

March 24, 2012

TO: Ed Bradford; Nancy Lyon

FR: Thomas Gerdom

RE: Exit Memos

To facilitate the conclusion of my current assignment and help you move forward, I am preparing a series of "Exit Memos" to help guide you into the future. I would be happy to elaborate on them as necessary. Included are:

Exit Memo 1 – Managing Director's Role and Staffing

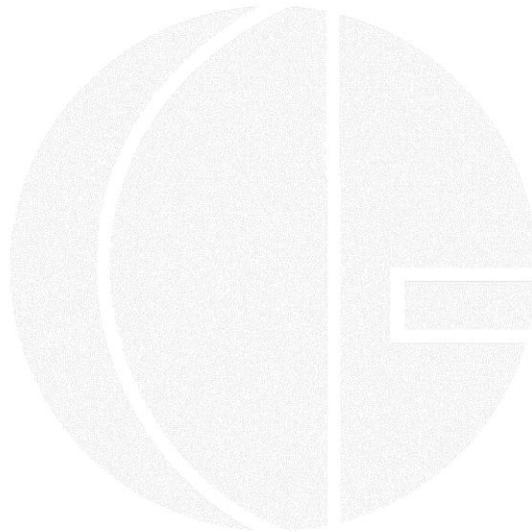
Exit Memo 2 – Marketing, Promotion and Branding

Exit Memo 3 – Community Arts School

Exit Memo 4 – Programming

Exit Memo 5 – Film Exhibition

Exit Memo 6 – Concession and Liquor Sales



March 24, 2012

TO: Ed Bradford; Nancy Lyon

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RE: Exit Memo 1 – Managing Director’s Role and Staffing

Though new budget work has negated plans for engagement of a full-time employee to oversee The Ramsdell in the immediate future, there are still a number of decisions to be made to keep the prospects alive and prepare to hire at some point. In spite of some setbacks, there are clearly signs that more activities could fill the theatre more often and be welcomed by the community. To begin these discussions, the Governors should address the following questions:

- Is the position a leadership role as chief executive/operating officer or more of a coordinator? A simple description for the leadership role would be:

To provide executive leadership and management of all business and other affairs.

1. Ensure full and timely execution of all board policies, strategies and plans.
 2. Provide executive support to the Board of Governors.
 3. Oversee all artistic affairs as they relate to fiscal and marketing decisions.
 4. Oversee all business affairs including fund raising, marketing, public relations, policy development, and finances.
 5. Direct fund-raising activities in collaboration with the Friends of the Ramsdell.
 6. Manage the human resources in collaboration with appropriate staff.
 7. Serve as the primary advocate for the organization in tandem with tenant artistic/executive directors, and represent the organization in local, regional and national affairs.
- Is the position expected to continue the booking of events, films and activities begun over the last six months?
 - Will the position be expected to continue and expand the Community Arts School activities?

Both of these responsibilities require a special skill set or the engagement of an additional person with such skills, but those skill sets could be acquired separately as part-time or even ad hoc. My current position on the Community Arts School is that the immediate focus should move toward the more adult life long learning programs like ballroom dance and some of MAI’s workshops. They should all be organized and promoted together as they were in the current catalog. If someone were identified to lead a more youth oriented program, that would be great, but it may be a longer term project and would require extraordinary effort. This will be addressed more completely in another memo.

Another related question here is the budget/risk tolerance for continuation/expansion of the programming.

- Will the position take over responsibility for the calendar and wedding bookings?

Staffing the weddings is also a question here as I feel a more customer-friendly, on-site person should be there throughout the day instead of only custodial staff and then the site managers for the event.

- Will the position have authority/direction over the custodial staff and site managers? If there is a direct staff person overseeing the facility and events, should the site manager role focus more on security and custodial issues?
- Is the regular operation of a ticket office to serve all tenants and renters necessary/viable?
- What role will the position play with the major tenants? Will this position oversee their occupancy agreements?
- Will the position be expected to continue the branding/marketing activities at the level of the last six months? If so, will professional assistance be financially possible or will the individual require some experience and skills in the design and distribution areas? This issue will also be dealt with in a separate memo.
- To whom will the position report? Directly to the Board of Governors or will there be oversight from, or a reporting relationship to, the City?
- Besides the existing custodial and site managers, will there be any support staff available?
- And the \$64,000 question: What can you pay? Does it need to be a part-time position? Many of the skill sets described above can be found in one individual, but at what price?

I have also looked into the councilwoman's suggestion of someone from an arts management program. As I indicated in a recent meeting, someone seeking experience to complete a degree program would have to work under an experienced mentor to provide the final pieces of their instruction program. Nevertheless, there are several programs accredited by or are associate members of the Association of Arts Administration Educators in the region:

Columbia College Chicago
DePaul University
Eastern Michigan University
Indiana University
Ohio State University
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
University of Akron
University of Cincinnati

University of Wisconsin – Madison
Wayne State University
Baldwin Wallace College
Ohio Northern University
University of Wisconsin – Whitewater
Viterbo University (Wisconsin)

If you emphasize the wedding/concession/facility management part of the business, you could also include any number of culinary programs including Northwestern Michigan College and Michigan State. I know the latter operates a co-op program for their students and Northwestern offers closer proximity.

Another possible direction we discussed was some shared management with an existing theatre similar to Michigan State's Wharton Center management of the Traverse City Opera House. However, I don't think that specific arrangement is an option as I got the impression from the head of their hospitality program that it was a unique undertaking related to their alumni base, and that current financing issues would prohibit any further expansion.

That is not to say that some other possibilities don't exist that might warrant exploration. The Frauenthal in Muskegon or CMU's theatre program might be possibilities, as might the people involved in running the Interlochen performance facilities. Also, as we have discussed, WSCC offers the most immediate prospect provided they don't have to take on new financial risk. Rick Plummer could easily expand his series into The Ramsdell, though he might need to refocus the selections a bit as his current programming is designed to augment the educational offerings and appeal to the demographics of the college community, not necessarily the greater population of the area. There might also be some tie with their management offerings to provide on site people.

As I suspected from my conversations with Cyndy Fuller, and recently confirmed by Mary Russell, the possibility of sharing a person with the Vogue is no longer viable. In reference to my original suggestion about this, and as I now see their situation coming together, I'm not sure their needs and skills required will match ours. More importantly, even if they open with only one screen, their staffing needs time-wise for a first-run movie house will preclude any meaningful time to oversee operations at the Ramsdell.

If all else fails, maybe you could put out an RFQ to firms who do this sort of thing to see if they are interested. However, I have recently made inquiries with a firm already working in the state for another client and believe, based on those discussions, that the venue is too small to be attractive. The tenant usage would also discourage these types of firms as it interferes with potential income opportunities that they may want to bring in. There are some firms that are not fully on the "up and up," but the process and due diligence should root out anyone who lacks the background to deal with all of the responsibilities. This latter concept could also be applied on an "ad hoc" or part-time basis to seek expertise in booking live acts, film, and/or operation of the school. However, moving in this direction would still require City staff to coordinate and oversee scheduling, wedding bookings, etc., as they do now.

March 24, 2012

TO: Ed Bradford; Nancy Lyon

FR: Thomas Gerdom

RE: Exit Memo 2 – Marketing, Promotion and Branding

One of my primary goals for the year was to try and establish an identity for The Ramsdell to distinguish it from its recent history as just the home of the Civic Players and try to take it back before that time when it was much more than the Players and was it's own person, so to speak. Included in these efforts were establishing a consistent usage of "The Ramsdell" instead of Ramsdell Theatre along with a "burgundy-ish" color palette that complemented the interior pictures that were also used. Further, the activities specifically promoted by The Ramsdell were identified as "The Ramsdell Presents." These uses morphed themselves into the following art:



All of this was manifested in the fall catalog along with the tag line – "Manistee's Community Arts Center" – and further described thusly:

Welcome

... to a 108-year-old "new" building.

Near weekly offerings in the early days of the last century drew crowds of Manistee residents and summer visitors on a regular basis to The Ramsdell; however, its history since then has seen peaks and valleys of activity with the theatre wing totally closed for years at a time. Following an extraordinary restoration, the City of Manistee has re-committed to fully realize the exciting potential that exists in this century-old complex as symbolized in its original design and its history since opening. It has always been a place

for the community, offering a home not just for the “community arts,” but the entire community. The grand balls, the meetings, and even the basketball games, are all important parts of its place in the community. When the Manistee Recreation Association ran programs there in the 1940s, they were for all of the community from kids to seniors representing a variety of interests and tastes. This greater purpose has been regularly recognized since T. J. Ramsdell’s original concept and design, and periodically re-enforced by “calling the citizens’ attention to the wonderful asset a building of this kind was to the city, and to the many ways the city benefited by having such a fine proposition in its midst.”

Today, we can again embrace the entire complex as a new “Community Arts Center,” not just the home of Manistee’s existing creative class, but a place where young and old from all walks of life can learn and be entertained. This welcoming and inviting facility was designed to be used by the community, and is re-opening its doors this fall with new programs to serve the entire Manistee area.

Our Vision – Enriching our community by providing unique entertainment and learning experiences in a majestic theatre

Our Mission – To maintain an irreplaceable community asset as a vibrant entertainment and education center through programming excellence, fiscal stability, strong community partnerships, and committed volunteers

I think the artist at the Ludington Press did a particularly fine job of integrating these colors, heads and concepts into the catalog, and the public reaction was particularly favorable. More importantly, it brought all of The Ramsdell’s activities into one place to demonstrate the breadth and scope of the entity. It also promoted the City’s ownership and operation while bringing together parking and ticket buying instructions into one place. To maintain this inclusiveness and further help brand The Ramsdell in the community, I would highly recommend continuing the catalog with three issues:

- Fall – published and distributed in mid- to late-August with a Labor Day push and Port City Street Fair presence
- Winter – published in early January to pull together activities through the end of school. This would be a smaller version as less activities are included.
- Summer – published by Memorial Day with a distribution that expands throughout the various channels used to reach the tourists.

All of these should be distributed up and down the coast with placements to include north to Frankfort and south past Ludington. This will require several newspapers or other physical means, not to mention the various Web-based media. It would be great to get directly into the summer homes with the latter. One possibility to explore might be the mail house in Traverse City – www.valpak.com/upnorth. A media kit is attached. A zoned buy for the Traverse City Record Eagle might also be considered.

Also, related to this activity, is ensuring consistent usage of the theatre name by all tenants and renters. This has been a problem since the theatre opened and they wanted to call it an Opera House because theatres were not held in high regard. I have found three postcards in an antique shop, each identifying the building with a different name in its history. Even recently, though, I have seen it referred to as the Ramsdell Center for the Arts or some similar aberration, and the Players continue their Victorian image of the Ramsdell Theatre logo as do the wedding promotions. And what do we call the ballroom? Is it Ramsdell Hall? Rotary Hall? The Ballroom? All of this needs to be pulled together into some consistent usage, and contracts for outside usage should also include requirements for consistent identification.

Once the collective advertising is out, a per program schedule could look like what we just did for Lynne Koplitz:

- Women's LifeStyle - half-page @ quarter-page price, no design charge = \$525
- Manistee News Advocate - Shopper 03/18, quarter-page = \$250; Page Two 03/22 = \$100
- Northern Express - quarter-page 03/19 = \$396
- Ludington Daily News - Shopper 03/18 = \$94.50; 4 x 4.5" 03/22 = \$264.96

Total = \$1,630.46

I like the Shoppers because they offer greater numbers for distribution than the dailies. Women's LifeStyle could be optional based on the attraction.

Something else that needs further attention is the social media presence. Randy Yeager (pronounced yayger) is a social media expert recommended by Womens LifeStyle. His business is OOB Marketing. His phone number is 231-571-4252 and his website is www.oobmarket.com. They said he was big help to them by just bringing him in for a workshop.

Press releases and press coverage have improved dramatically since AES started distributing for us. We are even getting radio mentions and, now that the City is officially in the Chamber, we got a mention in Melissa's column. I assume they are still game to do them as Jami handled one after Cyndy left.

Electronic media, and especially radio, continues to be a problem in the area and needs further exploration before investing many marketing dollars there. Few stations are based in Manistee and are either Ludington-centered or operate out of Traverse City, the latter with higher rates due to the larger market.

Strongest AM radio stations in Manistee:

- WMTE (1340 AM; 1 kW; MANISTEE, MI; Owner: LAKE MICHIGAN BROADCASTING, INC.)
- WTCM (580 AM; 35 kW; TRAVERSE CITY, MI; Owner: WTCM RADIO, INC.)

- WLDR (1210 AM; daytime; 50 kW; KINGSLEY, MI; Owner: FORT BEND BROADCASTING COMPANY)
- WCCW (1310 AM; 15 kW; TRAVERSE CITY, MI; Owner: WCCW RADIO, INC.)
- WOAP (1080 AM; 50 kW; OWOSSO, MI)
- WGN (720 AM; 50 kW; CHICAGO, IL; Owner: WGN CONTINENTAL BROADCASTING CO.)
- WKJF (1370 AM; 5 kW; CADILLAC, MI; Owner: WKJF RADIO, INC.)

Strongest FM radio stations in Manistee:

- WVXM (97.7 FM; MANISTEE, MI; Owner: XAVIER UNIVERSITY)
- WMTE-FM (101.5 FM; MANISTEE, MI; Owner: LAKE MICHIGAN BROADCASTING, INC.)
- WOUF (92.1 FM; BEULAH, MI; Owner: FORT BEND BROADCASTING CO.)
- WKZC (94.9 FM; SCOTTVILLE, MI; Owner: LAKE MICHIGAN BROADCASTING, INC.)
- WIAA (88.7 FM; INTERLOCHEN, MI; Owner: INTERLOCHEN CENTER FOR THE ARTS)
- WBNZ (99.3 FM; FRANKFORT, MI; Owner: FORT BEND BROADCASTING COMPANY)
- WTCM-FM (103.5 FM; TRAVERSE CITY, MI; Owner: WTCM RADIO, INC.)
- WCUZ (100.1 FM; BEAR LAKE, MI; Owner: FORT BEND BROADCASTING CO.)
- WCXT (105.3 FM; HART, MI; Owner: WATERS BROADCASTING CORPORATION)
- WOLW (91.1 FM; CADILLAC, MI; Owner: NORTHERN CHRISTIAN RADIO, INC.)
- WKLA-FM (106.3 FM; LUDINGTON, MI; Owner: LAKE MICHIGAN BROADCASTING, INC.)

TV broadcast stations around Manistee:

- W34BZ (Channel 34; LUDINGTON, MI; Owner: MS COMMUNICATIONS, LLC)
- W48BY (Channel 48; LUDINGTON, MI; Owner: MS COMMUNICATIONS, LLC)
- W53CC (Channel 53; LUDINGTON, MI; Owner: MS COMMUNICATIONS, LLC)
- WPBN-TV (Channel 7; TRAVERSE CITY, MI; Owner: WPBN/WTOM LICENSE SUBSIDIARY, INC.)
- WCMW (Channel 21; MANISTEE, MI; Owner: CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY)
- WWTW (Channel 9; CADILLAC, MI; Owner: HERITAGE B/CING COMPANY OF MICHIGAN)

Of the list, IPR is certainly a good presence for certain attractions, but is expensive. Coast FM has improved and reaches a more mature market with a female concentration. Sunny Country 101.9 has some listenership for certain attractions while WLDR, WBNZ and WOUF have offered spots for anywhere from \$5 to \$10. Local cable might be worth a look for certain shows.

TREATickets has worked well for our presentations and the relationship should continue. It might also become mandatory for certain attractions renting the theatre. Of particular importance for The Ramsdell's own presentations is maximization of the TREATickets promotion capabilities. Each organization has full access to its *own* patron data to use in its own marketing initiatives, i.e., every sale generates a new name for the mailing/email list. We are

starting to build our own list, but might be able to enhance that with occasional usage of the Players list in some trade agreement.

Treat also offers “Optional Marketing on a Fee Basis.” Included in this is:

ArtsPulse - monthly newsletter: \$25 per issue for arts and cultural organizations ticketing through TREAT; \$35 per issue for other arts and cultural organizations. Annual rates of \$225 for 12 listings for organizations ticketing through TREAT and \$325 others organizations. The 12 issues can be used in any combination since some organizations have more than one event a month and no events in other months.

TREATAlert - weekly e-mail blast: available only to organizations ticketing through TREAT. This goes to almost 13,000 addresses for \$50 for nonprofits; \$75 for profit organizations.

They also offer prominent positions on the home page of TREATickets.com. Feature tabs and sub-feature placement is \$10 per week and sponsor placement on the right side of the site is \$50 per month.

Finally, the appearance and signage on the building play a big role in its community identity and presence. Many times, it is merely a dark, lurking hulk, more scary than inviting. In exploring a sign design for the northwest corner, Brandon Jensen went one better and envisioned both a new brand identity, graphically, as well as some lighting and other external elements to make the entire building more welcoming:

PROJECT GOALS:

- Unify the image of the Ramsdell Theatre through a consistently designed brand print palette.
- Identify and illustrate "value" in the Ramsdell Theatre's productions across all disciplines
- Serve as "Manistee's Home for the Arts"

PROJECT POSITIONING:

The newly designed logo/mark and subsequent graphic elements outlined in this palette are designed to illustrate the Ramsdell Theatre as an independent arts entity with a united direction throughout the region. Through the use of juxtaposition in its image – flanking an iconic architectural landmark with a modern graphic image – we are able to create a clean look allowing the building to become the ornate focal point, and not the graphic image advertising/promoting it.

Juxtaposition in design has been successfully used in applications like this for many years in larger urban theatres and museums such as the MET, Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit Opera House, The Chicago Theatre, etc. The "modern" advertising, flanked by the classical interior/exterior spaces of the theatre, allow for the photos within the advertising

and marketing to become much more noticed. This typically translates to increased traffic or exposure to the driving message (Web site, play schedule, show opening, etc).

SELECTED MEDIUMS:

The initial design phases have identified opportunity through the use of exterior signage such as:

- Pole Banners: With City/HDC approval these banners could be mounted just off the sidewalks on First and Maple Streets. The top of the center pole could contain a light
- Portico Banners: With City/HDC approval these banners could be mounted between columns or on columns, perpendicularly extruding towards the street. These large banners could generate increased visual interest on one of Manistee's busiest intersections.

FUTURE MEDIUMS:

The initial design phase also opens up many opportunities and conditions for expansion and visual growth. Additional designed items to unify the space, internally and externally could include:

- Way-finding signage (interior)
- Print marketing materials
- Independent Web site development page
- Schedule of exhibits/shows materials.
- Unifying tenant marketing efforts under one collaborative message.

March 28, 2012

TO: Ed Bradford; Nancy Lyon

FR: Thomas Gerdom

RE: Exit Memo 3 – Community Arts School

As mentioned in Exit Memo 1, the Community Arts School requires someone with a special skill set to operate, or the engagement of an additional person with such skills, but that skill set could be acquired separately as part-time or even ad hoc. I went on to say that “My current position on the Community Arts School is that the immediate focus should move toward the more adult life-long learning programs like ballroom dance and some of MAI’s workshops. They should all be organized and promoted together as they were in the current catalog. If someone were identified to lead a more youth oriented program, that would be great, but it may be a longer term project and would require extraordinary effort.”

Originally, I had high hopes for including learning programs in the overall activities of The Ramsdell, especially since there was a dearth of such activity in the community, and the efforts of the tenants to accommodate those needs were frequently thwarted by the lack of sufficient staff or volunteers to undertake such offerings. I was also extremely pleased with the young, vibrant, enthusiastic and professional staff that I was able to bring together in such a short time period. Then, when we unveiled the offerings in the catalog and at the Port City Street Fair, there was great public enthusiasm expressed by our “open house” attendees and many “how wonderful” comments received directly at our booth. It all seemed to suggest we were doing the right thing at the right time.

Our Music Faculty

Annette Jurcevic (voice, piano, flute, beginning strings)

Ms. Jurcevic has a broad range of experience as a performer and teacher. She began her musical studies on the piano at the age of five. By the time she had completed high school, she had learned to play eight additional instruments, including flute, cello, and saxophone. She has sung in opera and musical theater productions and in folk, jazz, a cappella, and sacred music concerts. Ms. Jurcevic holds a bachelor’s degree and two masters degrees in music. She has more than 25 years of experience as a private music teacher.

Jason Jados (guitar – rock, classical and blues)

Mr. Jados has been playing for about 15 years and teaching regularly for the past five. His education was at the Musicians Institute’s G.I.T. program in Hollywood. He is in his fourth year at West Shore Community College teaching basic guitar skills where he is able to develop students to an intermediate level of playing in about three months time. Sight reading and music theory are important elements in his instructional style.

Julie Schleif (trumpet, French horn, trombone, euphonium, tuba)

Ms. Schleif has been teaching brass lessons in Ludington since 2008. She works with students from 6th grade through college age on all brass instruments. Ms. Schleif comes to The Ramsdell after years of teaching and performing throughout the United States and the world. For many years, she was Instructor of Horn, Chamber Music and Director of the Brass Ensemble at the Interlochen Arts Academy. She was Teaching Assistant at Arizona State, where she was working towards her DMA, prior to moving to Michigan. Ms. Schleif holds the Master of Music Degree from Michigan State University and the Bachelor of Arts Degree from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. She is an active private teacher in Michigan with studios in Ludington, Cadillac and the Traverse City area. As a performer, Ms. Schleif is Principal Horn of the Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra in Northern Michigan. She is also active as a soloist, chamber musician and clinician. Being a musician has opened many doors for Ms. Schleif as performances and guest teaching have taken her throughout the country and to India, Egypt and Peru.

We also included Ingrid:

Ingrid Bond School of Dance

Ms. Bond was founder and artistic director of Afterimages Repertory Dance Company, a professional modern dance touring company based in Louisville, KY. She majored in dance at Michigan State University and taught ballet and modern classes through MSU's "Orchesis" program. She was a member of the MSU Repertory Dance Company as a performer, choreographer, costumer and set designer. She has worked with members of the Alvin Ailey and Pilobolus Dance Theatres, Paul Koverman of the California Ballet, James Truitte, former member of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre, and performed works by Isadora Duncan, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Jody Oberfelder, Douglas Hamby and Harry Streep.

Our program announced in the fall included a variety of interesting programs:

Our Programs

Simply Music – group piano lessons for adults

Simply Music is the largest, playing-based music education institution in the world, with Licensed Educators at approximately 600 locations throughout the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It presents a revolutionary, Australian-developed piano and keyboard method for those who would like to learn how to play piano. This breakthrough program has students of all ages playing great-sounding blues, contemporary, classical and accompaniment pieces - immediately - from their very first piano lessons.

Melinda Lise, instructor
Tuesdays, 2:00 – 3:00 PM

Meditative Movement

Meditative Movement classes offer a simple way to reduce stress and bring peace and focus to your life. Gentle motions and dynamic stretching are paired with breathing and targeted thinking techniques. Physical and mental health benefits include strengthened immune function, lowered blood pressure, increased flexibility, improved functional balance, increased energy, improved mood, decreased anxiety and increased mental stability.

Classes are designed for people of any skill level. Physical challenges are easily accommodated. Let go and revitalize your life with Meditative Movement!

Annette Jurcevic, instructor
Mondays and Wednesday, 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Ballroom Dance

Learn the basic steps for the most popular ballroom, swing, and Latin dances. By the end of your first month of classes, you'll be comfortable with two different dances and ready to go out on the town. No partner required!

Instructor Annette Jurcevic has been trained in swing, lindy hop and ten different types of ballroom and Latin dances (International syllabus). She taught private and group lessons with Dance International in Austin, Texas and is a former president of the Ballroom Dance Club at Indiana University.

Annette Jurcevic, instructor

About Kindermusik

Kindermusik is a classroom learning experience. We teach children music so they can become better learners. It's not about making little Mozarts. It's about developing skills in the whole child - ages newborn to 7 years - cognitive, physical, social, emotional, language and musical. For more than 25 years, we have believed music is the best conductor for learning.

Kindermusik *Family Time*

Music class for families with multiple children ages newborn to 7 years

In 15 weeks, you'll play instruments together, dance together, share, and take turns, and see how music can bring you closer as a family.

A one-room schoolhouse approach to music. With older children ready to show the little ones how it's done and the younger ones eager to learn, *Family Time* becomes a multi-layered learning environment. Each week, a Kindermusik Educator will introduce basic musical concepts and then give you the instruments, and the structured free time to put those concepts into play.



Your children will listen to instruments and to each other, learn from their peers and older children, and enjoy music and movement with hoops, scarves and tumble-around play. Story time and family jams, puppet play and happy singing—all the *Family Time* activities encourage discovery and exploration and foster sharing and social skills too. In this special place for musical, social and emotional learning, your children will strengthen their ties with each other and with you—and they'll start developing the skills they'll need in school and on the neighborhood playground.

Family involvement in your child's learning is a fundamental cornerstone of the Kindermusik philosophy because we believe the parent is the child's most important teacher and the home is the most important place for a child's learning to take root and grow. After all, there's no better way to nurture your child's development and you'll love doing it together every day!

At Home Materials (sample shown at right)
Bring the learning experience home with an activity guide, a hand puppet and a finger puppet, two instruments, two music CDs packed with songs from class, and two beautiful story books.



Tuesdays, 1:00 – 1:45 PM

Melinda Lise, instructor

Ms. Melinda graduated from Albion College, with honors in Music Performance and Economics and Management. Melinda enjoys playing clarinet, sax, piano and dabbling with mandolin and other strings. Melinda is passionate about Kindermusik and bringing up the next generation of music lovers and music makers!! Bringing the best children's music and movement program to northern Michigan is something makes Ms. Melinda happy every single day! Early children's music education is so important for developing skills in every area of their young lives that will impact them positively in school and beyond!

West Shore Community College Youth Theatre Initiative

In a new effort to build youth theatre in our communities, WSCC has partnered with The Ramsdell and the Ludington Arts Center to provide area students professional instruction in the dramatic arts. From creative dramas to advanced scene study, this program is designed to develop spirit, imagination and acting techniques as students gain valuable life skills of confidence, creative problem-solving, personal responsibility and teamwork.

The multi-segment inaugural Youth Theatre course offers both new and returning acting students the opportunity to participate in short commitment period workshops, each lasting just five weeks. Ramsdell Theatre courses will be taught on Wednesday evenings, from 4:00 until 6:00 PM. The first begins Wednesday, September 14, and runs through October 12; while the second session begins October 19 and runs through November 16. Students are encouraged to build upon each segment by increasing their skill sets after

taking our variety of offerings listed below for fall. Performances for the public will be held from 5:00 until 6:00 PM the last day of the course. Programs are appropriate for sixth graders and older.

September 14 – October 12: Characterization and Improvisation/Tackling Personal and Team Acting Skills (*Requires commitment to memorization of monologue as homework for final performance*)

Build your acting skills with this fun-filled exploration of vocal and physical play. Learn proper stage directions for actors, projection and articulation exercises through the use of individual monologues. Learn to think on your toes through our team-work and improvisation skills. Students who finish this course develop strong public speaking skills, become more confident onstage, speaking in public and in new social settings.

October 19 – November 16: Scene Study – “Script-derived Acting Skills” (Second Installment)

(Requires attendance at all classes, in order to work as part of a team toward final performance)

Join us for fun onstage, young actors! This course builds upon basic theatre training blocks, incorporating theatre etiquette and rules for good theatre-goers and spanning from stage direction to stage presence, from acting to being, from improvisation to script work. This second installment of the Youth Theatre sessions bridges the divide between individual acting and acting as members of a cast, where you’ll have the chance to work off your peers.

Course Fees: \$80 for one term or \$150 for both

Cindy Beth Davis-Dykema, instructor

Ms. Davis-Dykema is a graduate of Hart Public Schools, Muskegon Community College, and the University of Hawaii at Manoa, specializing in *Cultural Literature and Performing Arts*. She has been directing youth theatre programs for the past ten years at Muskegon Civic Theatre, Oceana Summer Youth Theatre, Hawaii Public Schools and White Lake Youth Theatre, where she most recently directed a fifty-student cast in “Alice in Wonderland” at the Historic Howmet Playhouse, with all student technicians. Cindy



Beth has helped to develop the programs being offered by West Shore Community College’s Youth Theatre initiative at both the Ramsdell and the Ludington Arts Center, and serves as Executive Director of Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association. Passionate about PROCESS over PRODUCT, she enjoys infusing multi-cultural performance techniques with tried and true western scripts while encouraging students to push the boundaries of their imaginations and comfort zones onstage. She is honored to have the chance to serve in development and instruction for Youth Theatre at the beautiful Ramsdell Theatre.

Granted, it was an ambitious undertaking, but there was no financial risk involved if no one signed up, which is what happened. The theatre program had inquiries, however, the fall show at the high school prohibited many interested students from participating. Kindermusik had no one interested, but Melinda also had declining enrollment at her home and in the other cities where she teaches, so it wasn't just a Manistee problem. Ballroom dance had interest, but delays in beginning the classes due to "Sweeney Todd" performances and Annette's leg injury put some people off. Julie Schleif had no interest, and Jason had a number of students, but encountered scheduling and access problems. Several people mentioned the cost of such activities in the poor economy, but the rates were similar to and competitive with other offerings in the area. Also, the band program at the high school recently expanded into lower grades at no cost to students, and the teacher, though very good, is very possessive and controlling of her flock.

Jason's experience was particularly troubling as he is in a wheelchair and we were trying to accommodate his disability. At one point, he sent the following:

Today, my students were once again locked out of the Ramsdell and no one was there to let us in. I had one of them go around to the 1st street side and he got in there, but again, all other doors were locked and no one was around. My daughter and I take piano lessons there and our teacher was late last week for the same exact reason. There was a janitor there, but he seemed to be more annoyed by our presence than anything, much less open the doors. Last Saturday one of the other students had to go find a way in because no one is apparently there to assist. I am tired of it. I paid to rent the room, and got paid a month after submitting my payments to the City of Manistee. And had to call and find out when I would get paid. So, I will gather my amps tomorrow, if the place is even open, and I am done there. It is cold out and getting colder. Too cold to sit outside with guitars and wonder what the heck is going on. It was not a good experience for any one. Thank you.

He subsequently apologized, but never returned to teaching in the building.

To be successful, the school needs someone to be out in the community beating the bushes for students on a regular basis, and we were not staffed to do that. At this point, we have only Melinda and Annette involved on a limited basis. Cindy Beth has joined forces with the SEEDS program at the high school, and will co-lead a six-week summer workshop there.

Melinda is still interested and has recently sent the following:

One of my families has this little younger sibling who is "wild" - good kid - but not a good listener. He needs LOTS of attention and it was quite apparent he was going to be a major handful in Hardy Hall. I had to take those lessons back to their home or the church next door where he can't damage stuff. It was just too iffy.

I am really hoping to offer a short and fun session of Kindermusik sometime soon!!! I also have a great new piano program for little children 4-7, but I'm actually afraid of doing it in Hardy Hall. I LOVE that room and I LOVE the art. I just don't know if young children can behave or not.

I have encouraged her to use the dance studio for the Kindermusik and explained that we are not too far off from having the classroom on the lower level back together and equipped with a piano.

Annette is down to one piano student in Hardy Hall and the ballroom classes are in flux. Some weeks are good and some aren't. Part of the problem is that a number of her core students were organized by a woman who works at the Casino. Their schedules change frequently leaving them unable to attend some weeks. She is still interested, however, though she conducts a Sweet Adelines group on Tuesdays and a Barbershop Chorus on Thursdays. She and Kerry have also discussed re-organizing the Manistee Symphony, which might provide another possible user.

Short of hiring somebody to rebuild the program as originally laid out and to promote it throughout the community on an almost one-on-one basis, I think the best thing to do is:

- Organize the interested teachers with ongoing arrangements similar to Ingrid's with a per hour/class rental fee. (For the record, Ingrid is very professional, handles her own promotion, and provides a strong curriculum for young dancers with career aspirations. Her presence in the building is very positive, and her "Nutcracker" enjoyed a welcome return to The Ramsdell stage.)
- Complete the new classrooms with the piano from the Lakeside Club to provide additional teaching facilities
- Continue to push and promote the synergies and inclusiveness of the many activities in catalogs and other promotions.
- Encourage new or expanded activities by MCP and MAI. The latter has provided some exceptional programs this past year and could benefit from combined promotions and generally more activity in the building.
- Seek small grants and donations to help offset costs of promotions and special class offerings.

I'm confident there will be interested parties to move forward, especially if you agree to help promote their work with a catalog and/or other joint promotions, so that there will still be a viable learning component in the building's activities.

March 31, 2012

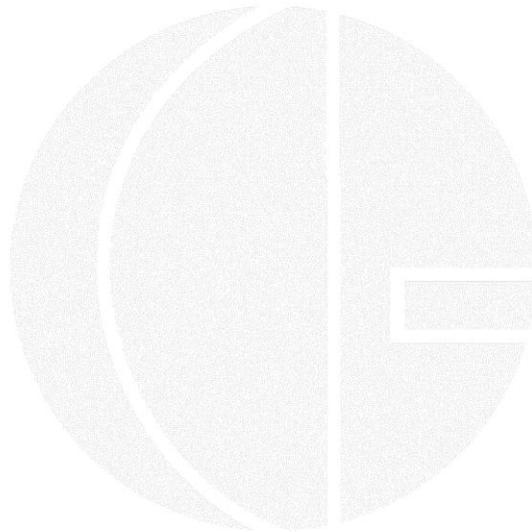
TO: Ed Bradford; Nancy Lyon

FR: Thomas Gerdom

RE: Exit Memo 4 – Programming

After further reflection, I've decided I really have nothing to add to this topic. It takes time to build the general interest and knowledge amongst the populace that you are doing programming that might interest them. Then, you have to select from a myriad of possibilities of what you think will work. We did things we thought would work, and they sort of did, but not well enough. The size of the hall further limits your selections, as does the "implied" pricing restraints. Regarding the latter, if you look closely at the sales reports, we hardly sold any \$10 tickets, selling mostly the highest prices, including the box seats. There might be more room there than we think for the right show.

With no room for risk in your budget, I don't see how you might expect to do any programs next year. The best I can suggest is that you partner with promoters such as Seamus to share risk/sales. You would need to put aside your desire to fully recover your out-of-pocket costs to even do this, however.



March 31, 2012

TO: Ed Bradford; Nancy Lyon

FR: Thomas Gerdom

RE: Exit Memo 5 – Film Exhibition

I believe film exhibition is a viable money maker for theatre operations, in spite of our recent experience. Several factors have influenced our results so far, primarily weather, but also the fact that many of the best potential audience is not here this time of year. The latter situation precludes a significant number of showings within the rental period, as do other activities in the theatre. Also, we are still “finding our way” in putting out the right product for the community. We do not have access to first run films, but what makes the most sense in lieu of that? Is it the older classics, classics that are not so old, or more recent films that have been popular and are now available on DVD?

So far, we have tried one of each, but with no clear direction. When asking the regulars what they want to see, their suggestions include "Godfather," "The Graduate," "Sound of Music," "Grease," and "The Wizard of Oz." There were even requests for “Bridge on the River Kwai,” “Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World” and “It happened One Night.” Mostly, it’s the experience they are seeking: to hang out with their friends/spouses, for the chance to see certain films on a big screen, and/or to make a date of it, and, in general, to do what people have done at films forever – share the experience.

There is also the question of whether or not this can be sustained once the Vogue re-opens. Their plans are now scaled back so that there will only be two screens, with the second one seating 45 or less. This will severely crimp their booking capabilities, initially, and should still leave room for The Ramsdell to offer classics and similar fare to complement or provide alternatives to the first run films showing there. Also in question here is when they will re-open. Current fundraising is barely above \$600,000, and they are waiting for a \$.5 million grant from the State that they expect to help open other wallets. Only one of these other gifts will approach six figures, however, further putting completion in doubt and leaving The Ramsdell with the prospect of a longer run without competition.

The physical layout of our situation has also been problematic, requiring three different people, but you have recently made some moves to improve this. At the theatre I operated in South Lyon, the box office and concessions were all together in one stand. I sold tickets and occasionally turned around to help with concessions if it backed up. The concession person was also the projectionist, so when the time came I took over both and he went up to start the film. Lights were all controlled at the projector, so there was no separate control as there is in the theatre here. The best part, except from my point of view, was that there was only one person being paid. By moving the concessions upstairs to the lobby and having the site manager run the projector, you have significantly reduced your costs.

Pricing and scheduling are also issues to consider. I started at \$4 across the board for the older films, and nobody objected. When I went to \$6 and \$4 for the newer film, people were actually telling me to keep the change, and a number of seniors insisted on paying the adult price. I think you can stay with the \$6 adult, \$4 for children (12 and under – it's based on the PG-13 rating), and \$4 for seniors (65 and over – just to keep it simple and not totally give away the product in a community that has so many near seniors.) Having a single price matinee with all ages at \$4 is still a good practice for anyone that is price sensitive. It also allows showings for people who don't like to drive after dark. If you really get a special or newer film, I doubt there would be a problem going up to \$8 and \$6, which is what they charge in Frankfurt.

In terms of scheduling, I can't imagine any value in running weeknights during the winter months, though the licenses are for Friday through Thursday. In the summer, this could be another story, but MCP has the lions' share of the nights tied up for rehearsals. Within the weekend confines, you should still be able to get in two evenings and as many as four matinees – two on each day. I wouldn't do any less than the three shows we have tried so far, then just experiment adding on.

In terms of the film booking, I spend anywhere from four to eight hours pulling each program together. I have a number of films in my head that I want to do, most recently dictated by the suggestions I have heard, but also based on regularly following the industry through Web sites and industry publications. I generally don't book films that I find personally interesting, as my tastes have not been known to track positively with what's working in the general population. (I believe Michael Moore does not share this self control. His staff has named a number of potential first run films that I would book in a minute that they said he would not, including any number of Disney films or the next film in the Transformers, and other series – all big sellers regardless of their quality.)

Once I've identified the films I want to book, the process goes like this:

- Look up the film on IMDBpro.com to view previous sales, media coverage, find art, and, most importantly, identify the distributor. This latter feature is not available on the public site, and a subscription is required to the "pro" component.
- Contact the distributor for availability and terms. Most of the older films are at \$250 minimum against 35% of the gross. Swank might be a cheaper minimum, but they have certain restrictions on doing advertising and charging admission. If there is admission, they take 50% against their minimum. There are also some companies they don't handle, and Disney is very restrictive. Their companies include:

Walt Disney Pictures, Paramount Pictures, Warner Bros., Sony Pictures, NBC Universal, DreamWorks Pictures, New Line Cinema, Lionsgate, MGM, Touchstone Pictures, Hollywood Pictures, Columbia Pictures, Tri Star Pictures, The Weinstein Company, Focus Features, Miramax Films, Warner Independent Pictures, Paramount Classics, Paramount Vantage, Fine Line Features, Relativity Media, Summit Entertainment, Samuel Goldwyn Films, HBO, Hallmark Hall of Fame, United Artists, National Geographic, Magnolia Pictures, Image Entertainment, Picturehouse Films, IFC Films,

Millennium Entertainment, Cohen Media, Monterey Media, eOne Entertainment, Koch Lorber Films, Vivendi Entertainment and many other independent studios, offering all of their box office hits to the non-theatrical markets. As a theatre that is not exclusively a movie theatre, we fall in the latter category.

Currently, we are only licensed with Sony, Warner Brothers and Disney, but we can't use the latter as we don't have first-run capability. Summit has been submitted but we have not tried to activate the agreement. Applications for Paramount, Fox and Swank are with Ed for completion and submission. Universal also should be pursued as they are not covered by Swank.

A list of contacts for the various companies is attached. I have not used some of the smaller ones before and can't vouch for their current status, but most of these you won't need. Warner is Howard Fox for anything since 2000 and Marilee for anything before that. Payments go to Brian Brambila as Lizette is on maternity leave. Summit is Dennis Glenn. Sony is Lori for current titles, Chris for older films. For really classic Sony films like "Capote," you need to ask Mary Bell whom to contact. We haven't heard back to confirm the Paramount contact. Matt Flinner is our contact at Swank. All of the current licenses have me listed as the booking agent, so you may need to change that with them so they know who to get the reports and agreements from.

- Once the booking is confirmed, I pull reviews and other materials to write the press release and prepare a poster. Generally, the release has the main info in the lead paragraph, the general storyline in the second, and some interesting tidbits in the third. The last paragraph lays out the standard pricing, availability, etc. Jami at AES transmits the releases, though I have also been sending directly to the people at the Manistee News:

dyarnell@pioneergroup.com, dlbarber@pioneergroup.com,
calendarmna@pioneergroup.com, kgrabowski@pioneergroup.com

Posters, both large and small, are printed in the City offices. Some of the newer films will have posters/flyers still available. How to get them varies by company. Flyers are distributed by Nick and/or Candace.

- Acquisition of the physical film for showing varies by company. Warner says it's simpler to buy or rent your own copy and show it rather than have them send it. Swank insists that you use their copy.
- Selling the tickets at the venue is also easy. Red are for the adults, blue for kids, and white for seniors. Mark the starting number at the beginning of sales for each and the end number when you are done selling. Tie out the cash and fill out the report form I've previously sent. Some of the companies want nightly sales grosses emailed to Rentrak at: faxusa@renttrak.com. Type **Rentrak ID 991320** in the subject line and submit what you have, such as:

991320 - 02/24/12 - An American in Paris - \$100

Some of the companies will have other reporting requirements while some don't require it at all. Warner is definitely Rentrak. Swank is direct to them. If there is required daily reporting and they don't get it, they will be in touch.

- Payment is expected very promptly and failure to do so will preclude future acquisitions. Also, if you are using their copy, that must also be returned promptly.

That's the process. Getting beyond our current sales experience is going to be the hard part, and may not change appreciatively, regardless of the film selection, until the community gets used to the availability of the films at The Ramsdell and the general population perks up a bit with the return of the snowbirds and, especially, the summer visitors.

One other thing we haven't gotten into is the kids' films. Those might best come from Swank and you may want to offer them free or very cheap. We have small boxes for \$1 popcorn and some other \$1 kid snacks for the concessions at those showings. Films could be selected from the past year's big hits or even older. Sponsorship might also help with this.

March 31, 2012

TO: Ed Bradford; Nancy Lyon

FR: Thomas Gerdom

RE: Exit Memo 6 – Concession and Liquor Sales

Though not one of my most popular recommendations, I think our experience with concessions has proved they can be provided in the theatre without damaging the facility's integrity or physical appearance. Allowing the evening's entertainment to determine whether or not to allow the concessions in the seating area appears to work well, and, when not allowed, the availability of the classroom set with tables and chairs has proven useful. I've been particularly pleased with the response of the movie-goers who are thrilled to be able to enjoy popcorn and snacks as they watch, but go out of their way to be careful eating and to not leave any debris following the film.

That said, there are still two major issues involved with the service: First, the concession selection, originally chosen to be "theatre friendly," has not been particularly popular, and significant quantities of some items are still on hand and passing their expiration dates. Second, we have yet to secure a liquor license, which would probably have the most positive influence financially, especially as it relates to the wedding business. An overall related factor is our overhead cost of sales. Even if only one person is working, the cost is around \$30 to cover through intermission, and some nights have not even grossed that much, let alone netted out over our product costs. To have two people covering makes this even worse.

To partially deal with the selection issue, we adjusted some prices so that all the drinks, except for the plain water, were selling at \$2, with plain water at \$1. The snacks were all at \$2. The original pricing, cost and mark-ups are attached. At this point, we have sold almost no juice and limited quantities of the iced tea, mostly during the summer. The most popular drink appears to be the Vitamin Water with the various flavors. We are currently buying additional quantities of various flavors on a regular basis for \$1 per bottle and selling them at \$2.

In the snack area, peanuts and Famous Amos cookies sold alright, but the Snack Wells did not. Sun Chips, especially the Harvest Cheddar, were popular, and Veggi Straws sold sometimes. (TJs had moved to Veggie Straws with its sandwich service but recently switched back to potato chips after seeing so many plates come back with them still there.) What really works, however, is chocolate, like our M&Ms and M&M Peanut and an occasional candy bar. We have also had some success at the movies with old fashioned movie snacks such as Raisinettes and Junior Mints, and we have had requests for Sno-Caps and other theatre fare.

I think what's happening here is that even though there is a trend in the industry to more healthful snacks, the fact of the matter is that when people go out for fun, they want something that's fun to eat, not something good for them. I would recommend you go with the flow and both change and reduce your stock to what is selling the best – Sun Chips (probably Original and Harvest Cheddar), M&Ms, peanuts, etc.. For the movies, the traditional movie candies are available at the dollar stores for \$1 and can be sold for \$2.

Beverage-wise, even though the Vitamin Water sells somewhat, and people buy the plain water, pop/soda is what people want with their snacks. Even I can't recommend that you put in a fountain set-up and do the cups with lids and straws, as it's just too risky, though the financial return is really the best that way. I think it might be worth an experiment with capped plastic pop bottles of not too large a size sold at \$2. The capped water bottles have not been spilled, and I think it's safe to say that the pop would not either. This would give you the variety to help sales, but the mark-ups and net income are not going to be as strong as a straight fountain set-up. Doing this, you would then have the plain and vitamin waters, iced tea in the summer, the pop, and maybe the other fruit flavored water that enjoyed some sales, though only the Strawberry and Lemon were really popular. I would also try to identify which of the vitamin waters are the most popular and not stock too many.

Popcorn is still a work in progress. It's really a must for the movies, and I think the big bag purchase from Wesco is working, but the quantity of actual sales is leaving too much left over. Obviously, increased sales would help this problem, but on days with multiple showings, having a cabinet to both warm and fluff the popcorn will help it maintain its freshness while wafting the aroma around more than it is now. I recommend purchasing the drop-in cabinet pictured at right which both warms and air fluffs. It was quoted at \$1,880.



Finally, it's time to "drive the place to drink." I really like John's "rathskellar" concept below the lobby and think it will be the perfect place for the theatre's bar. It can provide a warm, inviting gathering spot before, during and after shows, while adding a nice income stream to your activities. More important, is the income it can provide to your wedding business. I also feel strongly that controlling that business at the weddings is not just for the revenue, but should also offer the City some peace of mind by controlling the drinking with trained bartenders/servers and protecting it from any unfortunate liability issues that might arise from the current practice. I understand that the license issue is currently in the hands of the state legislature and hope that this can be pushed through as quickly as possible.