

Taking up Residence with Eighth Blackbird

TEACHER NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Articulate the typical requirements of an artistic residency
- Explain the role of artistic residency in the portfolio of a music organization.
- Compare the advantages and disadvantages of artistic residencies.
- Propose an ideal residency for a music enterprise, in light of its needs as an organization.

Topics For Discussion

• Artistic Residency

- ♦ What kinds of activities can be expected in an artistic residency and how have Eighth Blackbird and their patrons reached beyond these typical activities? Which seem most effective?
- ♦ According to scholar John Pippen, “ensembles in residence are often limited in their ultimate impact, as they are not fully fledged members of the institution in question.” To what extent did Eighth Blackbird become interwoven into the cultures in which they were resident artists? What kinds of individuals secured its success at the two institutions?
- ♦ As stated in the case, “partnerships with institutions work best when the entities hold similar visions for the affiliation.” Visions for the institutional residencies can sometimes be unstated. What were the likely underlying visions for each institution in the case and to what extent did the goals of the sponsor converge with those of Eighth Blackbird?
- ♦ How can artistic residencies be justified when the most profitable engagements for Eighth Blackbird have been single tour concerts?
- ♦ What factors should Peter McDowell consider in developing a proposal for a new residency? What is ideal for Eighth Blackbird, at least given its history with two very different institutional residencies?

• Academic Residency

- ♦ Conductor Leopold Stokowski said that schools “will become the most important musical institutions of our country, perhaps of the world.” To what extent is this true and how can musical artists ally more closely with academic institutions?
- ♦ In an academic residency, how much teaching should be done relative to performance and preparing new works? What forces are at play in determining the allocation of the resident artists’ time while “in residence”?

- ♦ What creative ideas can be brought to an academic residency that will benefit both the musical arts organization and the sponsoring institution?
- ♦ How is success of an artist residency measured and judged in an academic setting?

- **Cultural Institution**

- ♦ What is the range of cultural institutions that can reasonably support an artistic residency?
- ♦ While formal education usually does not take place at a cultural institution, education may still be a priority in an artistic residency. What kinds of teaching may occur at these institutions? What kinds of resources can be brought by a musical organization to educate its public?
- ♦ How is the success of an artist residency measured and judged in a non-academic setting?

- **Touring versus Home Base**

- ♦ The case narrative highlighted time-consuming artistic residencies in Richmond and Chicago, the latter being the hometown of Eighth Blackbird members. The Richmond residency provided steady income, but took the ensemble members away from their homes and families. As the musicians mature, they are less mobile and less amenable to staking out a life on the road to make music. Board members have encouraged Eighth Blackbird to develop an audience in Chicago, yet their fan base is scattered around the world. In the digital age, what are the benefits of growing an audience in a single city? How does a principally touring organization transition to a more central location, while maintaining its financial footing?

- **Governance**

- ♦ Eighth Blackbird members managed their own operation from 1996 to 2004. They later instituted a board of directors and a paid staff; however, all players still remain on the board. What conflicts arise when employees (here, artists) serve on the board of directors? How do organizational dynamics change in a musical organization that has the capacity for staff? What administrative tasks might still be handled by group members? What kinds of initiatives and tasks can be handed to board and staff?