

Splendor

Notes from a conversation with David Dramm and Anne La Berge in Vancouver, BC on Feb.27, 2017

2016-2017 Fourth season in workspace/venue (two seasons were held in guest venues before the opening)

- 50 musicians selected by the founding musicians
- each has a key to access Splendor's rehearsal and performance spaces which are booked online;
- each is obligated to present one 60 minute concert per year; Splendor sells the tickets through a membership program (see below);
- each is able to book space for own rehearsals online without added fees;
- each is able to book additional concert dates for themselves as well as sponsor/host for outside artists with 30% of the door paid to Splendor and 70% kept by the artist;
- There is no "programming committee or director." The programming is generated entirely by the 50 musicians themselves and their guests. A limited number of "rental" concerts also take place. This generates roughly 320 public events per year.

Audience members

1,250 patrons each contribute € 100 (CAD \$142) annually for free access to the 50 member concerts booked on a first come, first served basis online. In addition, there are regular ticketed concerts for general public with discounts to patrons.

Musician members

50% leading, "hardcore" classical musicians & singers from Concertgebouw Orchestra and other prominent ensembles
50% respected jazz, improvisational, world and popular music artists.

Young Artists

Splendor offers free access to all Splendor facilities to a small number of young musicians that are already well on the way to professional careers. They are admitted for a period of two years, usually in groups of five.

Venue Development and Operations:

Start up

Splendor started planning three years prior to the opening of the venue.

Two years prior to the venue opening, the 50 musicians began presenting monthly member (or patron) concerts at various venues willing to provide their space free of charge. At the time of opening, membership had grown to 750.

€ 255,000 (CAD \$) was raised by the musicians to cover renovation costs to the venue. The City of Amsterdam provided an old 1920s bath house for the development of a music venue featuring rehearsal, laboratory and performance spaces:

Ground Floor

- i) 60 seats
- ii) 100 seats
- iii) Bar (connecting entrance and both spaces)

Upper Floor

- i) 35 seats, doubling as meeting and office space

Lower Floor

- ii) Two rehearsal spaces, one doubling as Control Room for audio and video
- iii) General Storage
- iv) Percussion Storage
- v) Bow maker (sub-rental space)
- vi) Ventilation system
- vii) Coat Room
- viii) Toilets

Total square meters: 770 m²

Capital Costs

City of Amsterdam covered the cost to bring the building up to code which included:

- i) Lowering of the basement floor by 1.5 metres to provide more ceiling height;
- ii) Ventilation system five times the normal size in order to reduce the noise generated. Larger vents result in softer sounds from the fans;
- iii) Elevator connecting all floors used for load in, handicapped access;
- iv) Plumbing, wiring, etc.

Splendor Contribution to Renovation

Splendor raised € 255,000 in 3.5 weeks to complete the renovation including:

- i) Sound isolation between spaces and outside;
- ii) Acoustic design;
- iii) Floors
- iv) Bar
- v) Lighting
- vi) Sound
- vii) Control rooms for audio and video mixing & recording and streaming

All of the spaces are flat floor without raised stages.

Architect and contractor hired for the renovation of the bath house.

Operations

Annual operating cost: +/- €235,000)

Annual income: +/- €280,000 including memberships, ticket sales, rental, bar & sponsoring

Rent" €65,000 per year

Full Time Staff: 3

Staffing of each concert is usually combination of 1 staff member (bar), 1 volunteer (tickets) and 1 host musician. Venue is set up to enable either volunteer or professional technicians or the musicians themselves to run the sound & light system if required. This allows Splendor to be operated with three staff people.

Income

280-320 public events are held annually. Operating costs are entirely covered by revenues through:

- i) 50 member performances which raise € 125,000 through 1,250 patron members each paying 100 euros per year;
- ii) Commissioned performances (booked through the 50 member musicians with 30% of door paid to Splendor through regular ticket sales);
- iii) Venue Rentals (€ 450 per 3-hr use; booked through staff or members??);
- iv) Bar income – important that the bar be run by Splendor and not by an independent operator;
- v) For € 1,000, each bondholder receives a performance by one musician at a private event (usually outside Splendor). Many bondholders purchase more than one bond. For four bonds, they can request a string quartet or any other combination of Splendor musicians. First 50 € 1,000 bonds were purchased by the 50 musician members. A total of €260,000 in bonds has been sold to 60-80 people including the 50 members. The musician bonds are "resold" to new musicians when joining with the departing musician getting their €1000 back.

Programming

Things that work:

Youth Program

Classes for 2-4 year olds

Concert Karaoke

Leading classical musicians working with amateur musicians

Youth Residencies

Each year, Splendor invites two promising young musicians to join with key privileges for two years. These emerging artists must present one concert. Recently two Syrian refugee sisters, 12 years and 19 years were invited after their Mom took them to the annual audition for a New Years show by the Netherlands Wind Ensemble in the Concertgebouw.

Splendor Parade

Once a year, Splendor gives a marathon concert at a larger venue which features many Splendor artists and their own groups as well as young talent and special guests. Many patron members consider this concert worth the €100 membership in itself.

Bondholders concerts

Musician-driven projects which can easily be adapted to a fundraising or other target. An example is the concert-as-interest for the bondholders. Bondholders often use these concerts to raise more funds or as part of a membership drive.

Challenges and things that don't work:

- i) Afternoon concerts aimed at neighbourhood
- ii) Labour intensive projects emanating from Board or other source. Successful projects (and all "programming") are generated by the musicians themselves.
- iii) Outreach projects that are not driven by musicians. Musicians need to be motivated for programs to work. Case in point is the success of the classes for 2-4 year olds developed and run by a hornist and music educator who is a Splendor artist themselves.

<http://splendoramsterdam.com/?lang=en>

Also check out Radialsystem V in Berlin:

<http://www.radialsystem.de/rebrush/en/rs-radialsystem-v-einleitungstext.php>