



## **MILLER THEATRE ADVISORY BOARD "Business Plan 2014"**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Adopted February 22, 2006

*The Miller Theatre Advisory Board (MTAB) acts as a steward of public funds to provide professional-caliber performances, free to the public, at the Miller Outdoor Theatre for the cultural enrichment of Houston's diverse communities and the visitors to this great city.*

The all-volunteer Miller Theatre Advisory Board (MTAB) is appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council. Its 21 members reflect Houston's diverse communities and artistic interests. The Board is charged by City Ordinance with the responsibility for allocating Hotel Occupancy Tax revenues and other funds to performing arts organizations in order to conduct an annual season of free performances at Miller Outdoor Theatre. This facility is the only outdoor proscenium theatre in the country that offers more than 130 artistically excellent and culturally diverse performances in an annual season of events, totally free of charge to the public. It is unique, a Houston treasure and a cultural tourism destination. Since 2009, more than 2.15 million Houstonians and visitors attended 680+ performances and films, making Miller the most attended amphitheatre in the country.

Each year, MTAB solicits and receives applications from nonprofit performing arts and community based organizations. From these applicants, it selects a diverse schedule of performing arts for the season, including drama, musical theatre, traditional and contemporary dance, opera, classical and contemporary music, and ethnic performances and cultural celebrations. Organizations that receive funding cover the entire spectrum of Houston-area arts companies, from the largest, most well-respected performing arts organizations in the city to emerging groups whose mission and commitment to quality are in sync with MTAB's Core Values, as detailed below:

### **MILLER THEATRE ADVISORY BOARD CORE VALUES FOR PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES AT MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE**

**(1) QUALITY** is our foremost consideration in selecting performances for the Miller stage. -- Performances shall be of professional caliber. While MTAB appreciates the crucial role that civic and emerging arts organizations play in the city's cultural fabric, MTAB's commitment is to present the finest, most professional performances available.

(2) We are committed to serving the many DIVERSE communities of Houston. -- Programs with cross-over, multi-cultural and multi-generational appeal are particularly encouraged.

(3) We support performances with BROAD, POPULAR APPEAL. -- The vastness of the Miller stage and audience area demands that MTAB select performances which will attract a sizeable audience, and support cultural tourism. MTAB appreciates the fact that many performances, while of a generally accepted "excellent" artistic quality, are nonetheless of a limited audience appeal. MTAB believes such performances should be presented in more suitable, intimate spaces rather than at a venue as large as MOT. Conversely, performances with an anticipated attendance of more than 6,000 per night would be more suitable for a venue larger than MOT. Performances at MOT shall be "family friendly" in content.

(4) We expect a high level of ACCOUNTABILITY. -- MTAB funds selected performances on the Miller stage, produced/presented by non-profit organizations who follow sound business practices, regardless of their budget size. MTAB expects Grantees to follow the rules and regulations of the grant process and of the theatre facility. Grantees not in compliance may face reduction and/or elimination of future funding.

(5) We fund programs that are COST-EFFECTIVE in audience reach. -- Although quality is the number one consideration for performances at Miller, MTAB also pays close attention to the program's cost for audience reached by measuring "per capita" yield for MTAB funds. With considerations for weather allowed, a Grantee whose event's per capita funding exceeds average per caps for similar events may find future funding reduced or eliminated. Also, while MTAB does provide marketing support in the form of the season calendar, the web site, and regular notices to the media, the responsibility for primary marketing of the event is with the Grantee.

All grant applications are reviewed by the Program Committee of the Board and the MTAB Managing Director. Applications are scored utilizing the weighted system developed by the Houston Arts Alliance:

- Artistic Merit - 40%
- Audience Development/Community Outreach- 20%
- Cultural Tourism Impact – 20%
- Administrative Ability – 20%

Grants from MTAB may fund up to 50% of the cost of the performance. All grantees must provide funds or in-kind contributions that equal or exceed the MTAB Grant amount. Cash from other sources (from the private sector, individuals, corporations and foundations, and other governmental agencies) must account for at least 50% of the match. This matching requirement leverages the HOT funds and fosters a public/private partnership for the ongoing program. In 2013, the average cost per person was \$4.06, an excellent value for the City of

Houston. The true cost of the 132 performances in 2013 was in excess of \$5 million vs a HOT investment of \$1,581,535. MTAB also reimburses HoustonFirst Corporation for rent and crew costs related to all performances: in 2013 more than \$309,000.

In addition, the Board raises funds to present internationally and nationally known attractions to augment the season of free events produced by Houston's acclaimed arts organizations. Many of these attractions are making Houston or Texas debuts and are designed to appeal to both the local and tourist market. For example, in addition to presenting the internationally acclaimed Dance Theatre of Harlem in 2014, MTAB is partnering with Houston's sister city, Shenzhen China, to present the US debut of *Metropolis*, with cast and crew from Shenzhen, performed in Mandarin and English.

MTAB devotes a portion of HOT funds to promote the program to Houstonians and tourists alike. Print and digital advertising includes expenditures in media outlets that have a national and statewide reach such as Texas Highways, Texas Journeys, Tour Texas and the Official Visitors Guide to Houston. Each season, 240,000 brochures are distributed throughout the city and the region to increase attendance and to promote cultural tourism. The web site receives more than 2,500,000 page views annually. MTAB actively utilizes social network marketing to current communities of more than 30,000 on Facebook with a reach of 6+ million and 12,800 on Twitter, plus a weekly e-newsletter list of more than 21,725 subscribers, consistently with open rates of higher than 25%.

Miller Theatre was recognized by Trip Advisor with a Certificate of Excellence for 2013 as a business that ranks in the top 10% worldwide for traveler feedback, including recognition as the #1 "Attractions Travelers Recommend" for Things to do in Houston. Miller's domestic Facebook community includes the Houston/Galveston Metropolitan area, Huntsville, Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, Beaumont, College Station, New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta and New Orleans. Internationally, Miller's Facebook community is found in the United Kingdom and Canada, Mexico, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Australia, Brazil, Iran, S. Korea, Pakistan, Spain, the Philippines, Colombia, Turkey, Thailand, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Venezuela, Argentina, the Netherlands, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Colombia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Norway, Nigeria, Israel, Belgium, Greece and Chile .

MTAB engages in active outreach to the Houston Concierge Association and the Texas Medical Center to ensure that Houston hotels and hospitals are able to provide information on the free performances available to hotel guests and patients and their families, many of whom are from around the US and the world. The Miller Outdoor Theatre program is extremely appealing because it is artistically and culturally diverse, free, of high quality and easily accessible via MetroRail.