



Performing Arts Research Coalition  
Community Report

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THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

**AUSTIN**

**Performing Arts Research Coalition  
Community Report**

Findings from a 2002 Household Survey in the Greater  
Austin Metropolitan Area

*Mary Kopczynski and Mark Hager of the Urban Institute*

A collaborative project of the Association of Performing Arts  
Presenters, American Symphony Orchestra League, Dance/USA,  
OPERA America, and Theatre Communications Group, Supported  
by The Pew Charitable Trusts

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## *ABOUT THE PARC PROJECT*

The Performing Arts Research Coalition (PARC) brings together five major national service organizations (NSOs) in the performing arts—the American Symphony Orchestra League, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Dance/USA, OPERA America, and Theatre Communications Group—to improve and coordinate the ways performing arts organizations gather information on their sector. This unprecedented collaborative effort is coordinated by OPERA America and supported by a three-year, \$2.7 million grant to OPERA America from The Pew Charitable Trusts. Working with the Urban Institute, a leading nonprofit research organization in Washington, D.C., the project is collecting data in 10 pilot communities: Alaska, Cincinnati, Denver, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Austin, Boston, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Sarasota (FL), and Washington, D.C. Information is being gathered on administrative expenditures and revenues of performing arts organizations, the value of the performing arts as experienced by both attenders and nonattenders of arts events, and audience and subscriber satisfaction with performances and related activities. The findings from these various research activities are expected to help performing arts organizations across the country improve their management capacity, strengthen their cross-disciplinary collaboration, increase their responsiveness to their communities, and strengthen local and national advocacy efforts on behalf of American arts and culture. Research findings will be available each year of the initiative, and a summary analysis will be released in 2004. The national service organizations are regularly sharing findings with their members, policymakers, and the press, indicating how this information could be used to increase participation in and support for the arts, locally and nationally. For further information, please contact OPERA America at (202) 293-4466.

## *FOREWARD*

Austin is known as the capital of Texas, the home of the nation's largest university, the epicenter of the Southwestern technology boom, and the live music capital of the world. It is a city that prides itself on providing its citizens with an exceptional quality of life. With the average age of an Austinite being less than 35 years old, Austin is a city characterized by youth, education, innovation, and creativity.

The PARC research effort benchmarks a challenging time for Austin and our nation, as arts organizations attempt to respond to the roller coaster ride in our industry. Selected as one of the five cities studied in the second year of this research project, Austinites were surveyed almost exactly one year following the tragedies of 9/11, within a year of the crisis at Houston-based Enron and a record fall of the stock market, and several months prior to the start of the war in Iraq. With that as a backdrop, the PARC project offers valuable information and encouragement as we move forward.

Some encouraging findings include:

- Nearly three-quarters of Austinites attended a live performing arts event in the past year.
- The data show little relationship between age and attendance level, challenging the idea that people who attend the performing arts are older.
- Two out of three Austinites with young children at home still manage to attend live performances.
- Arts attenders are more engaged in Austin life than nonattenders. They are more likely to attend concerts, sporting events, museums, movies, live music venues, and more likely to vote and volunteer.

Some findings that provide us with challenges:

- While two of three Austinites believe the arts contribute to the education and development of children, the current economy and recent state and city budget issues prompted serious cut-backs in arts education in our schools.
- The data indicate that while most citizens believe that the arts improve the quality of life in Austin, fewer Austinites believe that the arts have a positive economic impact.
- With the greatest barrier to attendance being difficulty in making time to go out, arts organizations will continue to compete for audience members' most finite and precious commodity—their time.

*Austin is currently in the middle of a two-year redesign of the funding process for the arts. The PARC project provides a framework for further research and collaboration. Armed with knowledge, it is now time for these conversations on awareness and activism to begin.*

Cookie Ruiz, Executive Director, Ballet Austin

For the Austin PARC Group: Austin Lyric Opera, Austin Symphony Orchestra, Austin Theatre Alliance, Ballet Austin, Salvage Vanguard Theatre, University of Texas at Austin – Department of Theatre and Dance, UT PAC and Zachary Scott Theatre Center

## *PREFACE*

The Performing Arts Research Coalition—PARC—provides a historic opportunity for five national service organizations to work together in an unprecedented three-year project to measure the level of participation in and support for the arts in 10 communities across the country. A second set of findings from this project—the results of household surveys conducted in the metropolitan areas of Austin, Boston, Minneapolis–St. Paul, Sarasota, and Washington, D.C.—are now available. They enable us to draw a detailed picture of the value of the performing arts to individuals and their communities, and to offer a greater understanding of the perceived obstacles to greater attendance.

The findings are extremely encouraging. They reveal an arts audience far larger and more diverse than currently believed, comparable in size to audiences for sports. Support for the performing arts also appears to be broad, with far-reaching cultural, social, and educational implications. Attendance at arts events, for example, was perceived by attenders and nonattenders alike to be of significant value to communities, and especially important to the development and education of children. Several attendance barriers cited were primarily perceptual; for example, potential audiences did not fully appreciate the ease of attending performances and the accessibility of the arts experience.

Such information should be useful to a variety of stakeholders, including policymakers evaluating the role of government in supporting the arts; funders needing hard data on which to base and increase their financial support of the arts; media seeking a wider consumer base; and managers of arts organizations tackling the twin challenges of increasing and diversifying their audiences.

The size and breadth of the performing arts audience also suggest an appetite for expanded arts coverage in newspapers, radio, and television, and that arts coverage should perhaps be considered in broader terms than performance reviews. Grant makers may be interested in placing their arts support in the larger context of the range of civic benefits that derive from arts attendance.

Local initiatives that improve parking and reduce perceived and real obstacles to convenience and safety could have a significant impact on the size of the arts audience and frequency of attendance, particularly if such efforts are combined with communication strategies that introduce more people to the arts experience.

We invite you to review on the following pages these common threads and to reflect on the vibrant picture they paint of the high levels of participation in and appreciation for the performing arts in these five communities. In closing, PARC wishes to convey how indebted the coalition is to the generous support of The Pew Charitable Trusts and to the outstanding service of the Urban Institute in designing and administering this project.

Marc A. Scorca  
OPERA America President and CEO  
PARC Project Coordinator

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM

### *The Value of the Performing Arts in Five Communities II: A Comparison of 2002 Household Survey Data in the Greater Metropolitan Areas of Austin, Boston, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Sarasota, and Washington, D.C.*

Following are the key findings from the five household surveys conducted in the metropolitan areas of Austin, Boston, Minneapolis–St. Paul, Sarasota, and Washington, D.C. The findings cover participation rates, characteristics of attenders, perceived value of the performing arts to individuals and to communities, and barriers to greater attendance.

#### **PARTICIPATION RATES**

The research indicates that attendance at live professional performing arts events, at least on an occasional basis, is an activity enjoyed by a significant majority of adults in the five communities studied. The notion that the performing arts only appeal to a narrow segment of the general public does not appear to be accurate.

- **Attendance Levels:** Approximately three-quarters of respondents reported attending a live professional performing arts event in the past 12 months. These numbers range from 78 percent (in the Boston metro area) to 71 percent (in Sarasota-Manatee). Frequent attenders, defined as those who attended at least 12 performances over the past year, range from 17 percent of respondents (in the Washington, D.C. metro area) to 11 percent (in the Minneapolis–St. Paul metro area).

- **Arts vs. Sporting Events:** In all five communities, more people have attended a live performing arts event at least once in the past year than have attended a professional sporting event. However, arts attenders are active citizens who participate in a wide range of activities and volunteer for organizations in their community.

- **Performing Arts and Leisure Activities:** The research confirms that frequent performing arts attenders are also the most frequent attenders of other leisure activities, including sporting events, movies, festivals, museums, and popular concerts. Attenders were generally more involved with these activities than nonattenders of performing arts events. Rather than an “arts” versus “other activities” distinction, the findings suggest that people generally are either involved in community activities (be it attendance at performing arts activities or otherwise) or they are not.

- **Performing Arts and Volunteering:** In all five communities, arts attenders and frequent arts attenders are considerably more likely to volunteer than are nonattenders—not just for arts organizations, but generally in their communities. Although there is clear evidence to support this relationship, the data cannot be used to suggest that attendance at performing arts results in higher levels of volunteerism. Nonetheless, arts attenders

display characteristics that are conducive to greater civic engagement and stronger communities.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF ATTENDERS**

The arts audience is diverse. It includes people from all age groups and income levels, and is not limited, as is commonly believed, to older and affluent individuals.

- ***Age and Attendance:*** The most noteworthy finding from the surveys is the lack of a strong relationship between age and level of attendance.
- ***Household Income and Attendance:*** Nonattenders show a trend toward lower incomes and frequent attenders show a trend toward higher incomes. The finding is stronger in some communities than in others, and is weakest in Austin where respondents from the lowest income households are as likely to be frequent attenders as respondents from the highest income households.
- ***Education and Attendance:*** There is a strong relationship between education level and category of attendance. That is, as education level increases, so also does the percentage of respondents who are attenders or frequent attenders.

### **VALUE OF THE PERFORMING ARTS TO THE INDIVIDUAL**

The research indicates clearly that arts attenders place a very high value on the role of the arts in their lives in terms of enjoyment, their understanding of themselves and other cultures, creativity, and connection to their communities. This holds true across age groups, income levels, and the presence or absence of children at home.

- ***Offers Enjoyment:*** A strong majority of respondents have strong opinions about the level of enjoyment derived from live performing arts. More than 80 percent of respondents strongly agree or agree that the arts are enjoyable.
- ***Factors Related to Enjoyment:*** As level of education increases, so does the percentage of respondents who strongly agree with the statement that attending live performances is enjoyable. Enjoyment is unrelated to household income level, except in Sarasota where higher household incomes are associated with greater levels of arts enjoyment.
- ***Factors Unrelated to Enjoyment:*** Age and the presence of children at home are largely unrelated to the degree to which respondents find live performing arts to be enjoyable.
- ***Stimulates Critical Thinking:*** In all cities, more than three-quarters of respondents also strongly agree or agree that attending live performing arts is thought provoking.
- ***Factors Related to Critical Thinking:*** The strong belief that the performing arts are thought provoking does not differ substantially by household income level, age, or the presence of children in the home. However, consistent with expectations, this belief is held most commonly by frequent attenders and least commonly by nonattenders.

- ***Increases Cultural Understanding:*** Respondents in each of the five communities have similar views regarding the extent to which live performing arts help them better understand other cultures. Overall, between 70 percent (in the Minneapolis–St. Paul metro area) and 79 percent (in the Washington, D.C. metro area) of respondents strongly agree or agree with this statement. This strong level of agreement holds regardless of education, income, age, or whether or not there are children at home.

- ***Encourages Creativity:*** More than 60 percent of respondents in each community strongly agree or agree that attending live performing arts encourages them to be more creative. Education level and household income (except in greater Austin) play little role in whether one feels strongly that attending live performing arts encourages higher levels of creativity. However, younger respondents are more inclined to agree than are older respondents that attending live performing arts encourages them to be more creative.

### **VALUE OF PERFORMING ARTS TO COMMUNITIES**

Attendees place an even greater value on the arts in their communities than they do in their own lives. They believe strongly that the arts *improve the quality of life and are a source of community pride, promote understanding of other people and different ways of life, help preserve and share cultural heritage, provide opportunities to socialize, and contribute to lifelong learning in adults.* Above all, they believe that the arts *contribute to the education and development of children.* Especially noteworthy is the fact that many nonattendees also share similar views.

- ***Individual vs. Community Value:*** The percentage of respondents with positive opinions about the value of the arts to their community is even higher than that reported in the preceding section. This suggests that people place a higher value on the arts in their communities than they place on the value of the performing arts in their own lives. Combining the percentages of respondents who strongly agree and agree with each of these statements, more than three-quarters are in agreement, in every community, with every statement in the survey about community values.

- ***Value to Children:*** At least 9 out of 10 respondents in each of the five communities either strongly agree or agree that the performing arts contribute to the education and development of children. These opinions about the contributions made by the performing arts to the education and development of children are held consistently, regardless of education level, income, age, presence of children, or frequency of attendance.

- ***Increased Quality of Life:*** More than 8 out of 10 respondents strongly agree or agree that the performing arts improve the quality of life in their community.

- ***Preserves Cultural Heritage:*** At least 9 out of 10 respondents in each of the five communities strongly agree or agree with the statement that the arts help preserve and share cultural heritage. Among these respondents, the research finds no relationship between this belief and education level, income level, or the presence of children at home. Even nonattendees strongly agree or agree with this statement in relatively large numbers.



- ***Strengthens Local Economy:*** The percentage of respondents who strongly agree or agree that the performing arts contribute to the local economy is slightly lower than for other community values considered in this study. However, the percentage of respondents that strongly agree is considerably lower than for most of the other community values.

## **BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE**

There are, of course, barriers to arts attendance among nonattenders and barriers to more frequent attendance among those who already attend arts performances. What is particularly interesting is that, despite what some might suspect, the cost of tickets is not the leading barrier.

- ***Key Barriers:*** Of the 11 barriers suggested in the survey, only *prefer to spend leisure time in other ways* and *hard to make time to go out* are cited by a majority of respondents in all five communities as a big or moderate reason. *Cost of tickets* is cited by a majority in all communities except Sarasota, and *difficulty or cost of getting to or parking at events* is a big or moderate issue for a majority of respondents in Austin and Boston. *Cost of tickets* ranks second or third across the sites, never first.

- ***Prefer Spending Time Elsewhere:*** Between one-quarter and one-third of respondents in each community indicate that their *preference to spend leisure time in other ways* is a big reason why they do not attend more performing arts events. The preference to spend leisure time in other ways is the factor that most clearly differentiates attenders from nonattenders in all five communities.

- ***Difficulty Finding Time:*** Interestingly, attenders and frequent attenders are almost as likely as nonattenders to say that *hard to make time to go out* is a substantial barrier. The main variable that makes this a big factor for more people is the presence or absence of children in the home.

- ***Cost of Tickets:*** The cost of tickets is the only “big” barrier that attenders cite more often than nonattenders or frequent attenders. Especially noteworthy is the fact that *cost of tickets* as a barrier to performing arts attendance is substantially unrelated to education level, age, or whether there are children in the home. The research makes clear that attenders and frequent attenders share the same concerns about limited time and the cost of tickets with nonattenders. Yet the first two groups find attendance at the arts sufficiently rewarding to overcome these obstacles. Artists and arts organizations have the challenge of offering performances of sufficient quality, supported by strong customer service and community programs, to help potential attenders and frequent attenders overcome these barriers. Other obstacles cited less often by attenders and nonattenders also offer arts organizations an opportunity to build audiences by overcoming barriers of perception.

- ***Lack of Appeal:*** The statement that the *performing arts do not appeal* is cited as a big barrier by between 6 and 12 percent of respondents in the five communities. This barrier clearly is tied to education level and, as might be expected, clearly differentiates attenders

from nonattenders. Performing arts organizations might consider increasing community programs and adult education activities that could help build an interest in the arts among nonattenders.

- ***Feel Out of Place:*** A number of nonattenders said they *feel uncomfortable or out of place at performing arts events*, although fewer people cite this as a big barrier, and the relationship with education is much weaker in all communities. Performing arts organizations might wish to examine the way audiences are greeted and made to feel welcome upon entering the theater and before performances, during intermissions, and at the conclusion of the event. An additional barrier is the *difficulty or cost of getting to or parking at events*, which varies in importance by community. This particular obstacle could be addressed by arts organizations if they are in a position to make special parking arrangements for their audiences. Similarly, the belief that *performances are in unsafe or unfamiliar locations* could be mitigated by improved lighting, more visible security, and general awareness of the needs of the audience beyond the final applause.

## **AUSTIN HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FINDINGS**

### **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance is the most common measure of how much people value the performing arts. This section focuses on attendance, but also considers related behaviors such as listening to recorded media, watching performances on public television, and participating personally in performing arts activities. To gauge respondents' attendance levels, we asked them about their attendance at a variety of live, professional performing arts events in the past year. Respondents were instructed to exclude attendance at elementary, middle, or high school productions. For example, we asked people how many times they had attended a live professional dance performance such as ballet, modern/contemporary or a culturally specific dance performance in the past 12 months. We asked similar questions about attendance at opera, theatre, and symphony performances.

We also included a catchall "other discipline" category. The examples given to respondents for this category were chamber music, jazz, folk or traditional arts, and festivals. This category is meant to include the full range of performing arts activities that respondents could not group under dance, opera, theatre, or symphony.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

**Attendance Levels Vary:** About three in four Austinites went to a live, professional performing arts presentation last year. Of those, one in five were frequent attenders, meaning they attended 12 or more performances.

**Education Matters:** People with higher levels of education are more likely to attend performing arts events.

**Income and Age Are Unrelated to Attendance:** In most communities, higher incomes are associated with greater attendance at performing arts events. In Austin this relationship does not hold. Likewise, attendance levels do not vary substantially by age category.

**Participation Takes Several Forms:** Frequent attenders are more likely to enjoy recorded presentations and to be personally involved in the performing arts by playing music, singing, or otherwise performing their own art. However, a substantial number of nonattenders also participate in these ways.

**Frequent Attenders Do More Than Just Attend Live Arts Events:** Frequent performing arts attenders are also more frequent attenders of such activities as the movies, sporting events, and pop/rock concerts. This suggests that attenders are better characterized as "generally involved" rather than "arts lovers."

### **VALUE TO THE INDIVIDUAL**

This section reports survey answers to a series of questions designed to capture information about the respondents' *perceptions* of the value of the performing arts. These personal attitudes provide some clues about what motivates people to attend performing

arts activities, including how these motivations might differ depending on education, income, age, and frequency of attendance at performing arts events.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Positive Attitudes Toward the Arts Predominate:** The majority of Austinites agree with positive statements in the survey about the role that the performing arts play in their lives. The statement that generated the most agreement is that the performing arts are *personally enjoyable* (83 percent). Somewhat fewer (57 percent) agree that the performing arts make them *feel more connected to the community*.

**Attitudes Are Strong Regardless of Demographics:** As education level increases, respondents were more likely to agree that the performing arts are *enjoyable*. However, on the whole, education, income, age, presence of children at home, and voting behavior are largely unrelated to personal attitudes about the role of performing arts in respondents' lives.

**Attendance Is Linked to Positive Attitudes:** Overall, as attendance increases, so do positive attitudes toward the personal value of performing arts. Frequent attenders of the arts are most likely to strongly agree with all but one of the personal attitudes they were asked to consider.

## VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

This section focuses on public perceptions of the value of the performing arts to the greater Austin community. It considers relationships between perceptions about the value of performing arts to the community and various respondent characteristics. We also briefly look at the two activities of volunteering for community organizations and making financial contributions to arts organizations to see if these behaviors vary by frequency of arts attendance.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Value to the Community Is More Important than Value to the Individual:** Austinites register noticeably more positive opinions about the value of the performing arts to their community than they do about the contribution of the arts to their own lives.

**People Believe Arts Matter for Children:** About two out of three Austinites strongly agree that performing arts *contribute to the education and development of children*. This very high agreement is consistent regardless of education, age, income, presence of children in the household, or voting behavior.

**Community Engagement Patterns Vary:** Volunteer patterns differ among nonattenders and frequent attenders. Only about half of nonattenders volunteered at least once during the past year, compared with more than three quarters of attenders or frequent attenders.

**Giving Levels Are Low to Moderate:** Overall, only 23 percent of Austinites made a financial contribution to a performing arts organization in 2001. However, more than half of frequent attenders (64 percent) made a financial contribution.

## **BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE**

This section focuses on factors that keep people from attending live performing arts events more frequently. For nonattenders, the questions can be taken to mean “Why don’t you attend?” For attenders, the questions can be taken to mean “What keeps you from attending even more?”

We consider a range of practical, personal, and perceptual obstacles to attendance. Some of these vary by respondent characteristics, such as education and income, and some help us understand the differences among nonattenders, attenders, and frequent attenders.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

**Time, Preference, and Cost Are Key Obstacles:** The biggest barriers to more frequent attendance at performing arts events, cited by about one in three respondents as a “big problem,” are *difficulty making time to go out*, preference to *spend leisure time in other ways*, and *cost of tickets*.

**Demographic Characteristics Matter:** People with lower levels of education are more likely to say that the *performing arts do not appeal* to them. People from lower-income households are more likely to say that *cost of tickets* is the major barrier to attendance. Younger people are more likely to cite the problem of *not enough information about performances and times*.

**Nonattenders Prefer Doing Other Things:** Nonattenders are more likely than attenders to say that they *prefer to spend leisure time in other ways* or that the *performing arts do not appeal* to them. They also report that they have *no one to attend with*, that they *feel uncomfortable or out of place at performing arts events*, that they have concerns about the *difficulty or cost of getting to or parking at events*, and that *performances are in unsafe or unfamiliar locations*.

The full report is available online at [www.operaamerica.org/parc](http://www.operaamerica.org/parc). The final report, which will summarize results from all ten cities, will be released in June 2004 at the First National Performing Arts Convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania ([www.performingartsconvention.org](http://www.performingartsconvention.org)).

# PERFORMING ARTS RESEARCH COALITION

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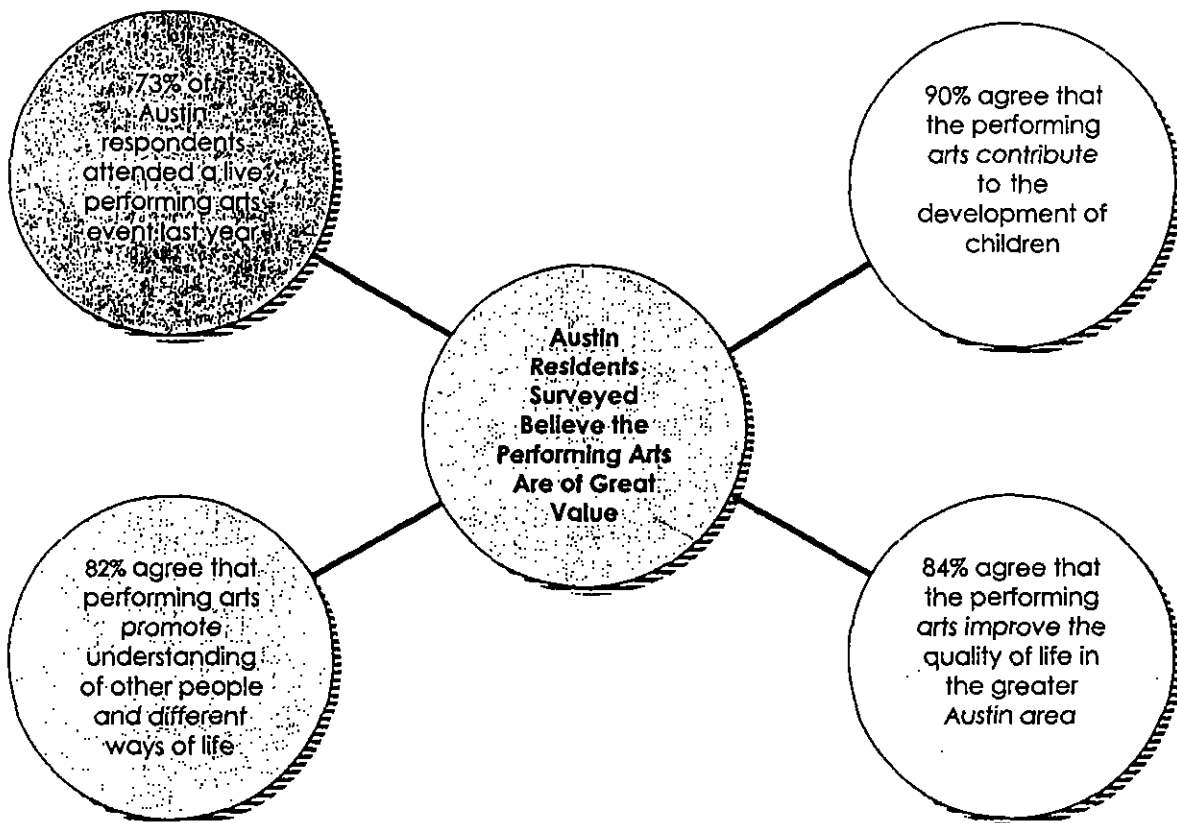
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Dance/USA • OPERA America • Theatre Communications Group

The PARC project was designed and implemented in collaboration with The Urban Institute and was made possible through the generosity of The Pew Charitable Trusts. Survey results documented in the *Austin Community Report 2002*, are based on the views of over 800 respondents and generally reflect the diverse education levels, household incomes, ages, and household compositions represented in the greater metropolitan Austin area. They represent both arts attenders and non-attenders. Copies of the report are available online at [www.operaamerica.org/parc](http://www.operaamerica.org/parc) or (your web site here) or to request a copy, please contact (your info here).

## Highlights from the *Austin Community Report 2002*.

(Source: Urban Institute Analysis of PARC Austin data, 2002.)

12/03



# **PERFORMING ARTS RESEARCH COALITION**

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Association of Performing Arts Presenters • American Symphony Orchestra League  
Dance/USA • OPERA America • Theatre Communications Group

## ***The Value of the Performing Arts in Five Communities 2: A Comparison of 2002 Household Survey Data in the Greater Metropolitan Areas of Austin, Boston, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Sarasota, and Washington, D.C.***

A PARC research project conducted in collaboration with  
The Urban Institute and made possible through the generosity of  
The Pew Charitable Trusts.

### **10 Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **1. What is PARC?**

PARC, the Performing Arts Research Coalition, provides an historic opportunity for five national service organizations—the American Symphony Orchestra League, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Dance/USA, OPERA America, and Theatre Communications Group—to work together in an unprecedented three-year project to strengthen the research capacity of the performing arts and to measure the level of participation in and support for the arts in 10 communities across the country: the state of Alaska (Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau), and Cincinnati, Denver, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Austin, Boston, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Sarasota, and Washington, D.C.

#### **2. What is unique about this particular research project?**

This project represents the first substantive collaboration among the five major national arts service organizations. They have collaborated in the past around arts advocacy, and they have shared information on an informal basis, yet they have never before joined together to define and implement a project that is so large in scope. In addition, the data collected in this study of diverse communities measure not only attendance, but the **value** placed on the performing arts by both attenders **and** nonattenders alike.

#### **3. What can you tell me about the study, *The Value of the Performing Arts in Five Communities 2: A Comparison of 2002 Household Survey Data in the Greater Metropolitan Areas of Austin, Boston, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Sarasota, and Washington, D.C.*?**

The PARC project was designed and implemented in collaboration with The Urban Institute and was made possible through the generosity of The Pew Charitable Trusts. Survey results documented in the PARC project's report, *The Value of the Performing Arts in Five Communities 2: A Comparison of 2002 Household Survey Data in the Greater Metropolitan Areas of Austin, Boston, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Sarasota, and Washington, D.C.*, are based on the views of 800 respondents from each of the five geographic areas and generally reflect the diverse education levels, household incomes, ages, and household compositions represented in each of the five communities. They represent both arts attenders and nonattenders. In March 2003, survey results from the first five communities participating in this study were released in the report, *The Value of the Performing Arts in Five Communities: A Comparison of 2002 Household Survey Data in Alaska, Cincinnati, Denver, Pittsburgh, and Seattle*. These reports are

available online at [www.operaamerica.org/parc](http://www.operaamerica.org/parc). The final report, which will summarize results from all 10 communities, will be released in June 2004 at the First National Performing Arts Convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania ([www.performingartsconvention.org](http://www.performingartsconvention.org)).

The survey is organized around four key topics: Attendance at Performing Arts, Perceived Value of the Performing Arts to Individuals, Perceived Value of the Performing Arts to the Community, and Barriers to Participation.

#### 4. What are some of the highlights from the survey findings?

The findings reveal an arts audience that is large and diverse. Support for the performing arts also appears to be broad, with far-reaching cultural, social, and educational implications. Attendance at arts events, for example, was perceived by attenders and nonattenders alike to be of significant value to communities, and especially important to the development and education of children.

- **Extent of appeal:** The performing arts appeal to a wide segment of the public. Nearly 3 in 4 people surveyed reported attending a live professional performing arts event in the past 12 months. (Source: Urban Institute Analysis of PARC Household Data, 2002. Table 2.1)
- **Attendance levels:** In all five communities, more people have attended a live professional performing arts event at least once in the past year than have attended a professional sporting event in the same time period. (Source: Urban Institute Analysis of PARC Household Data, 2002. Table 2.8)
- **Age and attendance:** One of the most noteworthy findings is the lack of a strong relationship between age and levels of attendance. While some have suggested that arts audiences are dominated by older attenders, the research indicates a weak relationship between age and attendance level. (Source: Urban Institute Analysis of PARC Household Data, 2002. Table 2.5)
- **Value to the individual:** The research indicates clearly that arts attenders place a very high value on the role of the arts in their lives in terms of enjoyment, their understanding of themselves and other cultures, creativity, and connection to their communities. This holds true across age groups, income levels, and the presence of children at home. For example, in all cities, at least 7 in 10 respondents strongly agree or agree that attending live performing arts helps them to understand other cultures better. (Source: Urban Institute Analysis of PARC Household Data, 2002. Table 3.1)
- **Value to the community:** Arts attenders place an even greater value on the arts in their communities than they do in their own lives. They believe strongly that the arts improve the quality of life and are a source of community pride, promote understanding of other people and different ways of life, and help preserve and share cultural heritage. Above all, they believe that the arts contribute to the education of children. Especially noteworthy is the fact that a majority of nonattenders share similar views and that this view is held regardless of education, income, age, presence of children in the home, or frequency of attendance. For example, more than 9 out of 10 respondents in each of the five communities either strongly agree or agree that the performing arts contribute to the education and development of children. (Source: Urban Institute Analysis of PARC Household Data, 2002. Table 4.1)
- **Value to children:** The contribution of the performing arts to the education and development of children is the most highly regarded value among respondents in this study. (Source: Urban Institute Analysis of PARC Household Data, 2002. Table 4.1)



**5. What external factors have contributed to the need for a greater research capacity in the arts sector?**

The tremendous growth of the nonprofit performing arts sector has created a need for new and improved, field-specific management tools. Improving research within disciplines and across disciplines has been identified as an area that will help managers to make more informed decisions. The ability to advance arguments in support of the arts has provided powerful motivation to arts leaders and funders to gather data that would inform their advocacy efforts in the future. Finally, and especially in times of diminishing funding for the arts, the sector needs to be better prepared to make strong arguments for support from public and private funders.

**6. How will managers of local arts organizations be able to use the research generated by this project?**

Information learned about the benefits and barriers to attendance will be very helpful to all performing arts organizations in communicating with current and potential audiences. Further, the cross-disciplinary nature of this project will allow managers to learn from the successes and challenges of their colleagues in a new way and to present the performing arts as a sector in their communities. Finally, the coordinated annual administrative surveys conducted by the national service organizations will permit local arts organizations to compare financial and operational information across disciplines. Enhanced benchmarking will enable managers to make more informed decisions about income and expenses.

**7. Will specific policy recommendations be made based on the data collection?**

The findings of the study will inform policy recommendations concerning public funding for the arts and arts education, and tax-related issues of concern to nonprofit arts organizations and arts donors.

**8. What types of data will be the most useful in advocacy efforts?**

The study has generated new information on attitudes about the value of the performing arts to individuals, to families, and to the communities in which they live. This information will be of particular value in advocacy efforts. Especially important are the attitudes of nonattenders or infrequent attenders. The study demonstrates that the arts are appreciated by attenders and nonattenders alike as being essential to the health of a community. An indication of positive impact on audiences, and recognition of this value by a wide group of citizens, will strengthen arguments for continued and increased support in both the public and private sectors.

**9. Will the data-collection system survive after the project ends?**

The primary objective of the current project is the creation of a strengthened research capacity in the performing arts. The collaborative process currently being developed is expected to remain in place after the project ends, and the standardized survey models and methodology will exist as permanent resources in the field. The practical benefits of this program should encourage and aid performing arts organizations in adopting more rigorous research as a core activity.

**10. How can I obtain a copy of the report?**

The report is available online at [www.operaamerica.org/parc](http://www.operaamerica.org/parc), or to request a hard copy, please contact OPERA America at 202-293-4466. A nominal fee will be charged to cover shipping and copying costs.

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For more information on please visit the Performing Arts Resource Coalition web site.  
<http://www.operaamerica.org/parc>