

# Michigan & Great Lakes Touring Network

*Bringing Professional Theatre and Music to Cities across Michigan and the Great Lakes*

## **Theatre - serves 150,000 people of all ages in 20 cities in 2005; 300,000 in 2006.**

The Network takes successful theatre shows from professional producers around Michigan, unseen outside their local area, and tours them to other Michigan cities, especially developing downtowns with little professional programming available; 4-6 other productions will be mounted each year from successful past shows of professional Michigan theatre companies' repertoires - shows that are cost effective to tour. The Network strengthens Michigan producers by reducing a show's costs, amortizing development costs across more weeks, and helping venues develop new sources of funding and sponsorship. Shows will go from their home venue to Eaton Rapid's new Horner Mills Theatre, or an Ann Arbor theatre, where they perform for several weeks and are "packaged" for the tour. Horner Mills is the home office of the Tour Network, Ann Arbor's Attic Theatre, is producing many new shows. A limited number of shows will tour other Great Lakes states in 2005. In the future, the Network will increase the number of Great Lakes shows.

## **Music – serves 100,000 younger audiences in 30 cities in 2006; 200,000 in 2007**

The Network presents and develops regional talent, takes advantage of available national acts, and helps the region's best musical groups play cities they rarely visit, ensuring multiple bookings and more acts for local venues less expensively. Promoting events as a tour - less is spent by local venues on per-show promotion and sponsors may cover many costs. The Network will expand to a Great Lakes-wide focus over 3 years.

**Agents:** The state's best booking agents who keep tabs on up-and-coming talent and have comprehensive knowledge of their special genres (folk, new music, jazz, rock), are part of the Network. This provides access to venues and sponsors who want to promote an act regionally or showcase new talent; helps expose local and regional acts that only need a "break" to get to the next level, and brings financially lucrative shows to smaller local venues. The agents also follow national acts that sometimes become available due to a hole in their schedule or a cancellation, so an act can be made available, albeit on short notice, to an appropriate venue with an opening on the available date(s). The Network strengthens Michigan presenters and booking agents by giving them the clout to book multiple performances of a regional act or a major national act in new venues. This will bring costs down, allow the Network to involve sponsors more effectively, and make a wider variety of excellent performers available to smaller and more distant venues.

## **State Funds in Michigan/Other States in the Future**

The Network has financial support from 20 key cities and several state agencies. Michigan Economic Development Corp.'s Travel Marketing Office will match sponsor funds spent for out-of-state and statewide advertising. As the tour expands to Great Lakes states it will work with similar agencies in other states.

## **Sponsors/Advertising/Corporations and Foundations**

National and regional companies may sponsor the Network's Theatre and Music components; the its first show *Celebrate Great Lakes*; the *Connections Music Festivals*; or the *European Exchange*, for 2006. A statewide program for each event will feature statewide sponsors; local venues can have an insert to sell locally. In Michigan, many corporations and foundations are in metro-Detroit and serve only local or statewide organizations. The same is true for Chicago. The Network will solicit support from national and regional corporations in these and other large cities, offering them the rare opportunity to sponsor events that will appear in smaller, outlying cities and venues. The Network will expand to Great Lakes states in 2006.

## **Ongoing Special Events**

### **Celebrate Great Lakes (CGL) - will entertain 150,000 in 2005; 300,000 in 2006.**

In the summer of 1989 Michigan's Department of Commerce sponsored a unique, vibrant and very successful musical/theatrical show on the history of the Great Lakes with 18 musicians, dancers, native drummers and actor/story-tellers. *CGL* toured outdoor settings in Michigan port cities. Audiences of 2,000-4,000 per show came from hundreds of miles away. In 2005, an updated version of this economically and culturally influential event will perform 50 shows in 20 Michigan cities. In 2006, a 2<sup>nd</sup> show will tour throughout the Great Lakes.

The Medicine Tent will give CGL's entourage of environmentalists, artisans, historians, and craftspeople, and CGL's merchandising a place to sell distribute or demonstrate their wares - a traveling Great Lakes fair.

**Sponsors** can use the Medicine Tent to display or demonstrate products or interact with audiences. Displays must be designed to lend a relevant dimension to the event. History, the Outdoors and Environment are the themes and interactions between audiences and modern products, and could, for example, include companies that have either their own history to share or products that are part of environmental and energy saving evolutions in commerce. The Medicine Tent has the goal of informing about the future as well as the past.

## **European Cultural Exchange - serves 200,000 Michiganders & Europeans in 2006**

An annual Exchange of artistic talent will have a special place in the Michigan Touring Network – and later across the Great Lakes. On average, 6 European performers and performance groups will come to Michigan and play a number of different-sized venues in the early summer. The performances will include classical and new music, dance, opera, theatre, mixed media, fusion, folk, jazz, and rock - and film and film makers. Shows in the Touring Network will be among the 6 artists and performance groups sent to Europe in 2005/6. *Woody Guthrie's American Song*, *The Chenille Sisters*, and *Big Brass Bed* (a Bob Dylan Review) will be among them; along with a dance company, another theatre show and likely a musical group.

**The European anchor** will be the Helmut List Hall in Graz, Austria (the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city after Vienna - and Arnold Schwarzenegger's hometown.) The List Hall is the most sophisticated venue in Europe for acoustical sound. Its acoustics change to adapt to the act on the stage or the size of the audience. The List Hall will host a live show of most Michigan acts and make a production DVD and CD of the live performances.

Funding for the Exchange Program: To succeed, The Exchange Program must be a highly subsidized program needing little box office to meet its financial goals, especially in small venues. Some support will come from the European Union and countries involved in the Exchange Program who support the European performers involved. Funds will also come from US/Michigan corporations with business interests in Europe, as well as Michigan Foundations and State agencies with many interests served by the program.

## **Connections Festivals – in 5 Michigan Cities in 2005; in 10 Great Lakes Cities in 2006**

Ann Arbor's *Connections Festival* – 3 weekends in August and Sept, 2005, celebrates the city's 2 arts enclaves – Lowertown and Kerrytown and the Broadway Bridge that connects them, each on a different side of the Huron River. It also connects the city's best performing and visual artists and the major arts presenters to each other and to national acts and regional audiences. The goal is to present more outdoor summer entertainment in Michigan riverside and lakeside parks using local, regional and national acts, and promoting each weekend for out of state, as well as in state tourism.

### **Sponsoring Connection Festivals in other Michigan or Great Lakes Cities:**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Connections Festival was in Ann Arbor in September 2004. In 2005, many of the performers in this year's Ann Arbor *Connections Festival*, as well as other artists in several other Michigan and Great Lakes cities are also planning to perform in *Connections Festivals* on different spring, summer and fall weekends in 5 Michigan Cities in 2005: Eaton Rapids, Port Huron, Downriver Detroit, Saginaw and Traverse City. In future years, this event can be duplicated in other Great Lakes Cities. It is meant to piggy-back on the success of *Celebrate Great Lakes* - a state sponsored touring show traveling to Michigan Port Cities - which will bring 2,000-10,000 people to these various cities each summer weekend.

**The Festival itself** is meant to have the feel of an outdoor riverside party. Ann Arbor's has some events that are free and some that are ticketed; sells beer, wine, "coolers", ice tea, soft drinks, juice, coffee and tea, and grills burgers, dogs, chicken and veggie burgers, and also has foods and desserts from local participating restaurants and delis. The site is right on the river and there is a fully equipped playground for families who want to bring their kids – who get in free, of course.

**Attendance:** Ann Arbor is expecting about 7,000 people per weekend, for Year 2 of its 3 weekend *Connections Festival*. The 5 new cities are each planning a 1 weekend event, and should have audiences of between 3,000- 4,000 each.

**Sponsors:** Presenting and Lead Sponsors can help establish a *Connections Festival* in several different cities. The producers of *Connections* have available dates for 2005/6. Besides traditional sponsor benefits, Sponsor Tents behind the audience can display products, host parties for employees and customers, display local visual artists, and also act as temporary rain sites.

## **Sponsorship Opportunities & Benefits**

A company may sponsor the whole tour; a featured part (theatre, music, *Celebrate Great Lakes*, the *European Exchange*, or the *Connections Festivals*); a specific region; an act, show or event (s); or may be more interested in local, regional, statewide or Lake-wide promotion. As there is such a range of opportunities, sponsorships must be individually negotiated.

- 1. Video/Film, TV/Cable-casts, DVDs, Audio, Radio & CDs:** The Horner Mills theatre in Eaton Rapids, the tour's home, has excellent sound and/or 5 camera video recording capacity for live CDs or DVDs of a concert or music from a play.
- 2. Product Use:** Broadcast, cable, Public TV; merchandise at venues with sponsor inserts; commercials, PSAs & webcasts.
- 3. Sponsor Opportunities:** Sponsors messages and offers can be implanted in the DVD or CD, and in the packaging.
- 4. The Internet, Web Events & Simulcasts:** By placing easy-to-use tools (audio, video, photo and tour, venue, act and sponsor info) on the web-site, the Network makes it easy for a promoter, venue, or media outlet to promote an act or tour. Arranging real-time chats, web concerts from multiple venues, and regional, statewide and local promotions can get great free advertising - as can including the website and sponsors in simulcasts. The Website will be heavily promoted.
- 5. Local, Regional and Great Lakes-wide Marketing** - each event has different sponsor possibilities.
- 6. Regional Promo:** MEDC Travel Marketing can double sponsorship funds for Lake-wide marketing campaigns.
- 7. Third Coast Cruise (future):** an hour-long TV show promoting tour events for distribution through cable or Public TV.
- 8. Inclusion** in advertising, banners, program ads, marquis/lobby displays; creative customer/product interaction.