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