

AT&T  
PERFORMING  
ARTS  
CENTER

the dallas opera

DSM  
Dallas Summer Musicals

City of Dallas

dallas symphony  
ORCHESTRA

Dallas Theater Center

at&t

## NEWS RELEASE

November 19, 2012

### **Performing Arts Institutions Launch Historic Collaboration**

*AT&T Assists in Sweeping Initiative to Create a Premier, Sustainable Performing Arts Community*

**DALLAS** – Five of the city’s major performing arts institutions have embarked on a major collaborative initiative to ensure their organizations survive and thrive - artistically and financially - in today’s new economic environment.

“This is a historic change for the Dallas performing arts community,” says Roger Nanney, Chair of the Board of Directors for the AT&T Performing Arts Center. “Government support is shrinking and donors are telling us, we must all work together to find more efficient and sustainable business models. Working collaboratively, we can get there.”

“Dallas is a rising star on the national and international arts stage and we all want each other to succeed,” said Blaine Nelson, Chair of the Board of Directors for the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. “That means working smarter, adapting to change and leveraging our collective strengths. I see this as a very positive move for all of us.”

The organizations involved are the AT&T Performing Arts Center, The Dallas Opera, Dallas Summer Musicals, Dallas Symphony Orchestra and Dallas Theater Center. The institutions will all retain their own institutional and artistic identity. The initial focus areas, or “work streams” they’ll explore include combining back-office operations such as healthcare and benefits, ticketing and box office, scheduling and capacity, artistic collaboration and facility management. As success is achieved, more work streams will be added. Top leadership is fully engaged in each of these.

The initiative is getting a major assist from AT&T, a major supporter of arts and cultural institutions both in Dallas and across the country. AT&T is donating the time of top experts in collaboration and efficiency, and is providing the tools to track and manage the initiative.

“Philanthropic and corporate donors want to be supportive, but they also want to know these organizations are committed to change”, said AT&T Senior Executive Vice President Ron Spears. “These organizations understand that for support to continue, they must be accountable and create sustainable business models. This collaboration will help them get there.”

A key player will be the city of Dallas, which owns all of the performance venues these organizations use. Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings strongly supports the initiative.

“As both a businessman and an arts supporter, this initiative makes all the sense in the world,” said Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings. “We have some of the finest performing arts organizations in the country and we want them to focus on what they do best. And the city is ready to participate.”

The work streams are in their early stages, and all options are being explored to determine what works. Other organizations could be added at a later date. The leadership and AT&T recognize other communities are facing similar challenges. They feel if they can create sustainable models, it might create a “best practices” framework that other communities could use to sustain their arts organizations.

Collaboration is not new to these arts institutions. Dallas Opera invited Dallas Theater Center to collaborate on the chamber opera, *The Lighthouse* at the Wylie Theatre. Dallas Symphony recently performed for the opening of Klyde Warren Park and will perform for *Holiday at the Center Tree Lighting*. Last year, DTC joined other local theater groups to produce the popular Horton Foote Festival. DTC and Dallas Black Dance Theatre worked together on *The Wiz*. And last year TITAS, DTC and the Center were joined by a dozen arts organizations to produce *A Gathering*, a critically acclaimed AIDS benefit performance at the Winspear Opera House.

“The Dallas Opera is committed to creating meaningful artistic collaborations with organizations throughout the Arts District—and beyond—as shown by a series of partnerships involving Dallas Children’s Theater, The Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas Theater Center, Cowboys Stadium, The Museum of Nature & Science, Big Thought, and the AT&T Performing Arts Center,” explained Dallas Opera General Director and CEO Keith Cerny. “When we apply that same spirit of collaboration, where practical, to the operations side as well, we can accomplish great things together.”

Initial operational collaboration has proved successful as well. The Center handles ticketing for the TITAS, DTC and other arts organizations. It also tickets Dallas City Performance Hall, the Majestic, the Meyerson and other venues on a per show basis. The Center and Dallas Summer Musicals now exchange ads in each other’s programs.

“Dallas Summer Musicals has been a leader in this arts community for 73 years,” said DSM President and Managing Director Michael Jenkins. “We know what it means to adapt and change, and we are eager to be a part of this initiative. I think it will be good for all of us and for the city of Dallas.”

Still, exploring a higher level of collaboration is a fundamental change for organizations with strong identities a great deal of history in the community.

“I think this demonstrates a level of maturity for the Dallas arts community” said Dallas Theater Center Board Chair Rebecca Fletcher. “These organizations have developed very strong working relationships and a new level of trust. I think that’s a key reason we feel very comfortable moving forward to see what’s possible.”

###