



Ms. Margaret Lawrence
Program Director, Hopkins Center for the Arts, Dartmouth College

Hopkins Center for the Arts, Dartmouth College
<http://hop.dartmouth.edu/>



Presenter Interview プレゼンターインタビュー

Pioneering the role of the university-based arts center, The Hopkins Center for the Arts in New Hampshire, USA

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大学付属の芸術センターの草分け
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Active for over 50 years, The Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College is one of the pioneers of the now numerous university-based arts centers in North America. Providing the performances by various college ensembles as well as productions by leading international artists and companies and commission works, often created in residencies, the Center seeks to play an important role as a cultural hub of the community. The Center's program director, Margaret Lawrence, is known as one of the foremost presenters in the USA. She spoke with us about the role of the university-based arts center and the many programs she and the Center are involved in.

(Interview: Yoko Shioya, Artistic Director, Japan Society)

Hopkins Center belongs to Dartmouth College. In Japan, a theater belonging to, or owned by a university would give the impression that it should be a facility for student activities. But in the U.S., many first-class theaters in many cities and states are actually university theaters run by professional presenters and presenting world-class productions to general public. So, I would like to ask you about the background and history of the Hopkins Center, and how the Center's structure, programming and operations are related to Dartmouth College.

The Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College (HOP) was built in 1962. It was at the very beginning of the wave of major interdisciplinary art centers being built in America on college campuses.

In North America, the majority of major arts presenters are actually based on College campuses. The support structure in this country fairly rarely includes municipal-based art centers. And for that reason campus-based art centers have really grown to be many of the leading arts-presenting institutions. The campuses see their role in their community as obviously not only teaching and inspiring their own students but also one of functioning as a cultural hub of the community they are in.

So in other words, before 1960, there were not arts center like those on campuses?

There were some arts organizations based on college campuses, such as Cal Performances at UC Berkeley, which is more than 100 years old. But the idea of creating one that was multi-disciplinary was not around until the big influx of buildings in the sixties, and we were on the very leading edge of that. Then, getting more into the role of a multi-disciplinary center rather than just campus-oriented, we predated the Los Angeles Music Center and Lincoln Center in New York City. In fact our building was the architectural prototype for the Metropolitan Opera House at the Lincoln Center because it was by the same architect. And ours was built a year before it.

So we came in the beginning of a daring kind of a grand experiment of placing an arts center in a community on a college campus, having an arts center that is more

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than just a theater; having a theater, galleries, and rehearsal spaces, and a film program—all these multiple aspects to it. That is something that we were one of the prototypes for.

As for the relationship with the campus and the community, we are a part of Dartmouth College. I am a Dartmouth College employee. But we, HOP's staff, are not faculty, we are not a part of any of the academic departments; but we are arts professionals who are College employees and report directly to the provost of the College. We have academic departments in our building: the Department of Theater, Department of Film and TV Studies, Department of Music, and Department of Studio Art; they are all "tenants" of the Center. But we are much more than just building supervisors for the academic departments, because there is deep collaboration with them all the time. Also, we promote student productions and student concerts.

How does the collaboration between you and academic departments take place? Do faculty members approach you with requests to book schedule times for certain artists or companies to present works at HOP?

I would love to work that way. But it often happens the other way around. I have an idea and then go to the academic department. As an example, we are working on a three-year project, a cross-campus/community programming initiative, which has involved the Theater Department. With a "Creative Campus Grant" provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, we've been spending three years looking at one theme, through the "eyes of an artist." The program is named Class Divide. The Divide it refers to is the divide between upper class and lower/working class. There is a big divide in this country, and its economy, a socio-economic divide.

Part of the project is that we commissioned a playwright/performer, Anne Galjour, to write a new play based on the experiences of people in our region, people of all classes. (*The premiere of this work, *You Can't Get There From Here* was in November 2008 at HOP). That has involved bringing in the playwright a handful times in the last two years.

As Anne began her research, her process involved talking one-on-one and also to circles of people with stories—in the community as well as on the campus. For example, she sat with a group of girls, asking them like, "What is 'class'? What was the first time you met someone you felt was from different class? What were your fears? What are your secret thoughts when you think of people with money, or without money?" Lots of people and students were involved in this personally. Anne also could give classes and playwriting workshops on class in Dartmouth. Many such artists were coming and going. Then, last year we presented her work as a work-in-progress: no set, and the actor holding the script. We did two sold-out shows of that. Each night the audience could join in a discussion with Anne and talk about what they saw and what they thought about. Students were there, too.

I was the lead commissioner of this play. Then I tried to get the Theater Department to think of a way that they could be a part of this initiative, bugging them, "Can you think of something other than workshops to do in terms of 'Class Divide'?"

As a result, this year, they are doing a student production of *The Grapes of Wrath*, because it is about poverty and unionization, and that is about "Class Divide." So now they were a part of my initiative. They chose to do that to be a part of it. (* Performance of *The Grapes of Wrath* at HOP was February 18-28, 2009)

So, many of our successful collaborations in programming are informal and based on human relationships involving common interests and excitement. I have

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developed personal relationships with faculty in the Theater Department. So I knew what they would like. With the Music Department, however, we have a more formal relationship. Each year we allow the department to request schedule time for three different performing groups and we bring each one in and do week-long residencies. It's their choices but we are the producer.

I remember the conversation with you when we (Japan Society) produced a tour of *Aoi/Komachi* (*written and directed by Takeshi Kawamura) for the spring of 2007, and I was trying to get you on board. We talked about the various angles to look at this production from, such as women's issues and Japanese pop culture issues, in order to involve academic departments of Dartmouth College. You must have involved many other departments outside of the arts in Anne's production, didn't you?

Yes, the sociology, geography, history and religious departments were involved. Also the Tucker Foundation, which is not an academic department but a center for community service that assist students going to help the community, was involved.

Talking about involvement of areas other than arts departments, another good example is from last year. We commissioned Merce Cunningham. Merce spent time on our campus only in the final week of tech and the world premiere, but during that week his company members were all over the campus, demonstrating motion-capture technology, abstract mathematics and its relationship with movement, etc.

Dartmouth's Studio Art Department interacted with them, and did a display of the graphics of Robert Rauschenberg because there was a new Rauschenberg backdrop in the piece. Even the classes came in during the day in the rehearsal, just to look at the backdrop and used it in teaching. And Merce was there, so the head of the John Cage Trust came to have a special talk with Merce. So many events were going on that week. In the Computer Science department, students spent the whole summer creating a 3D animation based on a drawing of a bird that Merce Cunningham had made.

The Computer Science faculty hooked up sensors so that dancers danced, with motion capture, and the bird would dance as an interaction.

We have a huge number of relationships with faculty members all over the campus, not just in the arts. Each year, probably more than 20,000 people interact with the visiting artists outside of the performances. That includes community people, not just students. Tremendous numbers of ancillary events take place.

You mentioned that HOP does promotion for student productions. In fact, I saw HOP's website, and saw student concerts and performances of world-class professional groups (i.e. visiting artists) listed side-by-side.

All the events in our building that are open to the public must be "Hopkins Center events," and we are in-charge of the marketing for them, except for some lectures or academic symposiums.

In Dartmouth College, there are several professionally-directed student ensembles: the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra, the Wind Symphony, the Glee Club, Handel Society, World Music Percussion Ensemble, etc. Those are not taught by academic people or faculty members but led by professionals who are all Hopkins Center employees. That's what we call co-curricular, because it is not part of the College curriculum and not for credit—it is extra-curricular. And we are the managers of all those professionally-led student ensembles. In a way those are resident companies of the Hopkins Center. I manage their performance dates, we

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do marketing, we manage the performances and we sell the tickets. They are promoted side-by-side with professional performances. We take kind of a producing role in helping and mentoring additional student productions, too.

For student music ensembles, who makes the decisions about what works to perform?

Their professional director; that is, each of the conductors of the respective ensembles chooses what to play based on their talents, interests and inspirations. Also they choose works based on students' talents and capabilities and often their decisions are not made until a very late stage. So if you look at our season brochure, some of the student programs are vague. They say, "We'd like to do Mahler but we are not sure. Do we have enough brass players...?" So making a thematic season with them is very challenging.

Then, wouldn't you prefer to promote student programs separately from visiting/professional artists' programs in order not to mix the quality standard?

People in the community know what are students programs and what are visiting. And there are huge crossovers in the audience between who goes to see student programs and who goes to see visiting artists. And Dartmouth Symphony performances always sell out—there is a very large community audience that comes to their performances. The same community members will come to a recital by the tenor Ian Bostridge. People know the differences and enjoy both. So I don't think we lose anything by presenting both.

To accommodate such performances of student ensembles in a season together with your many visiting artists programs, must make scheduling complicated.

Yes, it is. Dartmouth has a quarter system so we have four quarters (9-10 weeks each). If you look at our calendar, the visiting artists are concentrated very much in the very first month of each quarter—when we have visiting artists' performances almost every day. And then in the 2nd month of each quarter, it's mostly student performances, because by then they are ready to perform. For example, this spring, we will start the term in the end of March. So all of the April programs are visiting artists', and then May is mostly student performances—and then they will graduate (laughs). It's tricky, but once you get used to it you understand what you can do with things.

Have you set this as the regular pattern during your 14 years of working here?

The pattern was already set when I got here, since HOP has been around almost 50 years. But the most challenging thing for me is the space issue. We have two major spaces: one is the 900 seat concert hall and the other is a 480-seat dance and theater space. The dance and theater space is the only space that the Theater Department can produce in. I only get it for a brief window at the beginning of the quarter. So a very challenging part of my job is to find suitable touring dance and theater companies/artists whose schedules exactly fit the dates I have. I have these challenging windows four times a year.

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What is the total number of Hopkins Center's programs a year?

Our visiting artists series is usually around 50 engagements—or 50 artists, a year. Then the major student ensembles have 20 performances or so. Plus there are a lot of other student projects that have to get performed. So probably it is at least 50 student performances. In addition, there are more than 200 films to show a year. On Wednesdays and Sundays, the film showings take place at 900-seat concert hall. And they also take place in a 200-seat movie theater at least two nights a week. We usually present five films a week—mostly 35 mm films. We have also started to show live broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera.

Aside from the producing role for student productions, what are your criteria for selecting visiting artists and their productions?

I am trying to expose the students to things they have never seen before. I was lucky enough to go to the college where there was a very strong performing arts presenter at UC Berkeley. I was already a musician but I had never seen contemporary dance and contemporary theater. I had never seen Ping Chong or Mark Morris or Martha Graham—anything! I just soaked in everything. So I feel like this is a chance to show students the world around them to help them form their own sense of culture. Some of the students are quite sophisticated but most of them have not seen anything.

So you want to share your pleasant and inspiring experiences with the students at Dartmouth.

That's right. Especially over the four years when they are at Dartmouth, we want there to be very diverse kinds of arts, different perspectives, different esthetics worth challenging them with. We also want them to have a chance to be in the proximity of some of the famous artists of their time. A Dartmouth student called me for an interview last week about the Philip Glass program in January. (* "An Evening of Films and Discussion with Philip Glass", where films Glass worked on were screened, and he himself talked about them on the stage. Glass's chamber music concert will take place in April. Margaret and director of Film Program collaborated to create the January event). He had researched it for an article he would write for the Dartmouth newspaper. He asked me, "A lot of students have never heard of Philip Glass. Why should they go?" I said, "Because he is one of the most influential living composers of our time in the world. Even if you don't know his work, the commercials you see on TV are ripping off his work. So you'd better find out who he is, because this is a chance in your life time to learn about this. It's a special opportunity."

We are always searching for ways to show a really wide array of both contemporary and cultural tradition from around the world. When we do that, we not only see what parts of the current curriculum at Dartmouth we can connect with, but also we look at who the students are.

For example, Dartmouth College happens to have the largest Native American program in the Ivy League, because the college was started more than two hundred years ago as a place where the Natives Americans could be "educated." And it changed very fast but they went back to that goal 30 years ago and they built a really extensive program. So they recruit outstanding Native American students from all over the country to come there. That's just one of many things when I think about the program. But when I look at, for example, Japanese folk arts groups, like Warabi-za, I am looking for what is happening in the Music Department and if there is a course that relates to this. I'm also asking, "Is there a way to bring together

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Warabi-za with Native Americans to compare their traditions?," because Native Americans have folk traditions based in the land and weather and water, etc.

That's one of the most enjoyable aspects of working on this campus where students are interested in stepping outside of their own tradition and meeting another tradition.

Are there any types of arts you would avoid presenting?

Yes. I avoid bringing artists who I consider kind of inauthentic. For example, I would never bring a bunch of drummers from somewhere in the U.S. just doing taiko. I would bring Japanese artists doing taiko. Or, even I would bring *Nisei* (second or third generation Japanese Americans) doing taiko, it's important if they have a particular perspective on what they are doing and why they are doing it. When I'm going to bring in a certain art form, I wouldn't bring somebody just doing that particular form. I go to the source if I can. That's very important to me.

Also I've tried to avoid presenting artists who people can see right in my community because I am not there for that purpose. I am there to bring artists people can't see without my efforts. So, since a local theater is already presenting local folk artists a lot, I don't need to present them. I have my own niche.

Have you brought the same artists again later due to their popularity?

Yes. An example is the Emerson String Quartet. I don't think there is any better string quartet right now. So I don't have any problem with bringing them every two years. They can always bring different programs. There is nothing wrong with keeping brilliant artists a part of what we are doing—as long as we present lots of other perspectives.

You mentioned that you would not present the local artists—so does that mean you are not doing anything to involve them in HOP?

We don't present many local artists because they can find presentation in other ways. What we do with those local artists, however, is we involve them a lot in our activities so that they can have exchanges with artists we bring in. Many of them are really interested in being involved in master classes of dance or opera; we offered a theater workshop by Anne Bogart, to which we specifically only invited local professionals and semi-professional actors.

Let's talk about commissioning. How many commissioned productions have you presented so far?

In our history we have commissioned now more than 80 works. Many music works. Also dance works. Less with theater because it's more difficult proposition to commission. Some of those are co-commissioned with major institutions like BAM or "Great Performers" at Lincoln Center. Some are with co-commissioners across the country. For example, Donald Byrd (contemporary African-American choreographer), we had nearly 20 co-commissioners. Sometimes we are the only one.

As I explained, we are trying to show students the creative process by having the artist have a residency period for the commission. Even if we don't have the residency, having a moment of premiere means the artists are there—and it enables the students to be among first people to see the work, or to hear from the artists about their creative process, which is helpful to them. We want to show the students that art is not a set canon but something that is constantly being evolved and created.

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Do you handle a touring after the premiere at HOP?

Yes, for example, the piece we talked about earlier:

You Can't Get There From Here, is deeply connected to an issue that our community really cares about. It's a solo play, very simple to present, so it easily can tour after the premiere at HOP. Our goal was to commission a work that reflects our community but also to get the work out there. So we found some co-commissioners to involve with us. We started her research by bringing in an existing play of hers—and developed a short tour throughout New England so that she could be introduced to other communities, too. She began thinking about the new play and people in our region. That meant that when the piece was finished, we could book a tour throughout New England with the new piece. Now it's going to have a run in San Francisco, and we are actively promoting it to other presenters in the country. So, yes, we do try to get work that we commission out there. I wish I had another staff member to do this.

How do you raise the funds for commissioning?

Commissioning money comes from my programming budget. We are heading toward our 50th Anniversary in 2012, we are trying to build a new endowment specifically towards commissioning. Obviously we want to do some commissioning in celebration of the 50th. So we are starting to think about what that will be.

You must have to squeeze your annual budget hard for the commissioning projects.

Yes, I do. I put pennies from here and there and I write grant applications. Sometimes we go to particular board members to ask for help. For the commission by Paul Taylor to be premiered in this April, three of our board members were involved, and I wrote two grant applications. This year is unusual because five things in the season involve commissions and co-commissions. We usually do one.

How much is the annual operating budget?

It is about \$7 million, including film and some personnel costs. HOP has 50 full-time staff, and I supervise five who are programming and educational outreach people. I don't supervise marketing personnel because there are several curators for film programs and galleries and we all use the marketing department. I am also not in charge of the box office.

How much is the performing arts budget and how is fundraising handled?

A total artistic fee in my Performing Arts Program is about \$550,000 each year, which is actually not very much. We negotiate very hard.

HOP's executive director is the main fundraiser for the entire Center. Dartmouth College has a development department, so he collaborates with them. I help the executive director for some development, but I am the only grant writer for Performing Arts and I bring in around \$200,000 a year. I do some corporate sponsorship, too.

How does the current financial crisis affect budgeting?

Dartmouth's endowment didn't do as badly as other schools. Still, it has brought a cut of \$60 million. So Dartmouth has developed three different scenarios: everybody has to do a 5% cut, or 10% cut, or 15% cut. In a couple of weeks, we will find out which of those sizes of cuts will take place. I may have to have a smaller season by maybe 30% next year.

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Let's talk about Japan-related productions. We (Japan Society) recently sent to HOP a traditional puppet group, Hachioji Kuruma Ningyo, as part of their tour. Also HOP has frequently worked with us to present contemporary Japanese performing arts we produced tours for.

Yes. Kim Itoh, Ku Nauka, Pappa Tarahumara, and Aoi/Komachi by Takeshi Kawamura have come here from Japan. Also we have presented Eiko & Koma in the States. Maybe one of the things that inspired people about Japan-related arts is *Hashirigaki* by Heiner Goebbels.

Besides, you had served several years as a committee member for The Japan Foundation's PAJ grant program for North America, and also served for Toyota Choreography Awards in Tokyo last summer. Through those experiences, how do you analyze what is going on in Japanese performing arts? What are your expectations for Japanese performing arts?

I've always been really fascinated by the imaginative usage of technology that I see in some contemporary dance in Japan—maybe because I am an American and here you see almost no technology. We are kind of dark-age here with dancers because there are no resources at all, so they don't use technology very much.

The other thing I would like to say about contemporary dance is that in Japan not everybody comes from formal training. It's interesting because here so much dance comes out of people taking various kinds of physical training. They took ballet and moved into kind of Paul Taylor style; or they took contact improvisation and moved into another style. You can tell what their training is—and almost all have some kind of training. But, in Japan, anything could happen. Sometimes it could be disappointing: "What is that posture with legs dragging?!" But in another way it's kind of interesting because people really see the body as a blank page. The artist who won the top award at Toyota Choreography Award, Yukio Suzuki, was so strong. His movement was not coming out from any established kind: it was a kind of butoh movement, but you couldn't see any formal dance training behind it at all. If there had been dance training and he was trying to what he was doing, it would have been a much softer piece; it would not have had the edge he had.

From your experience with the PAJ grant program, which has two kinds of grant, one for collaboration between US and Japanese artists and another for touring in North America, how do you see the influence and contribution of those grants? How do you see Japanese performing arts activities in this country overall?

I think there is a challenge. We did see lots of people who knew about the value of the PAJ program and use it very consistently—they keep coming back. I am sensitive to that because for those artists there are very few resources. I think the challenge with that program is how to broaden the constituency, both in terms of presenters who, like me, are taking a risk or trying to collaborate with you to develop on some brilliant idea, and also in terms of artists. They, PAJ program staff, know this point, too. So we always had thoughtful discussion on how to broaden it. But doing that is always a challenge.

It takes so much money to help American artists to really experience these extraordinarily creative Japanese artists. How do you do it? It's a long distance. Even though we have this virtual technology, you can't just begin that way. You have to begin with real relationships. So somehow, people need resources to get together one way or the other. And that takes a lot of money. I think that is always a limiting factor when there are two groups of amazing people who could do amazing

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things together. Then, how can they find each other? Physical distance is still the biggest challenge.

You've been working at HOP for 14 years. What would you like to do in another five years or 10 years?

I do love the people I work with. I love working with my executive director; he is very inspiring and always supportive of me. It's a great place to work. And because I've been there so long, community people trust me. So when I say, "I know you don't know this but try this," they come to try. They do take a risk. I think my audience members like adventures. They are living in a small town in the woods with a river, but there is a really dynamic art center there. A lot of people say they chose to move there because of the HOP, or chose to retire there because of the HOP. It's great for us. I am always thinking about next projects that I am excited with. So as long as I'm excited, I don't tend to think deeply about the future.

So you don't get bored?

The whole definition of what we, presenters do is to think up things to entertain ourselves (laughs). So we would never get bored because it's up to us to create more challenges, right?

Exactly (laugh). Thank you so much for your time and sharing your thoughts with us.