



*A  
Report  
by the  
Boston  
Foundation*



*April 6, 2000*

Art—it's such a short,  
simple word.

Why is it so often  
forced to carry the baggage  
of ponderous aesthetic theory,  
class-consciousness, and  
political controversy?

Or is art,  
as some say,  
just a frill, unnecessary,  
a diversion for the elite?  
Just what is art, anyway?

Through the Fund for Arts and Culture, the Boston Foundation supports projects and organizations that link artists, institutions, and communities in collaborative relationships to expand, deepen and diversify cultural participation. Artistic and programmatic excellence is a crucial component of any strategy that addresses this goal.

Successful arts and cultural community-building strategies include:

- Broadening access to excellent arts experiences by understanding and removing barriers to participation;
- Engaging and educating the next generation of artists and audiences;
- Creating new cultural opportunities in and for a particular neighborhood or community;
- Integrating arts and culture into the life of our communities by advocating for the arts and encouraging their inclusion in civic conversation; and
- Strengthening the capacity of organizations to pursue one or more of the strategies described above.

Today, there is a growing awareness that the true picture is more complicated, that art transcends simple definition. In Boston and across the country, artists and community members, cultural workers, policy advocates, and citizens from all walks of life are working together to re-frame the picture, re-write the book, sing a different tune—of art as the gentle arbiter of our diverse society, a vital venue for engaging our creativity and cultural heritage.

When the children of Raw Art Works paint the stories of their pain, growth, and triumph, they tell us that art is much more than an intellectual and aesthetic experience. When the Boston Pops perform at Franklin Park, we realize that it isn't necessary to be seated in a formal hall to enjoy the city's best classical music. When *Glue* magazine publishes an elder artist's recollection of his changing neighborhood, we understand that art is about what was, what is, and what will be... it is about understanding and enriching our community and ourselves in new and different ways.

The Boston Foundation, too, is engaged in this work of reclaiming art as central to our community life. The Fund for Arts and Culture is our creative solution, established to provide a permanent endowment and an ongoing, community-based source of funding for organizations, large and small, working to make the power of the arts accessible to all members of the Boston community. The Fund is also designed to give donors a way to reach the hidden assets of our community's rich cultural scene.

While the Fund is still in its infancy, its impact is already apparent. Neighborhood organizations are learning strategies to stabilize their operations so their work can grow. Major institutions are learning the value of inviting in their neighbors. Children are learning to play musical instruments, as well as the importance of focus, self-discipline, and cooperation. Teens and elders are dancing—together—in our city's squares. Community members and artists working together in collaboration with nonprofit institutions make this happen.

This is the picture we want to share with you.



Anna Faith Jones  
President, The Boston Foundation

*On the cover: The Greater Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra Intensive Community Program serves children from Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, increasing their success in auditioning for GYBSO's top-level ensembles.*



*Vietnamese choir members  
rehearse at St. Mary's Catholic  
Church in Dorchester.*

**Handel and Haydn Society**, a leader in historically-accurate orchestral and choral performance, has developed a community-relations strategy designed to broaden access to and participation in classical music that begins by developing close relationships with urban churches. The Boston Church Partnership Program has matched instrumentalists and singers with such churches as the Cathedral of the Holy Cross and Twelfth Baptist Church in the South End, and the Chinese Catholic Pastoral Center in Chinatown.

**Contact:** Mary Deissler, Executive Director, Handel & Haydn Society, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02115, 617.262.1815.

*"This program helped us bring together people of different cultures with music as their common language – behold the power of music!"*

— Rev. Russell W.M. Best, Jr.,  
St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Roxbury

**The Art Connection** is a grassroots, artist-founded organization that helps visual artists donate their paintings, prints and drawings to nonprofits that serve people who often don't have access to original art in their daily lives. The program has transformed agency waiting rooms into living rooms, and humanized social service delivery. To date, more than 440 works by 34 artists have been placed in organizations such as the Cambridge YWCA, Rosie's Place, Casa Nueva Vida, Project Hope, and Jewish Vocational Services.

**Contact:** Maria Markham, Executive Director, The Art Connection, 537 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02116, 617.338.7668

*"The artwork inspires people to talk about their thoughts and feelings, and becomes a bridge for addressing the serious challenges of poverty or illiteracy, homelessness or drug addiction."*

— Cynthia Nartonis, Board Chair

*Surrounded by art at the  
Cambridge YWCA are, left  
to right, April Ray, student,  
with staff members  
Abeeda Hussain, Michael  
Zouzoua, and April Hale.*





# Engaging Young Artists and Audiences



*At Boston Arts Academy, students receive a rigorous academic and arts education that offers them the opportunity to think creatively and independently in a college-prep environment. Here, students rehearse a routine with artist-in-residence Wyatt Jackson.*

The **Boston Arts Academy** is the city's first public high school for the visual and performing arts. This year, dancer and artist-in-residence Wyatt Jackson, along with faculty and other visiting artists, scholars and community activists, worked with Academy students to explore the theme of "respect" through writing, as well as their individual concentrations in dance, theater, music or visual arts. Among the collaborators are a playwright who worked with the group to create a scripted narrative, and a local composer who developed a musical score with the students. Upon completion, the musical theater piece will tour other Boston Public Schools.

**Contact:** Linda Nathan, Headmaster, Boston Arts Academy, 174 Ipswich Street, Boston, MA 02215, 617.635.6470.

*Studies show that students with high levels of arts participation outperform students with limited arts experience on virtually every measure.*

The **Boston Photo Collaborative** is the city's only community-based nonprofit photography agency. Targeting the youth of Jamaica Plain, Roxbury and Dorchester, its programs include Project Image, a summer job training program for young people, and Teen Images, a year-round, teen-operated business providing professional-level photographic services to local businesses and nonprofits. These programs give teens safe, creative and productive opportunities for education and employment, and foster self-confidence and leadership skills as the youth master their art form.

**Contact:** Carl Mastendrea, Executive Director, Boston Photo Collaborative, 67 Brookside Avenue, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, 617.524.7729.

*"Project Image changed the way I look at things and changed myself. I am more hard working than before. It's not just taking a picture, but what the picture means to you."*

— Liz Miranda



*Since Boston Photo Collaborative was founded in 1991, hundreds of inner-city teens have participated in its programs. Here, students prep their cameras for a shoot.*

# Building Communities Through the Arts

The **ACT Roxbury Consortium** focuses a powerful combination of Art, Culture and Trade to revitalize the Dudley Square neighborhood of Lower Roxbury by using the arts to promote new businesses, skill training and tourism. Its Roxbury Art Series highlights existing local talent, builds networks among artists, and broadens their buyer base through such events and activities as the Dudley Film Festival, Roxbury Open Studios, A Taste of Roxbury culinary event, the Roxbury in Motion theatrical showcase, and the publication of a Roxbury Literary Annual.

**Contact:** Candelaria Silva, Director, ACT Roxbury Consortium, 122 DeWitt Drive, Roxbury, MA 02119, 617.445.1061 x222.



*With support for Roxbury's cultural activities, ACT is breathing new social and economic energy into the community. Pictured here, left to right: Nora Mae Carmichael, artist; Ekoa Holmes, art dealer, artist and graphic designer; Candelaria Silva, Executive Director ACT Roxbury; and Cynthia Mitchell-Scott, artist.*

*"Arts celebrate a community's varied cultures, reflect its resilient spirit, and impact the neighborhood's economy by supporting local vendors and inviting in new customers and audiences."*

— Candelaria Silva, Director,  
ACT Roxbury Consortium



*The Millennium Portrait Project is just one example of Dot Art's work to promote arts education and community collaboration. Here, Dorchester students pose next to their paintings on display at the Boston Public Library.*

The **Dorchester Community Center for the Visual Arts**, more familiarly known as Dot Art, began providing visual arts programs to neighborhood youth and adults in 1998. Its Millennium Portrait Project includes over 100 portraits and self-portraits painted on donated doors by local children, teens and adults. It is an example of the creative, engaging programming the Center has undertaken to raise the positive visibility of the Dorchester community and increase the artistic awareness of its participants.

**Contact:** Leslie MacWeeney, Executive Director, Dot Art, 63 Dracut Street, Dorchester, MA 02124, 617.825.3329.

*"I think Dorchester has the most beautiful children anywhere because of the diversity we have here. I think anything having to do with art bringing people together, embracing and exploring community, is great. This project is doing that."*

— Daniel Strong,  
Dorchester resident and artist

# Integrating Arts into Community Life



*With Touchable Stories, founder Shannon Flattery, second from right, developed a creative, arts-based way for neighborhood residents to connect with one another, and develop a great sense of pride in the community.*

**Touchable Stories** works in urban neighborhoods to capture the spirit of the community through oral history and interactive performance installations. Founded and implemented by artist Shannon Flattery with collaborating artists, oral historians and community-based agencies like its fiscal agent, the Fort Point Arts Community, Touchable Stories has worked in Allston and Central Square, and, most recently, in Dorchester's Upham's Corner. There, this project filled a 6,000-square-foot space in the Maxwell Community Business Park with voices, memories, sculpture and performed representations of neighborhood residents, past and present.

**Contact:** Shannon Flattery, Artistic Director, Touchable Stories, 319 A Street, Boston, MA 02110 617.423.3651.

*"What surprised me about this project was the interest and delight at hearing other people talk about their beginnings and of the hardships they endured. I've always known they were there, but never had the opportunity to 'touch' their stories."*

— Paul Berkeley, President,  
Allston Civic Association

The **Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center** is engaging their diverse community in a series of deep and important discussions called, "Arts and Dialogues on Race." Each program is centered on a reading, exhibition or performance, and features a facilitated exchange between the audience, artists, scholars and activists in an effort to link the arts to discussions about important civic issues. Past conversations have focused on the Cambodian refugee experience, the civil rights movement, the appropriation of Native American culture, and African- and Irish-American experiences.

**Contact:** Shelley Neill, Executive Director, Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center, 41 Second Street, Cambridge, MA 02141, 617.577.1400.

*"This program is based on our belief in the universal power of the arts to unlock humanity's innate desire to learn the reality that we are all connected."*

— Shelley Neill, Executive Director, CMAC

*CMAC's second in a series of five discussions about race included an exhibit by photographer Marcus Halevi which featured images of nine Cambodian women who fled to the U.S. and now reside in New England.*





# Creating Strong Organizations

The **Ballet Theatre of Boston** was founded by artistic director and choreographer José Mateo to create and present original works, and to make ballet more accessible to minority audiences and dancers. BTB's new business plan has paved the way for a number of organizational changes, including a move to newly renovated studios and a new marketing strategy to increase attendance, enrollment and revenue by specific benchmarks.

**Contact:** José Mateo, Executive Director,  
585 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 4, Cambridge,  
MA 02139, 617.354.7467.

*“The fact that someone is willing to help me help my children see some good parts of life when we’re so in need is a wish come true for me... We loved the show so much! My youngest girl now wants to be a ballerina.”*

— A mother who received free tickets to The Nutcracker through BTB's Community Ticket Access program



*Ballet Theatre is committed to making ballet an accessible art form. Pictured here, auditions for the annual production of the Nutcracker.*

The **M. Harriet McCormack Center for the Arts** at the city-owned Strand Theatre in Dorchester's Upham's Corner is home to a wide variety of community- and professionally-produced events. The Strand is currently operating with six full-time and five part-time staff led by the program director, who is serving as interim director. To maximize its ability to serve its constituency as a performance venue and important economic anchor for its neighborhood, the Strand is now focused on developing its senior management infrastructure.

**Contact:** Joyce Bishop, Acting Executive Director,  
543 Columbia Road, Dorchester, MA 02125,  
617.282.5230.

*Ongoing efforts to increase marketing and outreach strategies have increased awareness about the Strand's performances and programs. Pictured here in the renovated 1,400-seat theater, participants in the Community Producers series, left to right, Delores Christopher; Joyce Bishop, Acting Executive Director of The Strand; Inita Van Buren; Venessa Lindo; and Tasha Mignott.*

*More than 125,000 people attend events at the McCormack Center for the Arts each year.*



*The Boston Foundation Fund for Arts and Culture is proud to support  
the creative community-building work of the following agencies:*

ACT Roxbury Consortium  
American Composers Forum – Boston Area Chapter  
The Art Connection  
Artists for Humanity  
Ballet Theatre of Boston  
Boston Arts Academy  
The Boston Center for the Arts  
Boston Film/Video Foundation  
Boston Lyric Opera Company  
Boston Photo Collaborative  
Boston Symphony Orchestra  
Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center  
Cambridge Performance Project  
Children’s Museum  
Codman Square Health Center  
Community Glue  
Dance Umbrella  
Dorchester Community Center for the Visual Arts  
First Night Boston  
Fishtown Artspace  
Greater Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra  
Handel and Haydn Society  
Harries/Héder Collaborative  
Huntington Theatre Company  
Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción  
Institute of Contemporary Art  
Institute on the Arts & Civic Dialogue  
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum  
Massachusetts College of Art  
M. Harriet McCormack Center for the Arts at The Strand  
Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Project  
Museum of Fine Arts  
New England Aquarium  
New England Foundation for the Arts  
Northeastern University Center for the Arts  
Our Place Theater Project  
Project STEP  
Raw Art Works  
Revolving Museum  
Somerville Arts Council  
Somerville Community Corporation  
Theater Offensive  
Touchable Stories  
Wang Center for the Performing Arts  
ZUMIX



**The Boston Foundation**  
*Fund for Arts and Culture*