

Director's Notes

As an artist in the "real" world, a world in which success and value are measured in terms of economic achievement, I find myself enraged and bound by the limitations of money in determining artistic expression. With Congress' ever-raging argument over the value of the National Endowment for the Arts, and the resulting limitation on its budget and its use, it is becoming crucial for artists to discover new funding. This funding comes in various forms (personal donations, ticket/artwork purchases, and grants are some of the most common), but it rarely comes without a price. As David voices in *Three Birds*, "you paid the money, you call the tune." Organizations and artists are finding that in order to secure foundation and corporate grant moneys, they must produce works that fall within particular funding guidelines. When I conducted a search of Grant Applications, I stumbled on a myriad of questions similar to this one: "What is unique about your organization/project? What niche do you fill in the Tri-State area?" Gone are the days in which we can produce art that speaks to our souls, here are the days in which we must quantify the ways in which our art will empower a community.

Filling out grant applications, and tracking down and sustaining wealthy patrons and board members, is rapidly becoming a primary focus of most organizations. As a result, development offices continue to grow in strength even as the number of artists employed by artistic organizations continues to shrink. Vast quantities of time and energy are now poured into producing documents in the hopes of securing a few thousand dollars for a production on a particular theme. It is not uncommon for grantmakers to request that an organization submit upwards of twenty copies of its completed application, which are often fifty pages in length. For smaller organizations, the time, energy and money spent on generating strong grant applications and creating a strong, solid and wealthy board often corresponds to a direct loss in time and money for artistic pursuits. When there are only a few people working to run a company, every hour spent on fundraising is an hour lost in the creative process.

And yet, what is the alternative? A company with such a miniscule budget that it cannot fully explore its artistic vision? A company that is unable to purchase the advertising necessary to bring in an audience? Can an artist really succeed at her job if she is not producing art that is seen? If you believe, as I do, that art is produced out of a desire to communicate the hurts and needs of a society, an artist cannot succeed in isolation. Art produced without an audience is perhaps not really art, but rather an exercise.

But art produced without vision, for the purpose of making money, is also not art, but commerce. The contemporary attempt to define artistic success in terms of financial strength has led to a diffusion of artistic standards. Not only is the world now seen through the lens of subjectivity, but it is also seen through the shining lens of money. Money has taken over the job of determining artistic worth in this world, and as a result, it is becoming more and more difficult to differentiate between "good" and "bad" art. When are we pushing the boundaries and raising questions, and when are we just following fashion? Are we all "slaves to fashion," as Jeremy says, or are we interested in experiencing art in an attempt to connect with one another and to make sense of our world? Bidley found herself recognized in the paintings of Francis Bacon. I hope that you will find something of yourself onstage tonight and that the act of participating in the artistic experience will mean something to you, as it does to me. What that is, you will have to define it for yourself. —H. M.

