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University faculty involved with the fine and performing arts, along with faculty involved with the media, need to form cooperative ventures in conjunction with available public broadcast agencies. Such activities will enhance the ability of the public to have involvement with the various arts through the media, provide public broadcast stations a vehicle for public service, and, most importantly, provide reciprocal understanding of the characteristic functions of the arts and media to the students and faculty in each of these areas.

Telecommunications and the Fine and Performing Arts: *A Coalition for the 90s*

Introduction by Alexander E. Sidorowicz

Any viewer of public television or listener to public radio, especially of stations connected with the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), the National Public Radio (NPR), or American Public Radio (APR) systems, will undoubtedly be exposed to programming that is related either directly or indirectly to the fine and performing arts. Listings in the program guides of just about any of these stations will most likely include broadcasts of classical music performances, theater productions, review of art work, dance concerts, and the like.

In many of these cases, such performances are syndicated and distributed from a producing station or agency to local stations for broadcast. However, local stations are entering into the function of being an outlet for broad exposure to local and regional fine and performing arts events and resources.

Two reasons can be cited for this. One, which is fairly obvious, is that the arts, by their very nature, can be easily packaged as a broadcast event. Thus the station can fulfill a public service to its community and constituency in providing exposure to local arts events and artists, without becoming too involved in the direct production of the event. The second reason, perhaps not as obvious, is that through this local programming, as well as the syndicated arts programming, the station connects itself to a segment of the population that, because of its very nature, is more likely to financially support public radio and television. This is especially true in a large metropolitan area where well-established patrons of symphonies and other music groups, museums, operas, and ballet companies are regular users of, and contributors to, public broadcast stations.

Therefore, the need for media people experienced in the arts and arts people experienced in media, which began to grow in the 1980s, will certainly continue to expand during the rest of the 1990s. However, in spite of this need, there has been very little cross-fertilization between fine and performing arts programs and media programs in universities.

When Dr. Misiewicz and I were directors of the Communication and Music/Theater divisions, respectively, at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois in the mid 1980s, the local NPR/APR and PBS affiliates were located on campus. However, they were almost totally autonomous operations, interacting very little with either the communication or fine arts programs. Faculty and students really did not become involved in any way that contributed to curricular enrichment.

At that time, the PBS affiliate decided to do a broadcast of the Peoria Symphony Orchestra, and I was asked to help direct camera shots during the performance so that the appropriate sections and soloists in the orchestra would be on the screen when they were specially involved in the piece of music being performed. The task became a very significant learning situation for me, because I realized that I could not prepare the next cue by saying, for example, "camera three to the flute section." The cameramen, well-informed as they were about the use of the camera, had no idea what a flute was, let alone where a flute section would be in a standard orchestra seating arrangement. Similarly, some of the musicians were bothered by the need to make changes in seating arrangements to allow certain camera shots, or, on the whole, did not care to understand the functional difference between preparing a live performance as opposed to one that would be televised.

Let me quickly add that all involved in this project participated with an earnest desire to make the venture successful. But there appeared to me to be a lack of understanding by either element -- the fine arts people and those in communications and media -- of the basic operation and function of the other.

In this article, Dr. Misiewicz, currently Chair of the Department of Telecommunications and General Manager of WIPB-TV (PBS) and WBST-FM (NPR) at Ball State University, highlights and details the programmatic successes that he has cultivated in addressing this issue. As I suggest in this introduction, and as he confirms in his article, the coalition of media and arts people centered around public broadcast stations must be reflected in our instructional programs in some appropriate fashion. Our actions in the universities, especially those in metropolitan areas naturally involved with urban arts agencies and constituents, will foster and promote this coalition to the benefit of both areas.

General Overview

Students and faculty involved with the fine and performing arts at metropolitan universities have some unique opportunities for developing programs in collaboration with those in media and telecommunications. Similar programs could be developed in rural university settings, but the resources of a metropolitan university and together with those of its surrounding community make the prospect of initiating programs more likely. Indeed, without contemplating the complexities of implementation, it is easy to come up with a long list of ways the arts and the media people could cooperate. The following are just some of the possible examples:

- televising campus stage productions with potentially wide appeal on commercial or public stations
- televising experimental productions for local cable access

- televising choral groups and other musical ensembles, particularly during certain holiday seasons
- having TV students do a mini-documentary on the preparation that goes into a play by following the play from initial readings through rehearsal, and then into the dress rehearsal stage
- beginning a weekly or monthly “Arts” program on TV which would follow an interview format and feature local talent
- doing the same type of interview program on local radio, featuring all or parts of some local music performances
- video-taping museum exhibits with voice-over audio describing the various exhibit pieces
- having a local radio station broadcast concert performances either live or taping them for playback on the station at a later date
- having radio students do audio recordings of the many music recitals occurring on campus, and either using them as a program on a local radio station or building a music library for loan to other students and citizens
- video-taping various dance performances and editing the performances into a program format for a local TV station or cable TV access channel

At times, the very multiplicity of possibilities, involving a wide variety of resources, programs, goals, and missions, may work against the effective development of programs involving collaborations between the arts and radio and television. Often the task of targeting some programs that might work and then setting a direction becomes muddled without clear planning. However, with careful planning, collaborative programs can become reality for, and beneficial to, all involved.

The first stage in planning is to assess both the existing arts and media programs of the university. What are the strengths of each, and how can they be further developed cooperatively? What specific areas of their programs provide the greatest promise and are to be targeted? Nothing substantive comes from trying to get all possible areas involved. Media outlets cannot afford to provide many hours of time to various music and theater performances, art exhibits, and dance programs. And the outreach and performance demands of arts programs leave little time for contemplating the adaptation of all of them to the needs of broadcast media. Academic leaders need to decide early on what strengths they have in these programs, taking into account factors of personality as well, and then proceed to develop the most promising ideas for radio and TV.

In general, those in the arts should seriously consider developing a working relationship with a National Public Radio (NPR) affiliate and a Public Broadcasting Service affiliate (PBS). Most NPR and PBS affiliates are closely aligned with the arts, but not all have aligned themselves with the arts programs in academic institutions.

Description of the Programs at Ball State

Ball State University provides some specific examples of collaborative projects which have helped to forge a coalition between the arts and media, and to further the understanding of each by the other. The partners in these successful ventures have been the Department of Telecommunications and the College of Fine Arts.

The Department of Telecommunications in the College of Sciences and Humanities at Ball State has 16 faculty and 2 professional staff members. The curriculum emphasizes radio, television, and film through four options. Students can focus their studies on sales/management, corporate media, production, or news. The department also houses an FM radio station and a TV station, with the chair of the department serving as general manager of both the radio and TV stations. This administrative arrangement goes a long way in providing a situation where the broadcast stations can naturally interact with, and therefore enhance and enrich, the curricular mission and goals of the department.

WBST-FM is a 3300 watt station licensed to the university and affiliated with National and American Public Radio networks. It operates 18 hours a day with network and local programming featuring live on-air hosts and runs overnight classical music on an automated service from midnight to 6 a.m. WIPB-TV serves east-central Indiana, is seen on 40 cable systems, operates from 6 a.m. to midnight daily, and is licensed to the university with a Public Broadcasting Service affiliation. WBST has 8 full-time and 2 part-time employees while WIPB has 26 full-time employees.

Students from the Department of Telecommunications are actively involved with both stations. At WBST they work a variety of crew positions, serve as the live remote broadcast crew for radio, handle many news shifts, and cover on-air duties on weekends and for about half of the regular broadcast day. Students also handle the weekly on-air fund raising auction by securing the goods, writing the scripts, and following up with merchandise distribution after the auction. At WIPB there are several practicum students handling various crew positions. Students are also involved in development, marketing, on-air promotional editing, corporate video shooting and editing, and as board operators in master control.

The available facilities include 5 TV studios, 6 audio and 2 news production studios, a fully computerized news operation, 18 video editing bays, 2 televised classroom facilities that send 8-12 hours of instructional programs to schools throughout Indiana daily, a word-processing/newsroom computer lab, an ATT multi-media computer lab, and an engineering operation.

The Ball State College of Fine Arts houses a School of Music, Department of Art, and Department of Theater and Dance Performance. The Art department has a faculty of 35, Theater and Dance, a faculty of 17, and the School of Music, a faculty of over 50. The College of Fine Arts also has numerous professional and support staff positions.

Cooperative Projects

The following are some examples of cooperative efforts that have worked at Ball State.

WBST-FM began a weekly hour-long program called "Encore," featuring performances of the music faculty in the School of Music. Many of these were recitals performed during the year, along with several recorded in past years. In two instances pieces were sent to NPR's "Performance Today" and selected to be aired nationally. The project ran into some difficulties because music faculty did not always sign release forms for their work. Eventually WBST ran out of programs and had to retrieve and play performances that had clearance from previous years. Music faculty did not sign release forms either because they felt the performance was not at a high enough standard for broadcast, in comparison to today's digitally edited compact disk recordings, or because their schedules were so hectic they sim-

ply did not take time to complete the form. The program will be revived in 1994.

WBST also tapes the Muncie Symphony, does some editing, and then broadcasts the symphony at a later date. In Fall 1993, WBST aired live broadcasts of two Muncie Symphony performances. Because of the success of this pilot project, the goal now is to do all concerts live.

Finally, WBST is doing a thirteen-week series of outdoor summer music events live from the Minnetrista Cultural Center in Muncie. The groups performing the concerts range from the Community Band doing a 4th of July American music performance to jazz, choral groups, and a variety of others. This has established a strong link between supporters of the cultural center and those who support public radio. It has also helped promote the events, as it has with the Muncie Symphony and music faculty series, since WBST airs promotional spots during the week to highlight the upcoming events.

These examples deal with the broadcast of arts events, which may involve students in a variety of ways, building their understanding of the interaction between the media and the arts. However, this interaction can also be promoted in the classroom.

A successful example of this approach has been team-teaching an advanced acting class with an advanced television production class. Both sections, which are scheduled in advance to have the same class time, are limited to 12 to 16 students. The goals of this team teaching effort were three-fold:

1. To develop an understanding of teamwork between theater and TV students that cut across disciplines. These students are used to working in teams within their disciplines, but that type of teamwork can change dramatically when students from another discipline "invade" the territory.
2. To provide TV students with a realistic approach to blocking scenes and working with creative personalities, and provide theater students with a regular opportunity to rehearse on stage and then re-block material for the confines of a TV studio.
3. To provide students from both disciplines with an opportunity to develop a videotape for their professional portfolio. The theater students' tapes would highlight their acting and the TV students' tapes would highlight their directing and blocking.

Commercials can also be built into this class. Acting students actually cut "real-life" commercials, and TV students have a chance to direct these commercials with students who have usually rehearsed material meticulously as opposed to fellow radio/TV students who normally "rotate" roles to do the acting.

Some productions were done on location. In one case, the class went to a former mansion and used many of the rooms and winding staircase in costume to create the theatrical segment. This provided additional experience for theater and broadcast students since set-up time and shooting on location requires many different approaches than working in a studio environment.

Another way in which media students benefit from collaboration is by using costumes from the theater's inventory. Usually, if broadcast students attempt to do any form of drama, they wear school clothes and "make believe" that they are in costume. When the theater program joins with the broadcast program to co-teach a class, the support areas of both groups are made available, significantly enhancing real-life experiences and greatly enhancing a student's portfolio.

To carry out this type of project, it is necessary to obtain a script that is cleared for broadcast. Prior to starting this class, an independent study was done to identify public domain scripts. Alumni were also asked to explore the availability of TV scripts that might be donated to this cooperative venture between theater and television.

It was not difficult to establish the collaboration through the normal re-tape procedures of a university. It took two faculty willing to team-teach and two chairpersons willing to schedule the two classes at the same time. Once the classes were in the schedule book, the faculty simply introduced students from each class to the others, and they were off on a fascinating venture in the academic world.

The next project for the class will be to produce half-hour TV programs with original scripts from various network and production companies in Los Angeles.

If a goal is to involve more students of the arts in this theater/broadcast class, it would be relatively easy to secure the talents of some music students to compose original theme music for the opening and closing of the program along with "film" music for various scenes within the work.

Yet another area for bringing in students from the arts would be to have those involved in art and graphics design a logo for a broadcast program. They could also design print copy to promote the program. A year-long collaboration between an art student, some journalism students, and some radio students in this area proved most successful.

Most radio and TV operations on campuses do program guides. These monthly or quarterly publications come in various formats. WBST was producing a magazine-type guide. It had 16 to 32 pages an issue, and took considerable staff time to produce various feature articles along with complete monthly listings of programs heard on the station. Deadlines were critical since listeners needed the guide in advance of the month the guide was designed to cover. Rather than use full-time station personnel, the management decided to have a graphic artist re-design the publication and have journalism students write the articles. A magazine class in the journalism department took on the project with the class professor supervising content. A graphic arts group re-designed the publication. All benefitted, and when costs of producing a magazine eventually forced a change of format, the art and graphic students were asked to re-design the magazine into a 4 to 6 page 8 1/2 x 11 mailer piece containing the program listings, features about certain artists and lists of sponsors and cultural events.

Another venue for a natural collaboration between the arts and media derives from the strong promotional ability of broadcast stations, and the need for public arts events to attract a live audience. Many campuses with large arts programs have a variety of cultural events planned for the semester or year. Arts faculty also work with community groups who sponsor various arts and cultural events, and it is desirable and essential that academic personnel work closely with the campus radio and TV operations to promote these events. Often arts faculty and students can team-up with broadcast students and produce ready-for-air materials that they can submit to the campus stations. It is important to listen to the stations and develop a feel for how they promote such events. Some stations might even provide some time on a weekly or monthly basis for individuals involved in the arts to come to the station and record short promotional segments.

For these efforts there are some simple guidelines: Try to be creative. To promote a play, for example, have some performers provide two to three short audio

cuts from the performance, with an announcer voice-over providing information about purchasing tickets. Be careful to make the information provided sound interesting. Similar suggestions hold true for music performances. Provide a cut or two of a piece that will be featured and get the conductor to make a comment about the "theme" or direction of the evening's performance. For art displays, get the curator or artist of a recent display to make a comment or two about the current exhibit, rather than having an announcer simply read copy about the who, what, when and where of the exhibit.

Campus broadcast stations can use the skills and creative abilities of students within the arts, who, in turn, get to understand the artistic needs of the media. For example, having music students test their music composition skills can also be done with radio stations on campus. Many stations have locally produced programs and many associated with NPR have need for short music breaks during news programming. Ball State has been fortunate to have music majors or minors write original theme music for several programs, and for occasional short breaks where music is needed for transition from one news item to another.

Art students can also get involved with practical applications of their art by working with broadcast students and/or faculty. Many campuses have cable TV operations. Graphics are needed for on-air programming, letterhead designs are often needed, as are designs for program listings and promotional materials that might go into the residence halls and campus buildings where the cable programs can be viewed. As mentioned earlier, art students can get involved with the design and production of a program guide. They can also get involved, possibly with journalism students, in designing newsletters for broadcast groups and/or other campus groups. The same would hold true for letterhead design for other campus groups.

Try to be creative . . .

There is also a growing need in broadcast programs teaching sales, promotion, TV production, TV news and corporate media to have design work done. Good sales presentations and solid corporate presentations demand crisp and well-done graphics. Art students are often natural sources. Art students can also get involved with graphic design for the TV production classes, various graphics needed for news programs (many of which air on cable TV) and promotion classes which are often required to produce materials like billboards, brochures, t-shirts, bumper stickers, and other merchandising items required in broadcasting.

In one example, a TV station affiliated with PBS was preparing to do their annual on-air fund drive. This PBS station invited an advanced design class from theater into the studios and asked the students to design an interview area and a phone-bank area. Prior to coming to the studio, the station's production manager and executive producer of the program met with the students in their classroom. They discussed colors needed in TV, the basic size of the studio, what was needed in the interview area and the phone-bank area, and what were some limitations of studio sets as compared to on-stage sets.

The class then visited the studio, met with other station personnel, and sat in the studio to do some sketching. Designs were done with several samples submitted to station personnel. The station personnel selected the interview and phone-bank sets they wanted and the class then built, delivered, and assembled the set. The project took three weeks. The station paid for the cost of materials and promoted the theater program on-air during the two weeks, thanking the students for their design and construction.

Summary

Planning and focus are key to the success of all of these examples. It does not take long meetings. It does take an idea and commitment. One approach that seems to work well is to plant the idea in the minds of several faculty, allow them to share the idea with some students, and then get out of the way as the students go about completing the project. While some supervision may be needed to assure a professionally done project, depending on the type of student and year in school, many who have pursued these projects often discover that keeping faculty out of the way usually moves the project along much more quickly. Faculty often care about turf, while students often care about new experiences. Faculty often prefer not to have to prepare new materials, while students often like to crawl out of their discipline's cocoon and try new applications of their developing skills and expertise. Faculty are often stymied by red-tape, while students often are creative about getting around such obstacles. Faculty also tend to worry about how their involvement will count toward their promotion. If team teaching, they are concerned about who gets the student credit hour production count.

The premise is simple. The arts need exposure beyond live, public viewing. Media provides that exposure. Certain types of media need the arts to reach an appropriate audience, and need tie-ins to various arts groups to position themselves with the right public to generate funds. The way to nurture this much needed coalition in the 90s is to promote cooperation between these groups during their "university years," and with this success, cultivate a new manner in thinking about how the arts and media can serve each other.