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Taking up Residence with Eighth Blackbird



INSTITUTE FOR
MUSIC LEADERSHIP



EASTMAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

Taking up Residence with Eighth Blackbird

For at least a few decades, the artistic residency has benefited small musical arts organizations. An artist-in-residence is an individual or group of artists who are given the space by an institution or a patron to develop and release creative work, while also satisfying the needs of the sponsor. Apart from this basic idea, an artistic residency may take a variety of forms. It could last for a specified period or could be held indefinitely. Despite the name, a residency does not always involve a physical relocation: a short visit may be claimed as a residency. This case study profiles a pair of contrasting artist residency agreements in the portfolio of a single musical arts organization—the contemporary chamber music sextet Eighth Blackbird. You will examine the nature and outcomes of the residencies, assess the merits of the organization's arrangements with their hosts, and consider new residency ideas for Eighth Blackbird, given the completion of one of them at the close of the case.

EIGHTH BLACKBIRD

This case study was prepared by Michael Alan Anderson.

The Value of a Residency

Chamber music ensembles and small choirs have typically landed artistic residencies in academic, cultural, or ecclesiastical institutions, which have allowed these music organizations some financial stability and engagement with constituents, as they develop artistic projects. Partnerships with institutions work best when the entities hold similar visions in their affiliation. Artistic and institutional goals that align are more likely to generate close and enduring relationships between the organizations. If the partners' goals are not in harmony, the music organization may have to adapt its product or channel an untapped creative side to fulfill a patron's desires for the residency. Concerts, demonstrations, and teaching activities are key areas in which the sponsoring institution might have special requests that define the scope of a residency, provided the ensemble has the capacity to execute the needs of the host. The music organization may, in turn, have requests and needs that stretch the usual practices of the underwriting institution.

An artistic residency often emerges from an existing relationship between the musicians and the sponsor. The more that the relationship can be nurtured during the residency, the more likely it is to continue or expand the range of activities. Institutional residencies sometimes can be political in nature, so forming positive alliances with key decision-makers and supporters at the institution can help ensure the longevity and utility of a residency. Other relationships may develop in the course of a residency, as an ensemble becomes part of the fabric of the sponsor's world. Arts organizations may interact profitably with students in an academic setting, but resident artists may also identify future patrons and presenters. An artistic residency is an achievement that is usually absorbed into a group's standard "bio"; in some cases, the artist-host association may define an arts organization. The ensemble Eighth Blackbird has deftly produced short-term and

ongoing residency agreements with a number of institutions in the United States, two of which reveal the surprising breadth of activities that a musical arts organization can accept in a residency to achieve the goals of both sponsor and artist.

The Birds Nesting

Founded in 1996 at Oberlin College, the GRAMMY-award-winning sextet Eighth Blackbird has set a high standard for the practice of "contemporary classical music." The group takes its name from the eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens's 1917 poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." Eighth Blackbird coaxes a vivid yet indescribable sound world from traditional instruments—piano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and percussion. And it draws on an array of world musics to separate itself from historical western composition. The ensemble has commissioned hundreds of new works from a long list of ground-breaking modern composers including Steve Reich, Jennifer Higdon, Steve Mackey, and Amy Beth Kirsten. Eighth Blackbird's use of staging and multimedia in performance has defined its approach to twenty-first-century music-making, which has attracted audiences both learned and unschooled in contemporary art music.

The organizational structure of Eighth Blackbird is not surprising for a group of its size and its artistic concentration, but its \$1.2 million annual budget has caused management and governance of the group to be transformed since its inception. A Chicago-based operation since 2000, the enterprise offers full-time employment to its six musicians and has a small staff, including a managing director. All musicians in Eighth Blackbird function as artistic directors, a democratic ideal for shaping music in a close-knit group, which also has the potential to create gridlock in rehearsal or for larger artistic decisions. Self-administered for the first eight years of its existence, the players now have a board of directors that meets four times per year. All members of the sextet sit on the board, but

a decision in 2006 to place seven non-members on the board has guaranteed that the artists can always be overruled in major decisions. The culture of entrepreneurship that once defined Eighth Blackbird has shifted toward delegation of major administrative tasks (e.g., finances, grant writing, development, logistics) to staff.

Eighth Blackbird tours about 30 weeks per year under the management of David Lieberman Artists' Representatives for domestic tours. There is much money to be made on the road. Single concerts on tour can bring in between \$16,000 and \$20,000 for the organization. Attempts to self-produce concerts in its home city of Chicago have been less financially successful for Eighth Blackbird. More than half of the income for the organization, however, comes through institutional support in the form of long-term residencies and also grants (**Appendix 1**).

From its inception, the group has relied on academic residencies as a way to sustain their operation as an organization. The ensemble has offered

a menu of possibilities as artists-in-residence to institutions of higher learning. By seeking artist resident agreements at academic institutions in particular, Eighth Blackbird aims to inspire the next generation of artists and ensure that the category of contemporary

art music remains accessible and viable for today's students. A master class or question-and-answer period tacked on to a performance event would constitute the smallest kind of residency arrangement with a university, not extending more than a day or two. Further down the spectrum would be an institution that contracts with Eighth Blackbird for a few visits (each a few days or a week) during the year. These residency opportunities allow the

group to extend their reach into the institution, with clearer goals for performing, coaching, reading sessions, and collaborating in performance. Finally, long-term residencies often require frequent trips to an institution (often for extended time) or could take place where the organization is headquartered. There may be no scheduled end date in certain residencies.

Eighth Blackbird has been involved with a number of high-profile academic institutions including the University of Chicago, University of Michigan, Oberlin College, Southern Methodist University, and Rice University. The group was recently awarded a three-year residency at the Curtis Institute of Music, funded by a \$450,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The case at hand, however, centers on a long-term residency agreement with the University of Richmond and a one-year resident artist opportunity at a non-academic institution, Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art. An investigation into the complexion of these residency arrangements—the former is indefinite, the latter for one year—demonstrates the forces at play between host institutions and the ensemble, which has produced surprising outcomes.

Reliable Richmond

The University of Richmond is not an institution that springs to mind when one thinks of the hotbeds of contemporary art music in the United States. But the small liberal arts college has made a mark with this kind of music, by virtue of its enthusiastic embrace of Eighth Blackbird in a partnership approaching twenty years in length. The group first performed at the university in 1998 and was invited back twice over the next two years. In 2004, the ensemble received the invitation to become a part of the University of Richmond community, replacing the Shanghai Quartet. The department of music did not officially enlist Eighth Blackbird as resident artists, but rather as individual visiting instructors in the department of music, who together (as Eighth

"A one-time master class can feel like a drive-by lesson."

Eighth Blackbird violinist, Yvonne Lam, contrasting artistic residencies with single master classes

Blackbird) would engage in residency-type activities. The agreement did not include housing and travel for the group's members, but it did offer health insurance and retirement benefits, virtually unheard of among resident artist arrangements.

The department of music at the University of Richmond offers no music performance degrees, only a broad Bachelor of Arts degree with concentrations (a few elective classes) in subjects like music theory, music history, or performance. Unlike a conservatory environment, students who are interested in music are usually pursuing other subjects as well. Befitting its liberal arts tradition, the University of Richmond administration tasked the Shanghai Quartet with enlarging the string program and engaging in interdisciplinary ventures at the university. The string program continued to decline, however, which allowed Eighth Blackbird members to step in to reverse the trend, broadening the scope of instruction to include winds and percussion, in addition to strings. The group's willingness to collaborate with theater and dance programs at the university strengthened their appeal.

The length of time devoted to this residency was substantial: Eighth Blackbird agreed to six resident weeks in the academic year, about three weeks per semester. For five weeks of the residency, the group completes 16 "engagements" per week. Examples of engagements include private lessons, ensemble and sectional coaching, appearances with the orchestra, and classroom visits. The third week of the residency is devoted to preparations and performances in a new music festival begun by Richmond faculty composer Ben Broening. The niche festival—called the Third Practice Electroacoustic Music Festival—draws an international contingent of contemporary composers of electroacoustic music, and is dominated by the contributions of Eighth Blackbird. The dean's office of the School of Arts and Sciences supports the group in its basic resident artist

activities and has even made generous gifts beyond this, such as the purchase of equipment for percussionist Matthew Duvall and a spare cello for cellist Nicholas Photinos to have on campus.

For a small private school (just over 4,000 students in 2015), the University of Richmond boasts a significant endowment, topping \$2 billion, which has allowed for significant investment in academic programs including the arts. The Modlin Center for the Arts, opened in 1996, became a hub for Eighth Blackbird's activities. The impressive 165,000-square-foot facility houses performance stages, classrooms, galleries, and studios and brings theater, dance, and music into interdisciplinary dialogue. The arts center sponsors two performances by Eighth Blackbird per year; these programs, often commissions, usually become the substance of the group's tour performances. Kathy Panoff, executive director of the Modlin Center for the Arts from 1996 to 2009, recommended Eighth Blackbird as a resident artist to replace the Shanghai Quartet. She recognized the quality of the ensemble and had space to offer them to perfect their work. Most importantly, she believed strongly in Eighth Blackbird's artistic product and wanted to ensure a stream of commissions in their artistic arsenal. With access to another set of funds offered through the dean's office, Panoff underwrote several commissioned works for Eighth Blackbird and also helped defray travel expenses as needed for the group.

The importance of the University of Richmond residency in the Eighth Blackbird portfolio cannot be overstated. Without this long-term and multifaceted partnership, it is unlikely the group would have achieved its lofty position in the world of contemporary art music. Board member Sarah Mirkin emphasized the centrality of this residency: "The organization grew up around it." Although the annual commitment from Richmond amounted to six weeks

per year, it brought a significant and steady income to members of the ensemble. Half of the salary that Eighth Blackbird players earn comes from the six

weeks spent each year at the University of Richmond. With added health benefits, this arrangement became a reliable source of stability for a group that needed it in order to build its organization in other places. The guaranteed income for the musicians, which was not officially recorded on the

books of the Eighth Blackbird organization, allowed them to hire a staff to expand the music enterprise. With a staff in place, the sextet could hand off some of the administration of the group and focus on the art they wanted to produce.

As mentioned, the Modlin Center's Kathy Panoff proved to be one of the group's most powerful champions during their time in Richmond. She did not act merely as a liaison for the ensemble and sponsor of semiannual concerts at the performing arts center. Rather, she mentored the group, meeting with the musicians at least one time during each of the residency periods to discuss broader organizational and career issues. Behind the scenes, Panoff steadily helped Eighth Blackbird transition from a self-administered operation to a robust touring organization. She assisted with the group's search for artist management and taught them the demands that the business entailed. Crucially, she helped give Eighth Blackbird the laboratory environment it needed to develop its artistic identity, musical voice, and teaching skills at Richmond, while fulfilling its obligation to the students and the department of music. She turned skeptical audiences in the Richmond community into fans of a group that seems to defy categorization with its music-making. But above all, Panoff believed that

Eighth Blackbird must lead by example, and in the world of contemporary art music, that meant commissioning new works. The Modlin Center invested aggressively in nearly every new piece that Eighth Blackbird commissioned while Panoff was at Richmond.

Amid a steady flow of commissions that came from faculty requests at the music department, Panoff allocated yet more funding for the ensemble to commission works from some of the towering figures in new music. She was behind the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Double Sextet* by Steve Reich, written for and premiered by Eighth Blackbird at the Modlin Center in 2008. For her unusually strong support of the ensemble and for her belief in the power of their music, Panoff was invited to join Eighth Blackbird's board of directors in 2008. Although she accepted a position as director and associate dean of The University of Texas at Austin Performing Arts Center in 2009, her relationship with the group continues. Since her departure from Richmond, Panoff has invited Eighth Blackbird to perform a handful of times and has organized short-term residencies for the ensemble in Austin.

Students from the University of Richmond have greatly benefited from the Eighth Blackbird residency. Most Richmond students are not destined for professional careers in music, but many who opened themselves up to the ensemble's expertise have grown exponentially as musicians. Although Eighth Blackbird cannot always push the students as far as they would push conservatory students, there is a space for musical development that is satisfying to witness. Students who seem to profit the most from the artist residency are those with concentrations in composition. Their projects can be recorded by the outstanding musicians of the sextet. Small wonder that more than a few Richmond student-composers have been accepted into graduate school in music composition

"Eighth Blackbird would not be what it is today were it not for the Richmond residency."

**Kathleen Panoff,
Executive Director
of the Modlin Center
for the Arts**

"I am continually amazed that students from a school of our size have the opportunity to engage six times per year with an ensemble of this caliber. We are immensely lucky. But it is still a challenge to use their time well; that takes a fair amount of effort. When they're here, we have a lot for them to do."

Jeffrey Riehl, chair of the Department of Music, University of Richmond

because of their outstanding dossiers. Interdepartmental collaborations prompted by Eighth Blackbird's presence have united students in different ways. In 2016, Chicago-based composer and jazz bassist Matt Ulery was commissioned to write a large work that brought together—for the first time at the University of Richmond—students in jazz, string and wind players, and choir members to perform. The music department has learned from experience that preparation of a large work over the residency (like Ulery's) is a better use of Eighth Blackbird's time than aiming for smaller projects across the academic year.

Without question, the artist residency at the University of Richmond has been a boon for Eighth Blackbird. Over a decade, the ensemble has become integrated into the framework of campus musical life. Rudimentary coaching and teaching "engagements" over the course of the year are just the beginning of Eighth Blackbird's participation in the activities at the university. With annual support for the commission of new works, plus a generous, steady salary and visiting faculty status ensured by the dean's office, the group has a ready-made foundation on which to make more of its multi-dimensional musical art. The central position in the annual Third Practice festival and the openness of Eighth Blackbird to cross-disciplinary boundaries furthered the group's infusion into university culture. When the career mentorship

is included, one would be hard-pressed to improve on this model. From the perspective of the sextet, about all that could be criticized is the time spent on the road for a week at a time. A home-based artistic residency at the University of Chicago has proven fruitful for the ensemble over the years, but a larger splash in Eighth Blackbird's home city could increase donations from Chicago patrons and nurture a home town audience it has struggled to create.

Music for a Museum

Recognizing the success of the Richmond residency, Sarah Mirkin saw room for the ensemble to build on this stable arrangement. Spellbound by the group's artistry, she wanted to see it more often in Chicago—her home city and theirs. But Eighth Blackbird had established itself as a touring ensemble—"six musicians and a van," Mirkin recalled. The Kronos Quartet, a forerunner in some ways of Eighth Blackbird, was well known as a San Francisco operation, boasting a substantial following in that city. It was well within reach for Eighth Blackbird to claim Chicago as a geographic base for its work. Together with board president Peter Nicholson, Mirkin pushed Eighth Blackbird strongly for a more robust presence in Chicago. Her rationale was threefold: (1) with a home base, the sextet could raise money in the form of private support, difficult to do with one-off concerts and residencies on the road; (2) Chicago would benefit from the presence of an outstanding contemporary art music ensemble; and (3) Chicago could be a site to develop a consistent audience, one Eighth Blackbird could educate over time.

Exploring existing relationships was the key to a special artistic residency developed with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (MCA). Attendance was consistently strong in the galleries of the MCA, and its performing arts series, led by Peter Taub (Director of Performance Programs), was a

particularly bright spot on the museum's ledger, due to its wide variety of adventurous and acclaimed programs, but it often struggled with building a sustained audience. The performance seasons have always included an emphasis on contemporary musical events, some of which drew on themes from exhibitions in the galleries. Among the annual slate of performers was Eighth Blackbird, which was contracted for at least one program in the museum's theater each year since 2011. In the spring of 2012 for example, the group presented contrasting concerts on minimalist and post-minimalist art to mirror an exhibition on 1950s and 60s minimalism.

Separate from the performance programs, the MCA began hosting year-long creative residencies in 2011, which varied based on the work of the artist who was chosen. Given the positive reception of the performing arts series and the desire for an artist based in Chicago, Taub asked Eighth Blackbird if they could develop a year-long musical residency in the galleries at the MCA. In Taub's estimation, it was a great opportunity to have musicians in the galleries sharing their creative process with museum visitors.

Taub's proposal for an Eighth Blackbird residency in 2014-15 at MCA was novel: offer live music from the ensemble in a newly designed, free-standing structure in the lobby of the museum. The players and staff of Eighth Blackbird were thrilled about the idea, but more time was needed for planning. Taub suggested the execution be delayed for a year. Instead of a new structure for the lobby, Taub recommended that the ensemble take up its residency for the 2015-16 season (September 2015 through June 2016) in two adjacent galleries that opened up on the museum's third floor. Formal performances at the MCA's Edlis Neeson Theater were retained from previous years; the museum would now support two performance projects for the 2015-16 season. New to their responsibilities were public programs held intermittently

throughout the year. Some of those were held on Tuesday evenings which were free for Illinois residents, and this brought in a wide cross-section of city residents. Short Saturday performances were organized around the museum's "Family Day."

The extra time spent planning the residency enhanced the potential of the Eighth Blackbird "exhibit," as more departments at MCA converged to support this new artistic residency at the museum (**Appendix 2**). Taub and Eighth Blackbird conceived of the gallery space as a rehearsal room, the hub of their activity—another nest, as it were. Famous for its edict of rehearsing one measure of music per hour of rehearsal time, the group would put their careful preparations on display for visitors and open their rehearsals for public interactions. When the musicians were rehearsing, visitors could catch a glimpse of the sextet's creative process in real time and ask the musicians questions of all sorts. Eighth Blackbird appeared in the galleries on an average of a few days per month. Those appearances took place any time from Tuesday through Saturday (the museum is closed on Mondays), for at least three hours at a time, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

When the group travels on tour, its presence is still felt. Video projection paints the walls of the gallery, providing patrons with an intimate

"Some patrons sit down and observe Eighth Blackbird like a kind of artwork. Most are shy. Others ask questions; they'll watch for an hour or sometimes three hours! Occasionally, a group of students passes by with a tour guide. Sometimes there are so many people near the gallery that we needed a microphone so that everyone could listen. Eighth Blackbird is patient with all questions, ready for anything—from kids to seasoned art enthusiasts."

Peter Taub, Director of Performance Programs, Museum of Contemporary Art

look into a performance of *learn to fly* by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang. This video was shot on the MCA theater stage in a two-hour recording session and cut from twenty different camera angles. In addition to the video, an audio sample captures studio preparations and discussions during the group's rehearsals and forthcoming concerts of *Hand Eye*, a collaboration between Eighth Blackbird and the collective of six composers known as Sleeping Giant. Cellist Nicholas Photinos noted that museum culture in general is making inroads toward displaying artists' processes (how they make art) in addition to artists' final creations (what they made). Instruments and scores also decorate the rehearsal space in the group's absence. As managing director Peter McDowell and others have described, the idea is for Eighth Blackbird to "haunt the space" when the members are not present.

The rehearsal room was only half of Eighth Blackbird's physical exhibit space at the MCA. The adjacent third-floor gallery designated for the artist residents was an area for hands-on visitor engagement. In this role, Eighth Blackbird members became curators of their own exhibit, in consultation with MCA curators, designers, and educators. The adjacent gallery was transformed into a space for visitors to explore how to hear and engage with new music. The first interactive exhibit, early in the residency, featured John Cage's 1975 work *Child of Tree* for "amplified plant materials." Then in 2016, Eighth Blackbird curated an exhibit highlighting Amy Beth Kirsten's *Colombine's Paradise Theater*, which blends instrumental music with singing, speaking, dance, and gestures—a take on the pre-modern Italian masked art form *commedia dell'arte*. Instruments and props are again on display in the gallery, as are videos and audio stations to explain these and other works. As curators of the hands-on gallery, Eighth Blackbird encouraged visitors to consider what music really is and how one can make it.

Financing residencies at MCA has varied over the years. In general, the amount that was allocated would cover operations, presenting costs, and funds for the artist(s). As musical performers whose work is distributed and experienced differently, Eighth Blackbird had to be compensated differently for the residency. Lead support for the exhibition was provided by anonymous MCA donors, together with grants from other donors, trusts, and agencies. The MCA also paid fees for the two performances in the theater, and it supported the development of new works with staff time and necessary equipment for the theater. But considering Eighth Blackbird's typical single-concert fees, the remuneration was a strain for the sextet. Additional fundraising was needed to support the residency. A joint fundraising effort did not materialize between Eighth Blackbird and MCA, so each organization decided to solicit donations on its own, but to little avail. There was no increase in the artists' fees, yet there was no giving up such a valuable partnership.

The Eighth Blackbird residency was groundbreaking at MCA. Not only was it the first time that a musical artist had been selected as a resident artist, it was the first time a Chicago-based artist was resident at MCA. Furthermore, it was the first time that a group (not an individual) had held the residency. More so than a visual artist, Eighth Blackbird's residency could be felt immediately at the museum: the music carried to all four floors, whether or not the group was physically in the rehearsal space. Outstanding performances were the sextet's path to the residency, and they continued to deliver dazzling concerts in the MCA's theater. These shows featured compositions written and rehearsed in the museum's gallery space and in the theater, including the aforementioned *Hand Eye* by Sleeping Giant and *Ghostlight* by David T. Little (a sold-out weekend). Audience members commented on the strength in programming and their familiarity with the music,

due to the previews they experienced in the exhibit. One intimate event of note featured new music advocate Seth Boustead of fine arts radio station WFMT, who hosted a live broadcast of two movements of *Hand Eye* from the MCA's rehearsal gallery space with 30 audience members in attendance. Behind the scenes, the group used the theater stage to record music for the album *Filament*, winner of a GRAMMY award for Best Small Ensemble/Chamber Music Performance. Eighth Blackbird's three other GRAMMY awards were featured in display cases in the museum. Glory for the sextet was glory for the MCA.

In the spirit of the most fruitful types of residencies described at the outset, Eighth Blackbird had the space at MCA to develop their art, keeping new work in the pipeline, while attending to the needs of their sponsor. In the case of *Colombine's Paradise Theater*, MCA was the site where the design elements of the work came together, even though it was premiered elsewhere. MCA administration was eager to see projects in incubation, such as the Celtic-rooted work *Olagón* (by electronic music composer Dan Trueman), with the hope that it would reappear on the theater stage in finished form in the years to come. As is often the case in modern composition, composers were present for preparation of their works. Percussionist and composer Glenn Kotche (from the band Wilco) worked in the gallery with Eighth Blackbird to develop a piece that was composed only when the musicians and he were together. Working collaboratively with pianist Lisa Kaplan and percussionist Matthew Duvall, Kotche created a process-driven composition in real time for log drums and piano.

Perhaps one of the boldest and most innovative uses of the gallery given to the sextet was their willingness to open the space to other new music ensembles and composers to develop their own works, either in

conjunction with—or independent of—Eighth Blackbird. The third-floor exhibit thus became a magnet for all kinds of new projects, because of Eighth Blackbird's generosity. Guest artists included collaborators and friends of the ensemble, with projects varying widely from theatre to new music and visual art (**Appendix 3**).

Some guest artists participated in an on-going interview series with Eighth Blackbird's staff and interns. Artists

such as Third Coast Percussion, Dal Niente, and Quince Ensemble workshopped projects and performed in the gallery space. Scholar John Pippen, who studied Eighth Blackbird as part of his doctoral thesis, also gave talks at the MCA on new music. All were hosted in the gallery space at no charge, fulfilling a goal of percussionist Matthew Duvall in particular to have Eighth Blackbird's space be an open forum to humanize the practice of new music and to break down larger barriers with contemporary artists of any kind. Another goal was to boost the visibility of the growing new music scene in Chicago, an objective shared by the MCA as well. It is difficult to assign a precise dollar value to this aspect of the residency.

Administration of the MCA residency was no small challenge. Peter Taub remarked that while managing live artists and tapping resources across departments are typical for the museum, they had to develop new protocols for this musical exhibition. Personnel from the museum called on to assist the residency were staff from education and visitor

"The MCA residency was a financial investment in audience engagement, rather than a source of very clear income. What is clear is that the MCA Residency has been a source of artistic inspiration for Eighth Blackbird and guest artists, as well as countless visitors to the MCA, and will perhaps be looked back on by the group as the most artistic and community-focused event of the next ten years."

Eric Shoemaker, Eighth Blackbird intern and MCA liaison

services, designers for the space, and even a video producer for the multi-camera shoot. Interfacing regularly with Eighth Blackbird was a necessity for the museum. Taub became a point person for more than his title might indicate, and intern Eric Shoemaker handled logistics of the residency from the Eighth Blackbird's side. In spite of the many moving parts of this arrangement, neither MCA nor Eighth Blackbird had regrets about the yearlong alliance.

Assessing the Residencies— Exploring New Ones

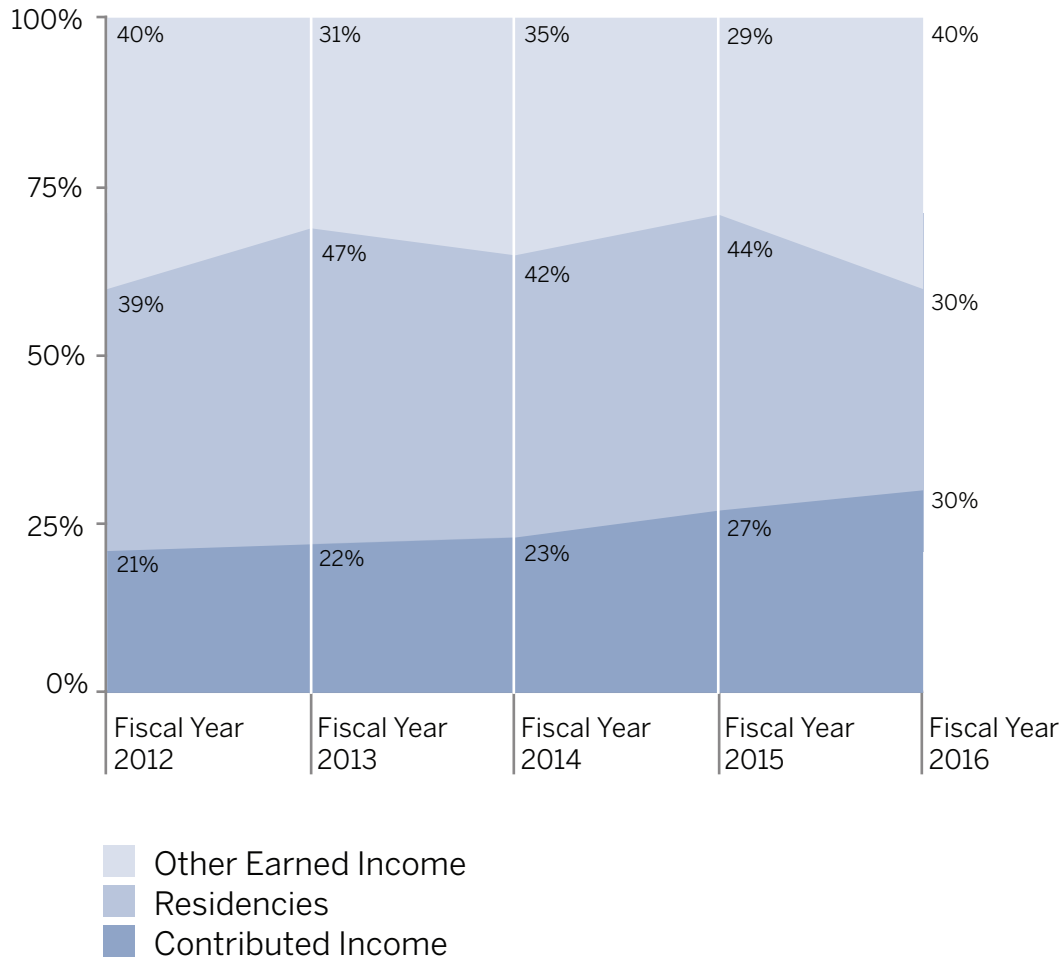
The most obvious difference between the University of Richmond residency and that of the MCA is that the former took place in a traditional university environment and carried a familiar set of artistic responsibilities. The latter was not a teaching institution but rather a public one, and outside of some required performances, Eighth Blackbird was free to develop its art, which was on view to the public from the designated gallery space. The Richmond residency has been in place for a dozen years and there are no plans to wind it down, only to make modifications to the contract and to learn lessons each year about handling multiple “engagements.” The MCA residency—the more dynamic and time-consuming of the partnerships—was, however, a one-year agreement, ending in June 2016. There is an expectation that the sextet may continue to appear in the MCA theater, but the rehearsal space and visitor engagement gallery would need to be reconfigured for use in other exhibitions. It was also time to select a new resident artist for the MCA.

The managing director of Eighth Blackbird, Peter McDowell, recognized the momentum of the MCA residency. He saw important inroads that the group had made toward establishing a presence in Chicago, creating a new audience base around a major institution. McDowell made an effort to extend the residency with Peter Taub at MCA but it was not possible with other plans at the museum. Taub announced his departure from MCA at the end of June 2016: the sextet had effectively lost its most passionate advocate at the contemporary arts museum.

Imagine yourself in the place of Peter McDowell. At the close of the MCA residency, Eighth Blackbird will lose its grip on an important connection with residents of Chicago. The residency was crucial for gaining visibility in the city, even though the group took a financial hit by forgoing other opportunities. In many ways, Eighth Blackbird had the wind at its back: it secured a stable and profitable residency in Richmond centered on teaching and performing, while developing its craft and hometown audience base in Chicago. With the conclusion of the latter residency, Eighth Blackbird's board of directors is pressuring McDowell to propose a new residency to continue the artistic momentum and to keep artist compensation flowing. Considering the merits and challenges of residencies in academic and cultural institutions, what kind of residency might McDowell recommend to fill the void? How would it be structured? How can the experiences of previous residencies inform prospective ones?

APPENDIX 1

Eighth Blackbird Income by Category Fiscal Years 2012–16



- ♦ Residencies include those at the University of Richmond, University of Chicago, and the Museum of Contemporary Art.
- ♦ Contributed income includes revenue received from individual, foundation, corporate, or government donations and grants.

APPENDIX 2

Excerpts of Eighth Blackbird Artist Residency Agreement with the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Peter McDowell
Managing Director
Eighth Blackbird

Dear Peter McDowell:

We are pleased to confirm the terms of the Eighth Blackbird Artist Residency with the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA), as outlined in this letter and in the Standard Terms attached as Exhibit A, which are herein incorporated by reference ("Agreement"). The Agreement shall be effective as of August 1, 2015, and will terminate on the date Residency is completed, as listed below.

A. Scope of Residency

During the Artist's Residency Program (the "Residency"), Eighth Blackbird ("Artist" or "You") shall transform the gallery space (the "Residency Gallery") identified below into a rehearsal space for musicians, an engagement area for museum visitors, and a video gallery. The gallery space shall be the adjacent spaces on the 3rd floor of the MCA. One space will be utilized for rehearsals and meetings by the Artist as a full ensemble as well as by individual members of the ensemble during pre-arranged times for the run of the Residency. A video of the Artist shall play on a loop when the Artist not in the space. An adjacent gallery will be the engagement area which will be designed and installed by MCA in coordination with Artist, and will change over the course of the Residency. The initial presentation shall be inspired by John Cage's work "Child of Tree." Archival material shall be displayed on the gallery wall in accordance with MCA guidelines. Performances shall also take place in the Edlis Gael Neeson Theater.

1. Dates of the Residency: September 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016.

2. Project Manager: Rosie May, Associate Director of Education Public Programs and Interpretive Practices, MCA Chicago. During the Residency, you will coordinate directly with the Project Manager and other designated staff in good faith to ensure the Residency is consistent with your proposal and, as applicable, the MCA's site-specific, physical, and environmental capabilities.

3. Location of Residency: The Residency shall be primarily based on the third floor of the MCA in the Sternberg Family Gallery, Rabin Gallery, and Sussman Lounge (the "Residency Galleries").

4. Access: Ensemble members will be issued temporary staff access badges. Artist shall have access to the Residency Galleries during regular museum staff hours, which are Monday–Sunday, 9am–5pm. Rehearsals on Mondays are subject to advance scheduling approval due to occasional private events in the building.

5. Installation: No later than August 31, 2015, Artist will deliver any objects requiring installation in connection with the first phase of the Residency. All such objects are subject to approval by MCA.

B. Miscellaneous

- 1.** Artist warrants to have control of and/or has obtained the rights to perform the work(s) that are the subject of this Agreement; that the work(s) do not infringe upon copyright or licenses held by any other Artist, estate, publisher or other entity; and that Artist will be responsible for any charges or legal action brought by the performance of the work or the infringement of any rights held by others and will hold the MCA harmless against such claims.
- 2.** Artist retains all rights in the performance and resulting product, including but not limited to broadcast and audio recordings of the performance and ancillary rights thereto, and nothing contained herein shall confer upon MCA or any other entity any rights, including but not limited to copyrights, in the performance or the resulting product.
- 3.** MCA may record, reproduce, or otherwise use such work product for MCA's nonprofit uses.
- 4.** You and MCA shall use one of the following attributions in any promotional, publicity or other descriptive material prepared relating to this Agreement: "Eighth Blackbird, MCA Artists-in-Residence"; "Eighth Blackbird, 2015-16 MCA Artists-in-Residence"
- 5.** The MCA shall own any and all equipment provided by MCA for use by you in connection with the Residency, unless otherwise specified in writing by the MCA.
- 6.** The MCA shall be responsible for the following expenses associated with the residency: piano rental and tuning, one time load-in and load-out expenses, and costs of prepping the galleries.
- 7.** The Artist agrees to be in the MCA's galleries on the mutually agreed upon dates. Any changes to these dates must be made in concert with the MCA staff and Project Lead and with a month advance notice.
- 8.** As part of the Residency Agreement, the Artist agrees to be available to participate in mutually agreed upon daytime Educational programs with students, teachers, and others. In addition, Artist agrees to participate in evening and weekend Educational Programs up to but not to exceed 10 during the course of the Residency.

APPENDIX 3

Special Events for the 2015-16 MCA Residency

Public Programs

MCA Studio: Composer David T. Little, October 13, 2015, 6–7 p.m.

MCA Talk: Peter Taub, November 10, 2015, 1–2 p.m.

MCA Live: John Cage, *Child of Tree*, November 10, 2015, 6–7 p.m.

Family Day: “Listen,” November 14, 2015, 11 a.m.–3 p.m.

MCA Studio: Eighth Blackbird, *Hand Eye*, December 4, 2015, 6–8 p.m.

MCA Studio: Eighth Blackbird, *Olagón*, December 8, 2015, 6–7 p.m.

Family Day: “All In,” December 12, 2015, 11 a.m.–3 p.m.

MCA Live: Eighth Blackbird’s Lisa Kaplan (piano) and Matthew Duvall (percussion),
February 23, 2016, 6–7 p.m.

MCA Live: Florent Ghys, *Petits Artéfacts* (Nicholas Photinos, cello), March 8, 2016, 6–7 p.m.

Family Day: “Jam,” April 9, 2016, 11 a.m.–3 p.m.

MCA Talk: Composer Seth Boustead from WFMT, April 12, 2016, 6–7 p.m.

MCA Live: Flutronix, May 10, 2016, 6–7:30 p.m.

Tuesdays on the Terrace: Matt Ulery Nonet featuring Eighth Blackbird, June 14, 2016, 5:30–8 p.m.

Guest artists hosted in 2015-16

Glenn Kotche—Ongoing

Drummer for the band Wilco and personal friend of Lisa Kaplan, Kotche joined Kaplan and Matthew Duvall in the gallery space regularly to compose an original duo piece, to be premiered in 2017.

Shulamit Ran—October 15, 2015

Composer, University of Chicago

Lara Downes—October 17, 2015

Pianist; participated in a talkback with museum-goers on her visit to the MCA.

Third Coast Percussion—November 21-22, 2015

Local percussion group; shares a building with Eighth Blackbird; workshopped a new piece.

John Pippen—December 4, 2015

Scholar who studied Eighth Blackbird for his dissertation; gave several talks at the MCA on new music.

Seth Boustead—January 8, 2016

WFMT host and composer Seth Boustead visited the MCA for a talkback and live broadcast with Eighth Blackbird.

continued

Mozawa—March 21–April 3, 2016

Matthew Ozawa, director of Eighth Blackbird's 2015-16 concert programs, workshopped several new interdisciplinary works in the MCA gallery. Mozawa is an international company of artists, which creates art that integrates theatre, opera, music, film, dance, design, fashion, and visual art

Mocrep—April 5, April 12-14, and May 8, 2016

Chicago-based new music ensemble

Dal Niente—April 6 and April 16-17, 2016

Chicago-based contemporary music collective; shares building with Eighth Blackbird; rehearsed new pieces in the gallery.

Quince Ensemble—April 21, 2016

Contemporary vocal music ensemble

Chicago Sinfonietta—May 2, 2016

Eighth Blackbird consulted with members of the Chicago Sinfonietta for a performance in the gallery space.

Sarah Goldfeather Band—May 7, 2016

Brooklyn-based ensemble blending contemporary classical and folk music.

Flutronix—May 10, 2016

Eighth Blackbird flautist Nathalie Joachim and her flute-partner performed at the MCA space.

a.pe.ri.od.ic—May 13, 2016

Chicago-based collective featuring post-Cagean notated, acoustic, and experimental music.



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