



CENTER for LEARNING through the ARTS

Quarterly Report

June 23, 2006

University of California, Irvine

A Word from the Director...

Liane Brouillette

With Commencement already past and summer session about to begin, the 2005-06 academic year seems to have flown by. Yet much has been accomplished.

The on-line version of the *Journal for Learning through the Arts*, made available during winter break, has now had 2,100 full-text downloads. Since June 2005, when the CLtA eScholarship Repository was created, 3,180 copies of research papers have been downloaded. These figures give encouraging evidence of the growing international interest in arts-based research.

The *Mapping the Beat* project, funded by a \$250,000 National Geographic grant, will begin in September. On March 31, representatives from UC San Diego, Cal State Long Beach, Oklahoma State University, Michigan State University, and Lawrence University met for a one-day planning workshop. Each participating university is carrying out original research to enhance this program, which introduces children to the connections between music and cultural geography. Emily South and Stephanie Feder, two graduate students from UCI's Claire Trevor School of the Arts, have undertaken research projects that explore the historical underpinnings of contemporary dance and music.

On August 17 and 18, we look forward to continued dialogue with arts scholars and program representatives at the ArtsBridge America conference in Wisconsin.

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CLtA Spring Conference

Wendy Lee

To disseminate best practices from the 3-year Dana Foundation ArtsBridge project and to kick-off a new 3-year grant from the National Geographic Education Foundation, CLtA hosted a conference on March 31st. Representatives from UC San Diego, Michigan State University, Lawrence University, Oklahoma State University, and Cal State Long Beach were invited to join UCI faculty at the Ayres Hotel in Costa Mesa for a full day event to discuss issues pertinent to preparing and supporting university students throughout their ArtsBridge projects in K-12 classrooms.

One focus of the conference was on how university programs can make a difference in integrating the arts into classroom instruction in an era with a strong standards-based focus. Former ArtsBridge scholars shared "best practices" they had developed for teaching specific arts content to K-12 pupils. Program directors brainstormed about how to carry on the important work initiated through ArtsBridge in recent years. The new National Geographic grant will support this work by allowing the consortium of universities to conduct

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Welcome to CLtA's Summer Intern!

My name is Leela Veeravalli, and I am a recent graduate of Whitney High School in Cerritos, California. As CLtA's new intern, I am excited to learn more about the role of the arts in education.

As a past intern at the Berkeley Art Center (BAC) in the summer of 2004, I realized how vital the arts are to the lives of youth today. The BAC sponsored several arts programs for Bay Area children and teenagers, such as picnics and lectures, and showed me how one can instigate a love for the arts in these age groups simply through the right medium. At CLtA, I am

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Exemplary School-University Partnership Maximizes Opportunities

Jenny Scholl

In 2001, ArtsBridge America at the University of California San Diego formalized a “Partners in Education” Agreement with Elizabeth Freese Elementary School, an Enhanced Literacy through Arts and Culture Magnet School. The Agreement outlined not only how ArtsBridge would support arts instruction at Freese, but also detailed how the staff and faculty at Freese would support ArtsBridge. The Magnet Resource Educator at Freese, Mary Pat Hutt, has been instrumental in making the partnership agreement an enduring commitment that has resulted in multiple funding opportunities and exceptional ArtsBridge projects over the years.

The partnership is constantly evolving via ongoing dialogue between ArtsBridge personnel and Ms. Hutt. The original agreement described how ArtsBridge and the four 6th grade teachers would work together to bring Beijing Opera to life at Freese. Each 6th

grade classroom focused on a different element of the unique art form. One class performed an adaptation of a traditional Beijing Opera story. Another made masks in the style of the painted faces of traditional characters. A third class created set designs, and a fourth studied Chinese music. The project culminated with each class presenting their work to the school. It was a very successful effort that set the tone for the partnership between ArtsBridge and Freese.

Since then the partners have worked together to secure a donation of 20 guitars from Taylor Guitars for a music program piloted by ArtsBridge scholars at Freese. The National Geographic Education Foundation funded *Mapping the Beat*, which was piloted at Freese and now has expanded to include universities and elementary schools across the nation. In spring of 2005, ArtsBridge scholars at Freese teamed up with the San Diego Guild of Puppetry and the Eveoke Dance Company to

honor the literary work of Gerald McDermott in a school-wide project that culminated with the author himself visiting the school to see his work reinterpreted by the children through a variety of art forms. A number of past ArtsBridge scholars have been hired as teaching artists at Freese Elementary upon graduation from UCSD. Ms. Hutt has been a regular presenter at ArtsBridge scholar training sessions and has been a valued advocate for UCSD ArtsBridge in the community. Freese teachers have written letters to lawmakers in support of funding for ArtsBridge. Freese teachers even invited Congressman Bob Filner to their school to see ArtsBridge in action.

As ArtsBridge and Freese have evolved as individual organizations, they have continually redefined the partnership, so as to best support one another. In so doing, they have forged a model alliance.

The Historic Cakewalk

Emily South

During the early 20th century, the Cakewalk dance symbolized the role of cultural artistry in bridging the racial divide between whites and blacks. Derived from the cultural aesthetics of slaves’ ancestral lands, the Cakewalk took its name from a practice in which southern plantation owners offered a cake as a prize to whoever could complete the most accomplished dance steps and turns.

Initially, the Cakewalk was a competitive art form. The dancing couple that displayed the greatest prowess would receive a cornmeal cake as a prize. As lowest members of a hierarchical social system, slaves had not been able to develop any sense of ownership; dancing became a medium for them to showcase their stifled emotions, to convey what otherwise

would have been considered insignificant. Whites still managed to control the emotional outlet, however. Masters would create a pseudo-stage with wooden boards, calling for slaves to dance and sing. Amongst these activities was a Chain Line Walk, a dance that later became the Cakewalk. Dancers walked in a straight line with random turns, carrying a pail of water over their heads. Whoever spilled the least amount of water and was the most poised would win.

Slaves gradually converted the Chain Line Walk into something more artistic and comical—the Cakewalk. White plantation owners, attempting to imitate European high society, would host grand balls and parties in their homes; slaves observed these ostentatious

affairs with disgust. Harking back to traditional African dances, in which Africans derived most inspiration from their environmental, slaves utilized the Cakewalk to mock their menial jobs and the Whites’ stuffy, pretentious ideals. Slaves mimicked cutting hay, cotton-picking, and corn shucking in their dances; they also performed exaggerated kicks to parallel their masters’ grandiose affectations. In these performances, the slaves were not considered as lowly and subservient. Instead, for those few moments, clad in expensive clothing and with a haughty stance, they were stars of the evening.

Yet, despite the satisfactions that Cakewalking may have brought to the frustrating lives of slaves, most of the competitions between plantations were

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CLtA Conference

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and evaluate *Mapping the Beat*, a project that integrates geography and music into the classroom curriculum for upper elementary students. The project will be carried out in California, Michigan, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin.

CLtA Intern

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discovering how the arts are vital components of many aspects of education, such as in reading and writing skills.

I am attending the University of Southern California next fall as a Print Journalism major, and hope to one day contribute to arts and cultural reporting. I anticipate experiencing great things at the CLtA this summer and am very thankful for the opportunity.

Cakewalk

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conducted by the white masters, dissipating the slaves' sense of self-ownership. Although the masters were the butt of the joke, they remained in charge.

When slavery was abolished in 1865, the Cakewalk evolved from a unifying endeavor for slaves in the antebellum South to an opportunity for African Americans to enter the entertainment industry. Minstrel shows, reserved only for African Americans, provided a professional path for freed slaves lacking direction. In 1889, *The Creole Show* eliminated blackface makeup (a makeup that exaggerated certain features to create a stereotypical vision of African Americans as less than fully human) and was the first show to use women; the Cakewalk was its signature component. In 1889, the Cakewalk reached Broadway in *Clorindy, The Origin of the Cakewalk*. The dance continued to pervade both the east and west coasts through individuals such as George Walker and Bert Williams.

The Cakewalk was a vehicle that united African Americans in the face of adversity. In the intervening years, it has evolved into one of the most culturally influential traditions of dance in American history. African Americans continue to defy the limits of dance and artistic expression today.

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