

No Place Like Home: The Industry at a Crossroads

TEACHER NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Recognize competitive advantages in new arts enterprises and their evolution over time.
- Compare artistic innovation and the institutional energy used to support it.
- Evaluate a partnership opportunity based on an organization's strategic goals.
- Produce a recommendation to a board of directors based on stated concerns.

Topics For Discussion

- **Artistic Innovation**

- ♦ The Industry offers a pathbreaking proposition: an experimental opera company untethered to a physical location. By opening the genre of opera to a wide audience in Los Angeles, the organization has institutionalized the idea of choosing a venue based on the needs of a given production. What are the advantages of this premise? What obstacles hover over this basic proposition?
- ♦ In some ways, it is hard to generalize about the activities of The Industry. As an experimental opera enterprise, it stages large productions in specific and changing locations. It also is a sponsor of workshops and lab environments for new work. Producing recordings has further been part of its activities. Evaluate The Industry's portfolio of activities. Is the organization spread too thin for its minimal staff?
- ♦ The driving artistic force of The Industry is a single person, Yuval Sharon. Sharon's futuristic vision for opera has vaulted The Industry into a commanding position among arts organizations in Los Angeles and has drawn the attention of the international press. As artistic director, Sharon also holds powerful sway over the board of directors and the executive director of The Industry. What are some unforeseen disadvantages to having an arts organization rest on the artistic vision of a single person? What could happen when artistic goals clash with the views of executive administration or the board of directors?

• Strategic Planning

- ♦ The board of The Industry approved a three-year strategic plan covering 2015 to 2018. The broad organizational goals begin with an artistic one: to continue the commitment to expand the definition of opera. The second involves attracting diverse audiences for its brand. A number of tactics were presented in the case to advance this goal. Finally, the final large goal is generic, stipulating that The Industry foster organizational growth. Evaluate the strength and cohesiveness of the strategic plan presented in **Appendix 1**. Are the goals realistic, actionable, and achievable? Do the clarifying strategies and tactics mentioned make sense for the experimental opera company? What additional strategies could supplement the strategic plan?

• Partnership Opportunity and Board Objections

- ♦ The case presents the opportunity for an institutional collaboration between The Industry and the new museum ICA•LA. Executive Director Elizabeth Cline sees great merit in the proposed partnership and recommends it to the board. An artistic residency at the ICA•LA could keep the pipeline for new operas moving in a stable environment for rehearsal and performance. There is also the chance for growing a steady audience through the consistency of venue. Education and outreach may finally become a reality for The Industry as well, in connection with museum education. What other institutional synergy could emerge in the proposed arrangement?
- ♦ When Cline presented the opportunity of collaboration to the board of directors, she received only minimal support for the proposal in its current state. Trustees voiced objections to the perception of a merged entity. Other members worried about the daunting fundraising goals that the ICA•LA may have to achieve even before a partnership could be negotiated. Too many administrative functions might fall on The Industry staff. The risk of failure is too high for the majority of the board. What concerns of board members seem most valid or substantiated? Review students' formal responses to the board objections and find areas of general agreement among the responses.
- ♦ The proposed artistic residency hinges on production and administrative costs being supported by grants. What if Cline obtains general agreement on the artistic residency but neither The Industry nor the ICA•LA secure adequate grant support? Is the collaboration scalable? How do the organizations plan for contingent scenarios like this?
- ♦ The Industry has built its enterprise in the early years on the idea of "placelessness." By securing a residency in a physical location for the short or medium term, the organization risks forfeiting a good part of its artistic identity. One board member suggested that The Industry should focus on capital campaign intended to construct a space of its own for opera. What are the benefits and drawbacks of resisting the collaborative opportunity and independently seeking a more permanent venue for performance?