

UMS Renegade: Building a Brand of Cutting-Edge Performances

TEACHER NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Describe the factors that must be considered when programming cutting-edge works and performances.
- Articulate the challenges associated with marketing non-traditional performances, both individually and as a series.
- Identify techniques for building an experience-based brand of performances by interpreting the findings of marketing research.
- Develop a vision and plan for the future of a niche music series.

Topics For Discussion

• Long-Term Planning vs. Short-Term Flexibility

- ♦ In its approach to programming, UMS uses a five-year planning model to lessen the risk of Renegade offerings. Mary Roeder, Manager of Community Engagement, expressed concern that because of these planning procedures, UMS does not always have the flexibility to react quickly to changes in the market or to emerging artists. What is the relationship between long-term planning and short-term flexibility and how does UMS maintain the ability to react to changes in the market with relation to cutting-edge programming? How does an organization stay flexible in its programming while safeguarding against its associated risks?

• Renegade Term

- ♦ As demonstrated by the Wallace-funded research, the term Renegade has both positive and negative associations from the community. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using a term that elicits both positive and negative connotations? What should the meaning of Renegade be to UMS and how does UMS clarify the meaning of Renegade to audiences? Should it abandon the term?

• From Label to Brand

- ♦ The overarching recommendation of the Wallace research was that Renegade must evolve from a marketing label to a brand, with a special experience for audiences. Should Renegade become a brand (or franchise)? What are the advantages and disadvantages of a Renegade brand? What programs and experiences will distinguish Renegade from other UMS performances?

- **Renegade Structure**

- ♦ In its current form, Renegade performances are interspersed throughout the entire season and are cross-marketed with UMS's more traditional series. For example, during the 2016–17 season, the Renegade event *Steve Reich @ 80*, featuring Eighth Blackbird and Third Coast Percussion, is part of the traditional Choral Union Series. The research showed that the current model only serves to confuse further the meaning of Renegade and to lessen its potential as a stand-alone brand.
- ♦ What are alternative structures for Renegade events? For example, should UMS move toward a Renegade festival model? Should Renegade artists commit to extended residencies in Ann Arbor?

- **Venue**

- ♦ What are the merits and potential drawbacks of scheduling performances at alternative venues? By using alternative venues, how does UMS effectively engage new audiences without alienating existing audiences? When should alternative venues be employed?
- ♦ What does a Renegade performance space of the future look like? How does UMS re-imagine the entire performance experience in order to distinguish it from traditional performances and create a memorable Renegade experience?
 - In February 2016, for a Renegade performance by Taylor Mac, UMS commissioned artist Machine Dazzle to create an art installation in the lobby of the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre. The installation was interactive, including large murals and a wall of balloons that audience members could throw darts at to pop. What is the value of this type of experience as it concerns performances and how does it relate to the UMS mission?

- **Marketing Renegade**

- ♦ How should UMS evolve its marketing planning for Renegade? What types of marketing vehicles are as cutting-edge as Renegade programming itself? How does UMS maintain an element of surprise and uncertainty at Renegade performances while successfully communicating what the performance will deliver? How should UMS engage current Renegade audience members in attracting new audience members? Based on the Wallace research, what changes could be made to the UMS marketing template (**Appendix 3**)?

- **Audience Engagement**

- ♦ The research showed that current audience engagement initiatives, including “UMS Night School,” “Artist Q&A,” and “Tune In,” are achieving limited success. How does UMS move away from an expert-driven model of audience education to a self-guided, informal, and individualized model?
 - UMS began concept-testing some engagement alternatives. Pre-performance lectures (“Tune In”) have traditionally been held in a separate spaces in a lecture format. During the 2015–16 season, these sessions were moved to the lobbies of performance spaces and were less structured, with audience members encouraged to join and leave the conversation as they saw fit.