

For immediate release
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Performance Network announces 09-10 fundraising campaign: "Raising Awareness/Raising Funds."

Annual campaign announced

As Performance Network launches the second show in its already successful 2009-2010 season, Ann Arbor's professional theater announces its annual fundraising campaign. The plan includes direct mail appeals, memberships, special events and new programs. The campaign is expected to raise \$350,000 in much-needed operational funds to keep Performance Network strong through the economic recovery. It will also focus on raising community awareness about the theatre and the unique financial demands placed on it as a producing arts organization.

Executive Director Carla Milarch said: "In the performing arts world, there are two types of organizations: producers and presenters. A presenter brings in productions that have first been produced elsewhere, whereas a producing arts organization builds each production from scratch, using local artists, designers, and technicians who live and work right here in Michigan. The producing arts organization has a unique niche and value to the community, as it funnels most of the revenue right back into the local economy. It also faces unique challenges. Because art is harder and more expensive to produce, the financial risk is greater. It also requires entire staffs of logistical and creative personnel. In the long-term, a producing theatre has the potential to bring acclaim to its city, by originating plays that go on to a wider audience. These organizations are unique community resources that should be sustained and protected."

2009 was a challenging year for Performance Network. Thanks to an outpouring of community support, the theatre met its 2009 financial benchmarks, including an October 1st cash target, putting it on solid ground financially.

However, in this economy, it's more important than ever for Performance Network to maintain continuity in its fundraising efforts. Performance Network relies on contributions for 50% of its annual operating revenue, and these funds must be secured every year. This revenue structure is based on the business model that most non-profit arts groups follow, which was created in the 1950's when ticket sales threatened to shoot out of people's reach if supplemental revenue sources were not found. This model relies on contributions to keep prices affordable for the whole community.

A new reality in Michigan:

Performance Network Artistic Director David Wolber adds: "The new reality is that corporate, state and foundation funding have reached all time lows in Michigan. Many

non-profit arts organizations will continue to struggle unless we can make up the gap. If we want these organizations to survive, we must answer the questions of long-term sustainable funding. We feel that as artistic leaders in the region, it is our responsibility to ask these important questions. Performance Network's annual campaign is designed to not only raise funds, but to keep the dialogue going."

2009-2010 Fundraising activities:

Performance Network will kick off its annual campaign with an end of the year direct appeal, targeted to community members who enjoy the art and support its mission "to provide uncompromising artistic leadership in the region by producing works that engage, challenge and inspire audiences and artists." Supporters are being asked to consider a gift of \$100 in honor of PNT's 10th season downtown, but gifts of any size are welcome and much needed. Contributions benefit the general operating fund, which keeps the art excellent and the ticket prices affordable.

Special events for the year include "Taste of the Season" - a spring fundraiser consisting of many small special events held in supporters' homes; a "Tony party" which will be held at the theatre; a found spaces theatre festival that will feature theatrical "happenings" at multiple locations across the city; and a season opener cabaret in September. Details on each event will be released throughout the year.

Other programs will include a private underwriting program, where individuals can sponsor a production in its entirety or one week at a time; the sustainers' club, where patrons can make an automatic \$9 payment once a month on their credit card; gift basket raffles; online auctions and even using social networking and Facebook to fundraise.

A new era

"It's a new era of fundraising." Milarch says "People are looking for exciting new ways to support their favorite organizations. Performance Network's events will be intimate and fun, and will connect people with the organization and with each other. What won't change is the great feeling of supporting a community-driven, award-winning professional theatre."

Performance Network is celebrating its 10th season in its downtown home at 120 East Huron. Since opening its space nine seasons ago, the company has grown into a regional leader, with a track-record of winning more awards than any other theatre in the state. It has garnered national acclaim, including three American Theatre Critics' Association nominations and moved plays out to theatres nationwide, including one optioned for Broadway.

Performance Network brings joy and entertainment to 20,000 patrons each year, and its touring shows and family series light up the faces of 20,000 children. Its programs include the critically-acclaimed professional series, the Fireside Festival of New Works, classes for children and a late night performance series.