

The Move to

MOBILE



Ticketing,
Programming,
& Marketing
in the Arts

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2016
SPECIAL REPORTS

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Each article in this issue is also found on our website, MusicalAmerica.com, in the [Special Reports](#) section.

Introduction



The world has gone mobile, and arts organizations are adapting—some more quickly than others. According to Google's recent "cross-device" research, daily time spent on mobile platforms far outdistances that on desktop computers. So if you depend on your website for marketing, ticket sales, good PR, or any of the other key elements to survival, you better make sure its design is responsive to all platforms, especially the ones with the

smaller screens.

Our goal in this issue is to provide some guidance to that end, culled from talking to technology gurus accustomed to working with arts organizations and with groups large (New York's Lincoln Center) and small (the Maryland Symphony) that have been through the process and can offer experiential advice. [Going Mobile: The Options](#) describes the alternatives available, from creating an app to investing in responsive web design, or, for a good stop-gap, simply making your extant site mobile friendly. We also provide a list of vendors who specialize in this kind of work, as well as information on the compatibility of their expertise with your current setup.

In a sterling example of learning lessons already paid for and tested by the commercial sector, several members of Lincoln Center's marketing staff took a field trip out to Levi's Stadium, home of the San Francisco 49ers, said to be the most digitally connected stadium in the world. One of the ideas they gleaned was recently introduced in an app that indicates the length of the restroom lines in some of Lincoln Center's venues. There's also one for ordering your intermission drink ahead of time, and for touring the 16-acre campus in real time.

If those represent the practical sides of mobile, the programmatic side is addressed in [Mobile and Live Performance: Maybe Not Such Strange Bedfellows](#). The Philadelphia Orchestra has developed the LiveNote app, which provides real-time program notes and commentary in sync with the work that's being performed; it's also handy for texts and translations. Opera Theater of St. Louis invites Twitter users with impressive numbers of followers to selected performances; the deal is, they tweet their comments and reviews to their followers in exchange for complimentary tickets.

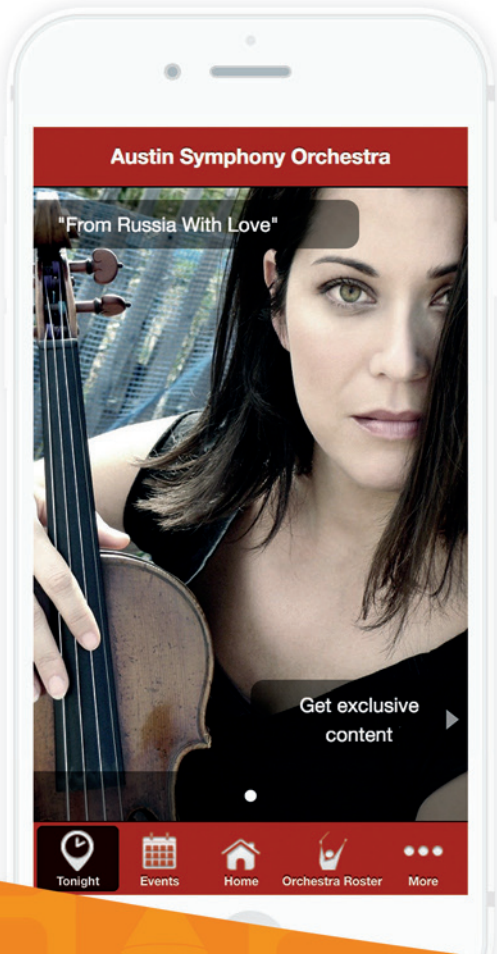
[Making the Switch to Mobile Ticketing](#) offers a step-by-step guide to taking the plunge. It's expensive true, but, as one of our sources puts it, "If organizations spent as much time and energy making their websites optimized [for mobile] as they did on their season's brochure, their online ticketing purchases would skyrocket."

Regards,
Susan Elliott
Editor, Special Reports



InstantEncore

Mobile Solutions for the Performing Arts



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InstantEncore is invaluable to our marketing mix and engagement strategy. We need a powerful mobile app that is turnkey and user-friendly. InstantEncore offers all the functionality we need and more.”

- Jason Nicholson, Director of Marketing
Austin Symphony Orchestra*

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Mobile PREFERENCES

By Susan Elliott

Among Arts Patrons

Group of Minds, a California-based marketing and technology company, has been tracking mobile use in the arts since 2009. Its latest 2015 survey, titled “Arts Patrons: Mobile Preferences,” updates one conducted in 2012 by asking roughly the same questions of roughly the same populations.

The findings

Growth in mobile use by arts consumers has been “profound” according to the Group of Minds survey: smartphone ownership rose to more than 91 percent of arts consumers in 2015, up from 50 percent in 2009. In addition, the number of people who used their smartphones to look up cultural events near their location doubled during the same time frame.

Mobile ticketing, too, jumped, to 37 percent in 2015 from 21 percent in 2012 (it’s undoubtedly higher by now—the survey was published one year ago). And nearly 50 percent of the respondents in 2015 used their phones for ticket scanning at the venue rather than printing them out at home or waiting in the will-call line.

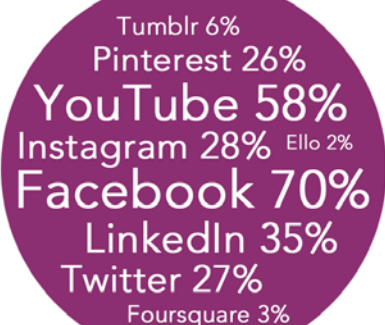
The sample

The 2015 survey was distributed to 1,000 individuals across five cities: San Jose, CA; Austin, TX; Nashville, TN; Philadelphia,

PA; and Boston, MA. The respondents were accessed via the cities’ discount ticketing email lists and were given one week to complete the questions. Most of them were between the ages of 58 and 67, with 75 percent of them being women (so much for the baby-boomer generation being clueless about technology). Ron Evans, founder and CEO of Group of Minds, writes in his summary, “We must reexamine our assumptions about age and interest in technology use.”

More about the sample: 54 percent used Apple iPhones and iPads; the rest

“I use my mobile device to access these social networks”



Source: Group of Minds Arts Marketing Consultants

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were Android fans. Wearable platforms, such as Apple Watch and Google Glass, accounted for about 1 percent of the pool.


Social media

Social media and mobile are made for each other. About 70 percent of the 2015 survey respondents said they are on Facebook “all the time” and 58 percent are frequent YouTube users. Instagram showed up for the first time on the 2015 survey, claiming 28 percent of users. (All of the percentages were higher among the 13-32 respondents.) To state the obvious, social media’s facility for sharing—whether it’s buying a ticket to an event and telling friends, being there and sharing photos and comments, or writing

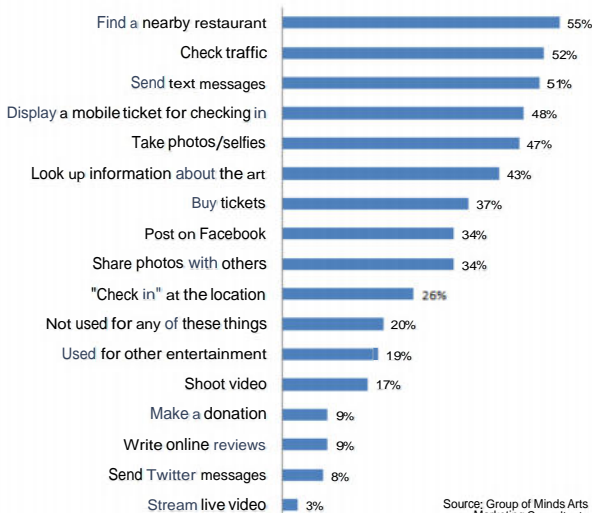
about it afterwards—can be an enormous boost in terms of visibility and future sales.

The whole experience

Presenters need to be paying more attention to the practical aspects of attending a cultural event, writes Evans. As the charts on these pages indicate, a night at the theater is more than just a play or concert. It’s the creature comforts of the venue, the traffic, the parking, nearby restaurants, the performance run time, the nature of the content—is the show appropriate for Aunt Millie? What’s the cell phone policy? Are they allowed in the venue? Can I take pictures? Is there a texting section? If there’s a bar in the venue can I buy a ticket ahead of time?

Chances are the artistic experience is assured to be a good one. Why not offer it under optimum circumstances by making the best use of the technology already in people’s hands? 

When you're specifically at arts events, do you use your phone to do any of the following before, during or after the event?



If there was a "perfect" mobile application to help you experience arts and cultural events, what would it allow you to do?



For the full Group of Minds report, see [2015 Update: Arts Patrons: Mobile Preferences](#).

GOING MOBILE

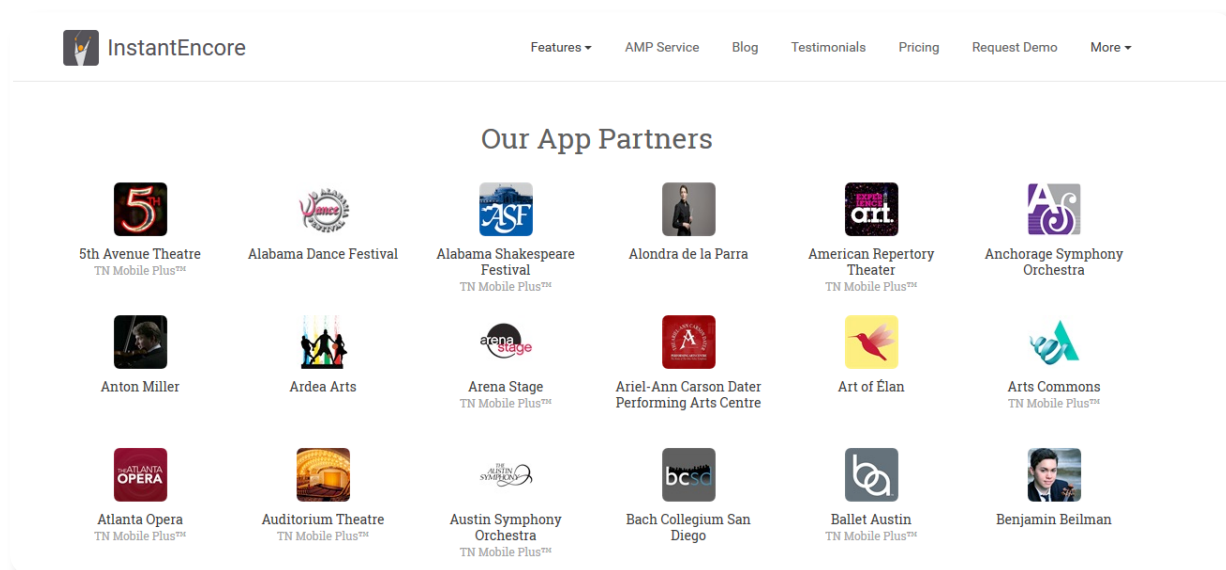
By Nancy Malitz

The Options

As of this writing, Google's latest ["cross device" research](#) reports that 80 percent of all consumers who browse the web spend some of their time daily on a smartphone, compared to 67 percent on a computer and 16 percent on a tablet. And while most people move among devices throughout the day, 32 percent do all their searching on a PC while 39 percent do it all on a smartphone. And consider the time spent on each—170 minutes on phones, 120 minutes on computers and 75 minutes on tablets. Time to go mobile; here are your options.

THE APP

A piece of code that gets downloaded onto a phone or tablet, an app can perform a specific task, such as providing an easy way to check movie showtimes at your favorite cinema, warning you about traffic jams, or enabling you to engage in creative play. Many apps are free or almost free.



A few of InstantEncore's app partners.

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Pluses

- You can't break your website building an app—users interact with it on their phone or tablet.
- Apps are great for spot uses like festival maps, last-minute ticket purchases, intermission drink orders, and guaranteeing a cab.
- Some apps are widely used by arts organizations and therefore easy to employ, like the InstantEncore app, which is set up for pushing important messages and special offers, providing information at the venue, storing calendar info, and soliciting feedback.

Minuses

- It's up to the customer whether to download the app.
- A quarter of all apps that consumers download to their phones are one and done—they are used and then almost immediately deleted. Apps have to be considered essential, useful, or cool, like an app for doctoring photos or new movie previews, to be long-lived.
- Some apps are device-specific, e.g. for iPhone only, or Android only, requiring that you maintain several of them.

- Really outstanding apps, such as the LA Philharmonic's "Bravo Gustavo" conducting app, which allows you to speed up or slow down the music just like a conductor, can be expensive to create.
- An app that's not seamlessly integrated into your main site will cost your staff time.

MOBILE WEBSITE

This is generally a subset of a website, made up of fewer pages, or pages slightly redesigned to fit on a smaller phone and tablet screens, but driven by the same back-end structure and utilities. A mobile website's home page may have a slightly different address, such as <https://www.carnegiehall.org/m/home.aspx>, versus <http://www.carnegiehall.org/>. Some mobile-site templates are free (such as m.YourSite.com) or nearly free. Others can be custom-designed.

Pluses

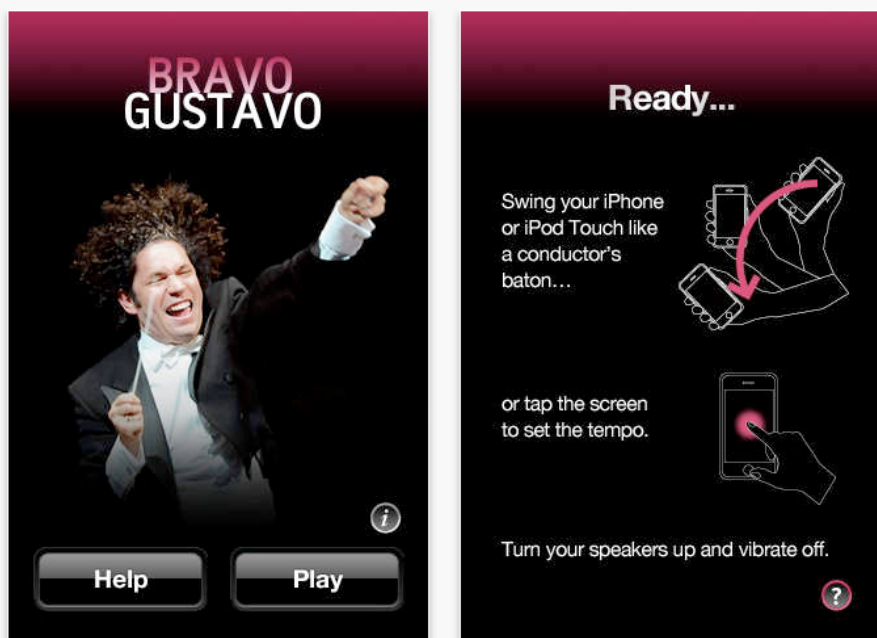
- Any phone or tablet that can get onto the web can see your mobile site. No installation is required.
- Some app creators already offer three-way solutions for iPhone, Android, and small-screen web browsing.

- If your main website doesn't look very good on a mobile device, or if a redesign is months or years away, then a mobile site can plug the gap.

Minuses

- You now have two sites to update. Keeping them in sync requires diligence over the long run.
- Designing a mobile site almost always leads to some retrofitting on your main site, to keep key branding consistent.
- Checkout options may not integrate with your in-house ticketing. For instance, you may be able to sell single tickets but not subscriptions, general admission but not reserved seats.

iPhone Screenshots



"Bravo Gustavo" conducting app: cool, but expensive to create.

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yoursite.com

Search Ads

Related Links

Website Builder →

Create a Web Site →

Submit Your Site →

Web Design →

Drive Traffic to My Web Site →

Yoursite.com offers free mobile-site templates.

MOBILE-FRIENDLY SITE

If a website does not look good on current mobile devices, but a major redesign is not in the immediate offing, a site can be made more mobile friendly by centering the content on the page so that it looks the same across all platforms, by streamlining the navigation, and by simplifying the pages so they load faster.

Pluses:

- De-cluttering the site for mobile users will improve the performance for desktop users, too.
- Adding click-to-call buttons and thumb-friendly action buttons will help mobile users without compromising desktop performance.

Minuses

“A quarter of all apps that consumers download to their phones are one and done—they are used and then almost immediately deleted.”

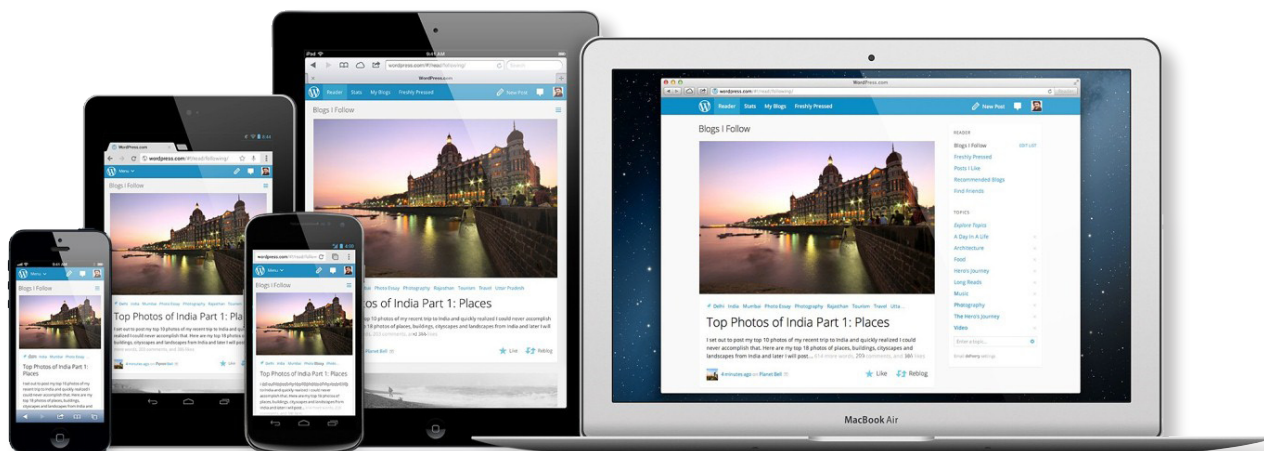
- As you remodel, you may break something you’re trying to fix.
- If your site is more than five years old, it may easier to undertake a comprehensive redesign.
- Your thinking will be web-down. Designers today are recommending the opposite. Start with mobile requirements, then design up.

RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

This is the current website ideal. The responsive site detects the device that is accessing it and delivers the page accordingly. Content components are centered on the screen or they are optimized as modules that can stack vertically or horizontally. To get the idea, go to the [San Francisco Ballet website](#) and widen or shrink the screen. You’ll see the content move around.

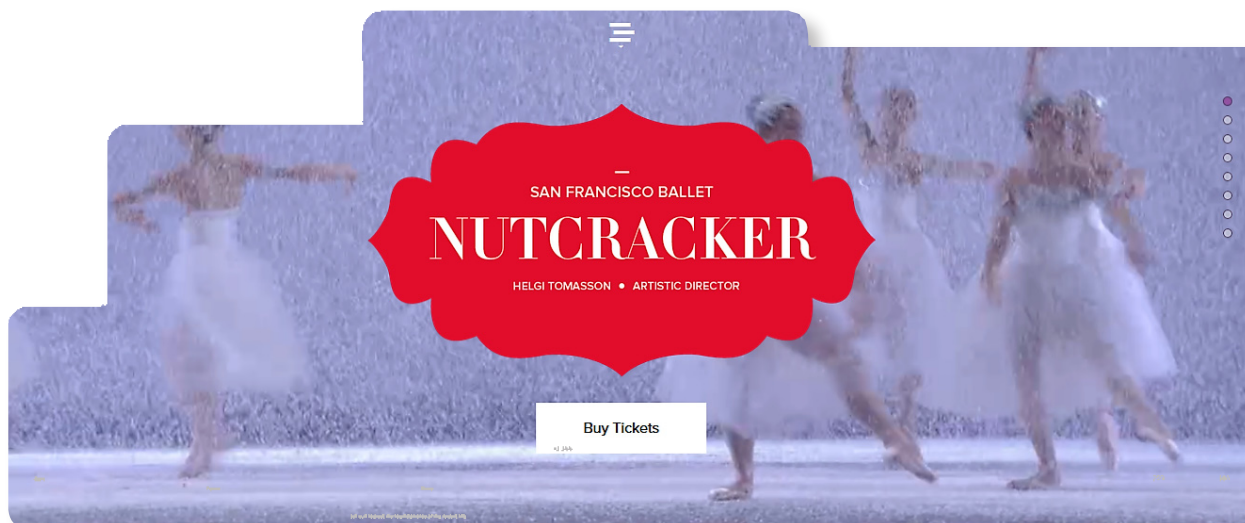
Pluses

- You manage the content once. As a concept, it’s ideal.
- Fluid layouts are fun.
- You can test the concept with a special-event or mini-festival site, such as the [Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Next Wave Festival](#).



Mobile friendly content stays the same on all platforms.

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San Francisco Ballet's web design is responsive.

Minuses

- It is impossible to convert a large existing website quickly. The project has to be planned carefully.
- Testing must be periodic and habitual, to make sure the templates continue to perform with reliable flexibility.


MOBILE STRATEGY AS MISSION CRITICAL

The optimum approach is for an organization to tie together all aspects of its technology infrastructure, brand management, business needs, analytical tools, and donor/customer relations into a smoothly functioning system built to last. The mobile solution should be central to high-level thinking, since it is the fastest growing segment of the market. It cannot be an afterthought. It requires the involvement of the entire organization and almost every internal computer system, as well as a high position in the design and communication strategy. Using a consultant is typical.

Plus

- The increasing sophistication of mobile users will be key to improving an arts organization's reach, brand, and performance.

Minuses

- Massive restructuring is likely to involve many months of initial planning and investment.
- The mobile field is changing so quickly that continuing annual upgrades will also be required. 



NANCY MALITZ

Nancy Malitz is the publisher of ChicagoOntheAisle.com. She has been writing about the intersection of the arts and technology most of her career. She developed some of Gannett Media's first newspaper websites and worked on strategic projects for media change.

GOING MOBILE

By Nancy Malitz

A Few Vendors

The following companies are among the many that offer app/mobile solutions to arts organizations. Please note that this list is by no means comprehensive.

InstantEncore

Aimed at: Presenters who want to expand interaction with customers on iPhone, Android, and mobile web devices.

Features: Suite of palm-size tools that many older websites cannot accommodate including: streaming audio, video on demand, location-based triggers for welcoming potential patrons in the neighborhood, important news updates pushed directly to mobile devices, one-tap sharing buttons for Facebook and other social media sites, link path or phone path to the box office.

Users: Pittsburgh Symphony, Seattle Shakespeare Co., El Paso Arts District, Dallas Summer Musicals, Columbus Symphony, University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance.

Pricing: \$1,000–\$10,000 annual, based on budget, plus a set-up fee; free to the user.



Features: Same as InstantEncore with added benefits: Because TN Mobile Plus is tied into the Tessitura customer-relations database, donors and subscribers can be recognized when they initiate contact via a mobile device. Their subscriber discounts and seating preferences are more readily accessed and monitored even when making a transaction by phone.

Users: New York Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, Santa Fe Opera, Canadian Opera Company.

Pricing: At member request.

Cloudtix

Aimed at: Presenters who want to expand interaction with customers on iPhone, Android, and mobile web devices, this is an alternative to InstantEncore with a different look and ticketing focus.

Features: Suite of palm-size tools for customers that many older websites cannot accommodate including streamlined mobile ticket sales. Presenters who use the Tessitura database can offer customers a "Select-a-seat" option. The calendar



TN Mobile Plus

Aimed at: Presenters who use the Tessitura office database, this is a customized InstantEncore version.



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Cloudtix
"Select-a-seat."

enables browsing by date, event, keyword, or traditional calendar view. Customers can also activate Twitter and Facebook tie-ins, flow-ins from YouTube and Flickr pages, maps, streaming, video, and audio on demand.

Users: Chicago Symphony Orchestra, New York City Center, Seattle Symphony, Roundabout Theatre Co., Musica Viva, San Francisco Opera.

Pricing: \$500-900 monthly, \$100 more for select-a-seat. See [demo video](#).

WordPress

Aimed at: Presenters familiar with the enormous WordPress web publishing environment. WordPress's millions of users have greatly improved the ability of WordPress frameworks to detect devices and adjust the way content looks. Musicians and presenters who already maintain blogs will find this a good path to developing a mobile strategy.

Features: Free and inexpensive templates ("themes") for site creation, and add-ons ("plugins") for selling tickets, such as [WooCommerce](#), which powers 37 percent of the world's online stores. New and updated WordPress themes and plugins are increasingly responsive to all screen sizes. Further, they are offered by a community (once mostly bloggers) that favors free and nearly free sharing.



Users: Eighth Blackbird, Toledo Museum, Lollapalooza Festival, Austin Opera.

Pricing: Typically free or less than \$100 a year.

EventBrite

Aimed at: Presenters who want to use Apple, Android, or mobile web tools to sell tickets, facilitate check-ins, track sales, and manage the event planning at off-site or rental locations. Ideal for festivals, outdoor concerts, and for ensembles and small organizations that sell their own tickets and offer events in multiple locations.

Features: An easy-to-use, intuitive mobile ticketing and sales transaction tool that works with Paypal, credit cards, and other online checkout options. At-the-door apps make it possible to set up a mobile box office and print out thermal tickets and wristbands for customers, or to allow their check-ins via phone swipe. An option to create seat maps and specific seat assignments is available.

Users: London New Year's Eve in the Sky 2017, Baltimore Playwrights Festival, Sanibel Blues and Jazz Festival, Lone Star Youth Orchestra, National Asian American Theater Conference, Golden Gate Theater San Francisco, DuPage Symphony Orchestra.

Pricing: Free to both presenters and customers if event is free. Otherwise the presenter pays a per-ticket service fee—2.5 percent per ticket to EventBrite—plus the usual transactional pass-through of 3 percent for credit-card processing.



REDESIGNING with MOBILE in Mind

By Rebecca Schmid

With an eye on mobile viewership, four prominent performing arts organizations redesigned their digital presence this past year and are now opening new channels for marketing, sales, fund-raising, and all points between. We asked each of them to describe priorities and a few new features.

Lyric Opera of Chicago

Upgrade considerations: [Lyric Opera](#)

relaunched its website last fall. In addition to making sure it was responsive and adapted to any screen, says Director of Marketing Lisa Middleton, the company focused on making its content more “engagement-based” as opposed to purely transactional. It now includes hotel recommendations, performance running times, and other information surrounding the event. Program notes are available in advance through flip-book technology that patrons can open on any device.



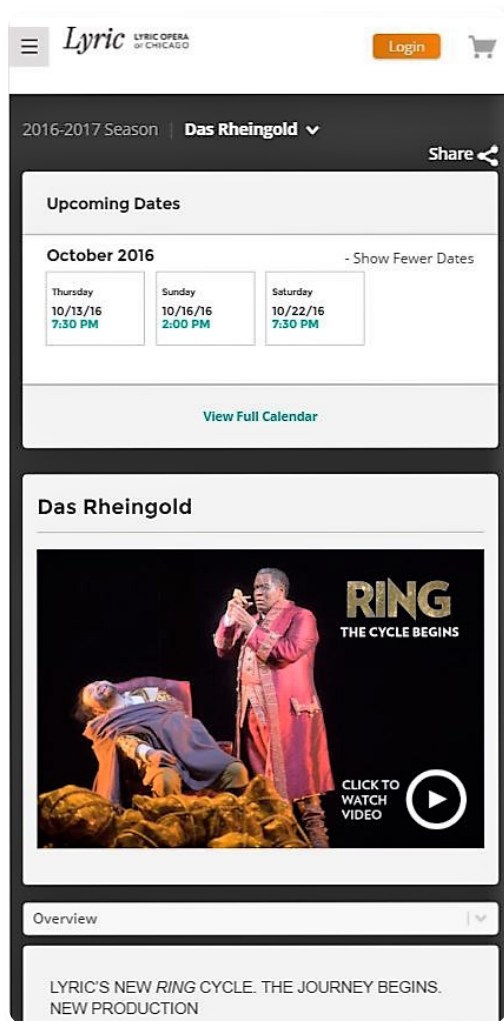
Lyric Opera of Chicago Director of Marketing Lisa Middleton.

“There’s a clear desire in our audience to learn more,” says Middleton, “so we wanted to make it easy for people to do that, whether they’re new to opera or a die-hard opera lover from out of town.”

Mobile: Once a patron’s ticket has been scanned (33 percent of Lyric’s audience uses mobile ticketing), he receives a special “thank you” on his screen; what with

all of his information now safely in the company’s network—including name, seat number, repertoire preferences, etc.—he may even receives a visit from a member of the development team once he’s in his seat.

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Screen shot from
Lyric Opera's
mobile website.



Lyric Opera offers a video series on Facebook featuring commentary from
Music Director Andrew Davis.

The app: Apps offer an opportunity to strengthen an organization's brand and enhance the mobile experience, but, as Middleton explains, they must address a specific problem: "You don't want to create one for the sake of saying you have one. I use my airline apps because they give me mobile boarding passes and tell me if the gates change. The Uber app is for a convenient car pick-up. So we have to think about what is missing in the arts consumer's experience."

Lyric Opera currently runs an app offering subtitles in real time to accompany radio broadcasts or streams. The company is in talks with vendors to produce one that would allow patrons to pre-order their drinks at a certain bar within the house rather than wait in line. Middleton also mentioned a potential app for pre-reserving a parking spot at a garage around the corner.

Social media: Middleton says that Lyric Opera had heard a "loud and clear" interest, especially from its social media community, in finding out "how the magic of the art comes together onstage." The company took advantage of the summer months to record interviews with artists, directors, and designers. Also very popular is a new video series in which Music Director Sir Andrew Davis [explains works from the piano](#).

In addition to Facebook and Twitter, the photo-sharing site [Instagram](#) (whose under-30 users are responsible for over half the site's activity, according to a [study by the Pew Foundation](#)) is exploding. The average Instagram user spends 21 minutes daily on his or her app, [reports econsultancy](#).

Lyric Opera has seen fast growth since joining last year, with over 15,000 followers (close to half its followers on Twitter). Middleton says that while Facebook falls right into their target market of highly educated females of 50 or above, the young audience on Instagram allows for a different approach to content.

Facebook ads allow Lyric Opera to target individuals by both basic demographics (age, location, gender) and their interests; not just opera and classical music lovers but those who enjoy "grand theatrical spectacle" are potential customers. In contrast to Twitter, she emphasizes that an organization can capitalize on fewer posts "because Facebook's algorithm sees that the post is popular with our audience and releases it more widely."



"Just Ask Roger" is a series that the Lyric Opera recently introduced on its website.

Streaming: Lyric Opera chooses not to stream entire performances but rather interviews, set tours, and snippets of rehearsals. It recently used Facebook Live to launch its feature "[Just Ask Roger](#)" — [Lyric's Dramaturg Answers all Your Opera Questions](#) and a set tour of its new *Rheingold* production, receiving 23,000 and 17,000 viewers, respectively. The company also broadcasts on [periscope.tv](#), a video streaming app launched last year, on which it has 821 followers.

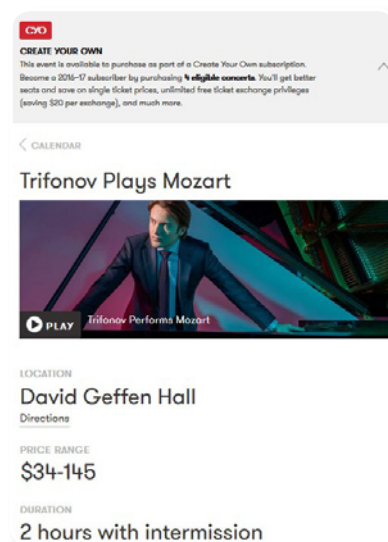
New York Philharmonic

Upgrade considerations: Vince Ford, the [NY Phil's](#) director of digital media, says the orchestra's web focus has shifted to "connecting the online and offline experiences" to increase satisfaction at every step of the "customer journey."

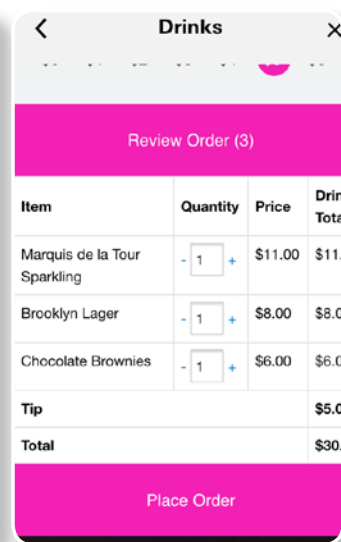
Since last year, the site has included basic information about planning a concert experience under the simple rubrics, "Getting Here" and "Once You're Here." Ford explained that museum websites had been an important model in the redesign process because of the clear, user-friendly way in which they present information.



New York Philharmonic Director of Digital Media Vince Ford.



Screen shot of New York Philharmonic's mobile website.



The NYPhilharmonic will soon offer pre-intermission drink ordering.

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Ford reports that the Philharmonic saw a 50 percent increase in online giving between the 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons. Mobile giving, however, remains “indistinct from online giving in general.”

Social media: Every month, the NY Philharmonic introduces a member of the orchestra through its series “On the Cover,” located under the rubric “Meet the People of the Philharmonic,” which receives 10 percent of the site’s overall traffic. The orchestra has also capitalized on video, which has increased viewership. Sharing its backstage interviews on Facebook and Twitter, says Ford, brings a “human dimension to music-making.”

Streaming: The New York Philharmonic recently took advantage of [Facebook Live](#) created last summer for streaming from iOS and Android devices. The orchestra opened its season in September with a live broadcast of its 175th anniversary gala concert, which received over 55,000 viewers.

The app: The Philharmonic has since 2009 run an app via [Instant Encore](#), where fans can find blog posts, the latest news, and listen to radio broadcasts. Ford nevertheless errs on the side of caution when it comes to developing an app. “We recognized early on that an app can do some really incredible things, but at the same time it’s really a long-term commitment. You have to keep it up with

new devices and operating systems and continue to improve it.”

The Philharmonic is currently honing its future plans. “I think we’re at a point now where we see a specific set of benefits with the technology,” says Ford. “Whether we do it on our own or with a partner is still to be decided.”

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

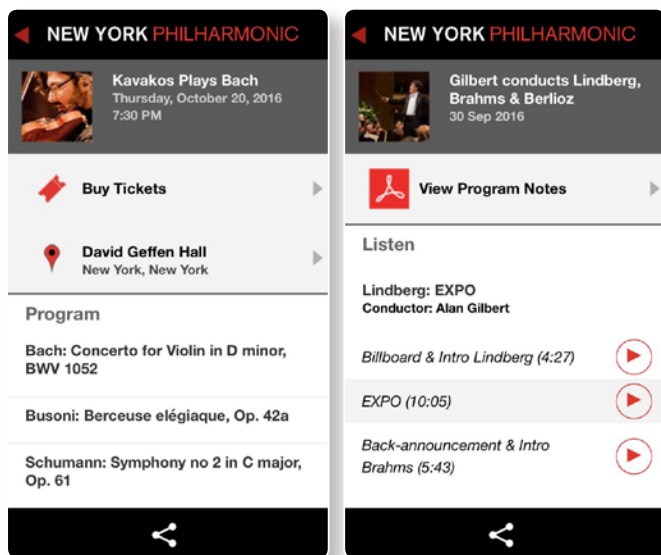
Upgrade considerations: [The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra](#) (RCO) recently opted for a responsive website that places more of an emphasis on video and photos and better integrates with social media. Since relaunching its site last May, it has seen a 10 percent growth in the number of sessions and a 32 percent growth in the number of transactions (tickets and CDs), according to Wietske Kuiper, the orchestra’s marketing and sales manager.



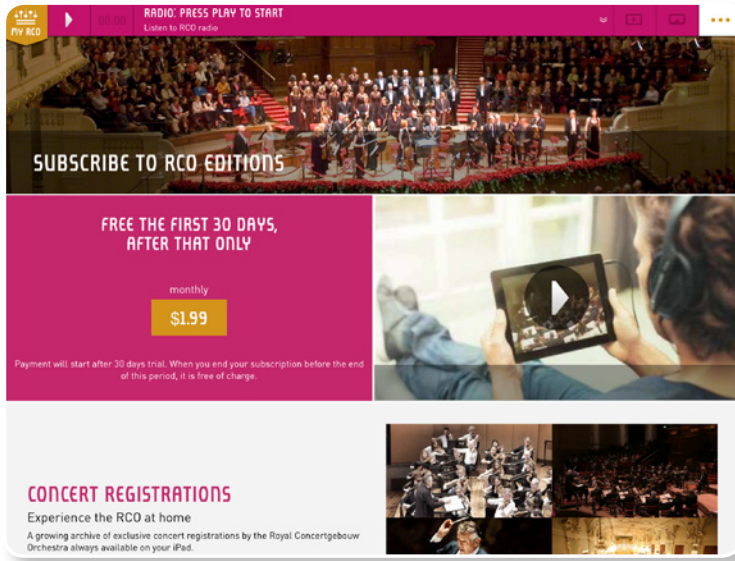
Royal Concertgebouw Marketing and Sales Manager Wietske Kuiper.

Mobile: Kuiper reports 28 percent of website traffic is now from cell phones and 15 percent is tablet-based. The RCO in 2013 launched the video magazine “[RCO Editions](#),” designed primarily for iPad and available by paid subscription. Kuiper says that in coming years the content (which includes high-quality concert footage and text) will become more closely integrated with the website, citing the opportunity to create a “pre-, during-, and after-” concert experience. “Of course everything revolves around the actual concert,” she says. “But you can broaden the experience.”

Social media: The responsive design has seen some important “conversions through social media,” says Kuiper. She cites a Facebook ad for a family concert that brought quite a number of new customers to the RCO’s mobile site. The RCO, meanwhile, plans to further develop its website as a place where visitors can learn about the orchestra “via the musicians.” For now, however, Facebook remains the main platform for behind-the-scenes coverage; a video campaign is currently accompanying the “[RCO meets Europe](#)” concert tour, in which the orchestra coaches and performs with a youth orchestra in all 28 member countries.



The New York Phil Instant Encore app offers event information, program notes, and more.



The Royal Concertgebouw's video magazine for iPads and tablets, "RCO Editions."

Mahler Chamber Orchestra

Upgrade considerations: As a touring orchestra that does not act as its own presenter, the [MCO](#) presents a different case. The launch of its new site in the summer of 2015 was accompanied by a complete rebranding, which included a new logo to reflect its identity as a "nomadic collective" of musicians from 20 different countries. Visual content was overhauled to appeal to audiences in a "less factual and more emotionally driven," intimate way, says MCO Managing Director Michael Adlick. Violinist Geoffroy Schied is charged with providing photos, offering an insider perspective.



Mahler Chamber Orchestra
Managing Director Michael Adlick.



Mahler Chamber Orchestra underwent a major rebranding when it redesigned its website.

Mobile: The site, whose traffic is 36 percent mobile and 9 percent tablet, features a tour-based calendar with links to presenters and video footage with titles like "On Becoming a Musician" and "Live, Play, Dream," along with social media links and ways to purchase tickets and CDs. It was previously more text-heavy and used a multi-lingual format. With the re-launch, the organization streamlined to English-only.

Social media: Last summer's concert tour took the orchestra to Lucerne; posting an image of a swan on Lake Lucerne on [Instagram](#) drew the attention of the Swiss city's tourism board over the summer. "You can become a brand only if you move beyond the closed party of concertgoers," says Adlick. [ma](#)

REBECCA SCHMID



Rebecca Schmid is a music writer based in Berlin. She contributes to the Financial Times, Musical America, The New York Times and other publications.

Making

the Switch to

MOBILE TICKETING

By Dina Gerdeman

It's no secret that the use of mobile platforms is rapidly gaining speed—and mobile sales are not far behind. A 2015 [Group of Minds](#) survey showed 81 percent of consumers use their mobile devices to look up arts and cultural events; out of that same universe, there were 37 percent more tickets purchased via mobile in 2015 than in 2012.

The numbers would undoubtedly be higher if more arts organizations made mobile sales a priority. But many have been slow to catch on. Mike Evenson, VP of marketing and product for [AudienceView](#), which provides help with software, tools, and platforms, says they may be missing out on sales as a result.



AudienceView VP of Marketing and Product Mike Evenson.

"If you don't provide a good mobile ecommerce experience, you get a lot of abandonment," he says. "You need to make sure you're on a platform that supports mobile purchases without it being a painful experience. If it's painful, you may lose an opportunity."



A mobile ticket, fully loaded with restaurants, hotels, and sharing options.

Time to take the plunge

Eugene Carr, founder and CEO of [Patron Technology](#), says he has worked with organizations that are selling 80 percent of their tickets online because they have made digital an important goal. Meanwhile, other organizations have been slower to invest in the digital end of their marketing—including, most importantly, their mobile web offerings.

"Many organizations still have websites that are complex where you can't find where to buy tickets or it's confusing or there's a roadblock," says Carr, whose firm provides technology tools for the arts and culture sector. "We know arts organizations typically don't have enough



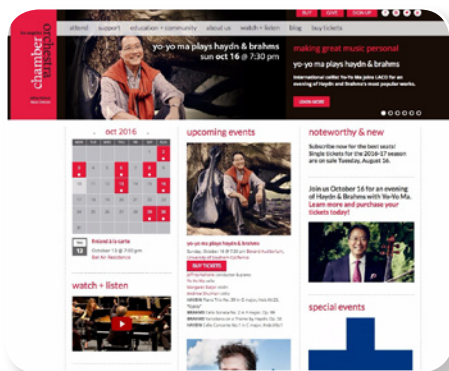
Eugene Carr, founder and CEO of Patron Technology.

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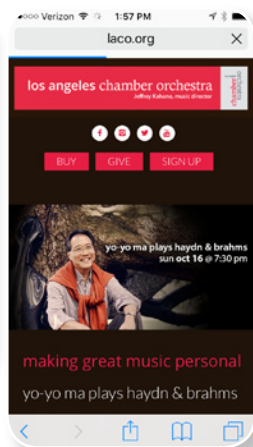
resources to do everything they want to do. But they need to shift their priorities toward digital.

"If organizations spent as much time and energy making their websites optimized as they did on their season brochure, their online ticketing purchases would skyrocket."

Step 1: Make it responsive



Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra's website is responsive to viewing on desktop or mobile.



When planning for a website redesign, especially one that involves ecommerce, first consider the myriad platforms available. "What you need is to make sure that when a customer looks at your website on their computer screen, tablet, and phone, the website has technology embedded in it so that it responsively changes," says Carr.

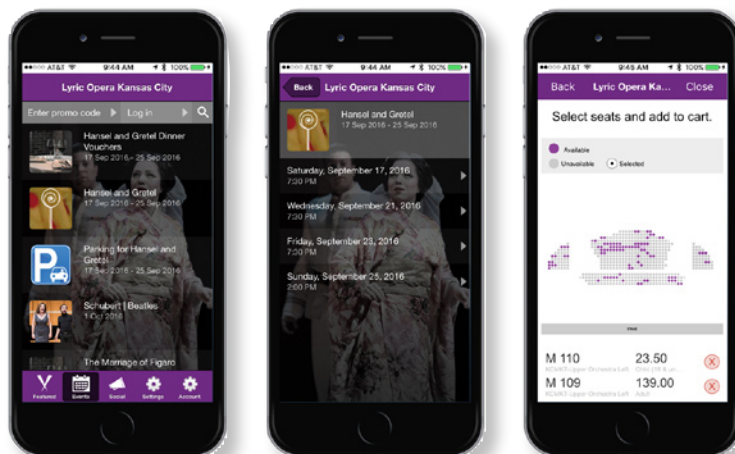
Step 2: Keep it simple

The mobile site should offer all the nuts-and-bolts information patrons need: show times, admission costs, directions, parking information—and, of course, a ticket purchasing platform. "Taking a desktop site and squishing it to mobile is not going to do well," says Kristin Darrow, senior VP of digital for [Tessitura Network](#), which provides technology and services for the arts and cultural sector.

Rather, designing for mobile means writing more concise content to fit the smaller screen and providing a simple, touch-friendly ecommerce transaction path that's built for "the smallest piece of real estate."



Kristin Darrow, senior VP of digital for Tessitura Network.



A mobile sales transaction should be simple and quick.

Step 3: Keep it quick, i.e., don't get personal—yet

People want to be able to do on a phone exactly what they can on a desktop, and that includes seat-selection, a feature many organizations don't offer on mobile. Patrons also don't want to jump through a lot of hoops—or clicks—to get their tickets, for example, by having to register before making a purchase.

"The number of steps you require is important. You don't want to over-ask for information," says Evanson. "This industry tends to try to identify people first as opposed to getting the transaction done and learning about people later."

Carr agrees: "Too many websites make the consumer work too hard," he says. "If I'm in Detroit and I'm thinking about going to a theater, if they make me create a user account, immediately I hear alarm bells. I don't want you to have my personal information. I'm just coming here for the first time. Don't make me get married to you when all I want to do is go on a first date."

Step 4: Drill, baby, drill

Rather than putting long-form content in an extended scroll on a mobile site, offer additional information as an extra, such that

"If organizations spent as much time and energy making their websites optimized as they did on their season brochure, their online ticketing purchases would skyrocket."

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The drill-down principal avoids clutter and speeds the purchase path.

consumers can just tap to if they want to learn more. That way, the site doesn't appear cluttered.

"With good design, you can allow the user to drill into the content or expand things as needed and still keep the path streamlined," says Darrow. "It's about how it's presented. You make it more discoverable as opposed to putting every possible

bit of content face forward. You can find design tricks geared toward making the mobile transaction as quick as possible."

To app or not to app?

Mobile apps are great for providing extra engagement. For example, at a football stadium, a big fan of a team might be willing to load an app to seek out more information about the players—and then the app can serve up offers to buy products and take advantage of discounts. But if organizations only have enough money to invest in one—a website or an app—Carr recommends focusing on the website.

"The challenge we have in the arts is, if you're going to see a symphony concert, you may not remember to load up the app in case they might send you a special offer," Carr said.

Beyond the scan

Patrons love the convenience of using their mobile phones to

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"I don't want you to have my personal information. I'm just coming here for the first time. Don't make me get married to you when all I want to do is go on a first date."

well. "It's not just about the transaction, it's about engagement," she says. "It's about taking advantage of dead time. While people

get into an event, versus having to print tickets at home. Nearly 50 percent of the people surveyed by Group of Minds said they had displayed their tickets on their phones to gain access to events.

Darrow points out that there can be life beyond the purchase, as

are waiting in line for a drink, give them some interactive program notes." Or perhaps display discounted offers for future shows. Just make sure those screens go dead at showtime. Allowing mobile phones during performances is still tricky terrain; they can be distracting to both artists and audience members and can affect people's enjoyment of the performance. **ma**

DINA GERDEMAN

Dina Gerdeman is an award-winning reporter and editor with more than 20 years of experience.



MAKING THE SWITCH: THE WHEELER OPERA HOUSE IN TRANSITION



The Wheeler Opera House in Aspen, CO.

Redesigning with mobile in mind is high on the agenda for the Aspen, CO, [Wheeler Opera House](#) as it works on its new website, slated to be released soon.

"A lot of times people develop this gorgeous desktop version of a website with a lot of beautiful photos, but then the general public hardly ever uses it because everyone's on mobile now," says Executive Director Gena Buhler. "We are working with our



Gondola ride as optimum mobile moment.

programmer and web designer to design everything with that in mind." She has engaged the Texas-based firm [Soloshoe Communications](#), and estimates the cost of the new design to be in the neighborhood of \$30,000.

Buhler reports that much of the input for the new design has come from the weekly and seasonal surveys the opera house conducts among its patrons.

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Making the Switch: The Wheeler Opera House in Transition (cont'd)

Aspen provides some special opportunities for mobile marketing, Buhler notes, especially come winter time. That 16-minute gondola ride to the top of the mountain is one. "You're inside and warm, so you want to pull up your phone, maybe buy a ticket to the opera. But right now people are faced with a tiny version that requires them to do a lot of zooming in and scrolling to figure out how to buy tickets, and if you don't know where to look, the process can be tough to maneuver."

So far, the workaround has been to send people to [AspenShowTickets](#), the ticketing arm of the Wheeler Opera House, but it's not an ideal solution, especially because it sends patrons away from the opera-house site, where all of its branding and marketing lives.

Still, about 50 percent of customers buy from their mobile phones, and Buhler expects that percentage to rise once the newly optimized site is in place.

"I think we will see a huge increase from the tourist population," says Buhler. "If it was me and I was visiting [the opera house site] and it was cumbersome to use

"People don't read that much anymore. If you have a mobile site that's text-heavy, you'll lose them."

on mobile, I would go elsewhere. This is a very active town; ease of convenience is key."

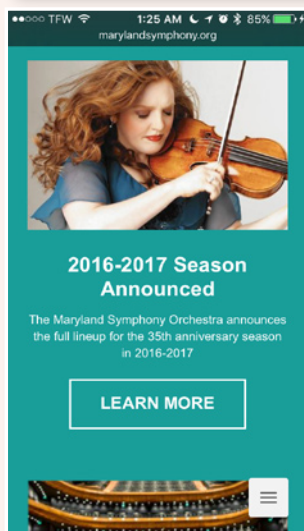
The opera house is also looking into developing an interactive app that would enable customers to learn historic details about various sites as they wander through town.

Buhler's advice for mobile optimization: Keep the content tight and clear. Use video to help tell your story. "People don't read that much anymore. If you have a site that's text-heavy, you'll lose them." Finally, do your homework.

"We looked at 60 different sites and platforms of entertainment venues across the country to get a look at who's doing it right," Buhler said. They were looking for sites that presented a clear brand and were easy to navigate, both in terms of finding information and selling tickets. "Another key factor was open space and not too much text or graphic overload," she says. Asked for her top choices, she lists:

[OPAS](#) at Texas A&M University
[The Durham Performing Arts Center](#)
[The McCallum Theatre](#)

MAKING THE SWITCH: MARYLAND SYMPHONY'S EUREKA MOMENT



Maryland Symphony's new logo and new look; 70 percent of ticket sales are now on mobile devices.

[Maryland Symphony Orchestra](#), which presents monthly concerts that mix pops and classical programming, recently refreshed its brand with a new, more modern logo and a fresh, mobile-enhanced website, as well as a custom portal

that allows for easy clicking to purchase tickets. The ticketing portal was launched in the beginning of May, the new responsive website on July 1.

"Prior to that, we had a really clunky system," says Michael Harp, director of marketing and public relations for the orchestra. "It wasn't impossible to use; it was just difficult. People are doing their shopping on mobile now. They're accustomed to

having Amazon at their fingertips. Since that's the world we live in, we had to find a solution."

The response has been tremendous. Prior to the launch of the mobile site, about 10 to 15 percent of ticket sales came from mobile; now the number is closer to 70 percent. Ticket sales in general are up by almost 10 percent over last year, and website traffic has also increased. The organization normally had between 30,000 and 40,000 visits on its website annually, but from July 1 to mid-September, visits rose to 20,000, with 70 to 75 percent coming from mobile. Plus, people are staying on the site longer, from an average of 30 seconds on the old site to three to four minutes on the new. "We've taken down a barrier," says Harp. "We didn't make it easy to buy tickets. Now, when you hear that commercial on the radio, you can buy [your ticket] right away, when you're thinking about it, rather than waiting until you get home to the desktop. People have truly embraced this."

For the second phase of its mobile redesign, the orchestra is looking into creating an app that uses the content of its program book and brings it to life with graphics and interactive features.

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MAKING THE SWITCH: CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA'S NEW TICKETING APP



Cleveland Orchestra's one-month-old Members Club app.

The [Cleveland Orchestra's](#) new Members Club, launched in September, is geared specifically to millennials and Generation X-ers—people who make decisions about their leisure time by swiping and tapping their phones.

Accessed either via smartphone app (built by [L2](#), an Illinois-based digital media firm) or on the [orchestra's website](#), the club offers unlimited concerts for a \$35 monthly fee, plus \$10 per concert ticket, and includes some 100 concerts annually at Severance Hall and the Blossom Music Festival. The app of course has the added advantage of delivering the ticket directly to the phone with a barcode that can be scanned in the hall.

"We decided on the app to provide additional ease of mobile use, in particular for accessing mobile tickets and helping us be in control of who is using the service," said Jim Sector, Cleveland's assistant director of loyalty marketing.

The Orchestra previously introduced an all-purpose app in 2011 but it was discontinued after the launch of a mobile-optimized website in 2014. Even with a traditional paper ticketing system—in which patrons can print out their tickets at home or pick them up at the hall—the orchestra reports a steady

uptick in mobile sales transactions: last month, they represented 22 percent of all ticket purchases, up from 12 percent in 2014.

To get value from the new Members Club, patrons would need to buy at least one ticket a month, given that single ticket prices range from \$29 to \$92.

"If you come one or two times a month, you're getting about the same discount as in one of our [traditional] subscriptions," said Sector. "If you're a raving mad fan and you come nine times a month, well, good for you."

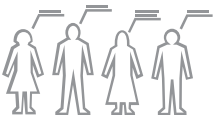
Officials hope the club will build loyalty and encourage frequent attendance, a leading indicator of whether someone will donate money. "We have studies that suggest that somebody who comes eight, nine, or 10 times a year, and is a new patron, is much more likely to donate to the organization than a 20- or 30-year patron who comes only once a year," said Sector (as of yet, the new app doesn't include a donate button).

The new program also drew on a 2015 study of orchestra subscription plans by the consulting firm Oliver Wyman that called on orchestras to explore "methods used in other industries (e.g., retail, grocery, fitness), that build 'stickier' relationships with customers."

It's too early to judge the success of the Members Club, but feedback thus far has been uniformly positive. "People really enjoy the fact that you can sit in different places every time," said Justin Holden, Cleveland's director of public relations. "A lot of the patrons liked the ability to experience concerts from different angles." — Brian Wise

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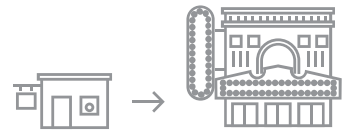
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MOBILE and LIVE *Performance* A Not Imperfect Union

By John Fleming

Keeping your mobile device *on* during a live performance—or at least before, between, and after—is no longer strictly verboten. In fact, in some cases your personal mobile device can amplify and enhance the greater experience. Here are a few early adventures in the intersection between the live action under the proscenium and the screen action in your hand.

Lincoln Center's Field Trip to the Super Bowl

Last February, [Lincoln Center's](#) Senior VP for Brand & Marketing Peter Duffin and several other staff members went to the Super Bowl—not because they're necessarily football fans but because they wanted to observe [Levi's Stadium](#) in action. Home of the San Francisco 49ers since opening in 2014, the Santa Clara, CA, facility is the most digitally connected stadium in the world, equipped with a staggering array of Ethernet, cloud-based



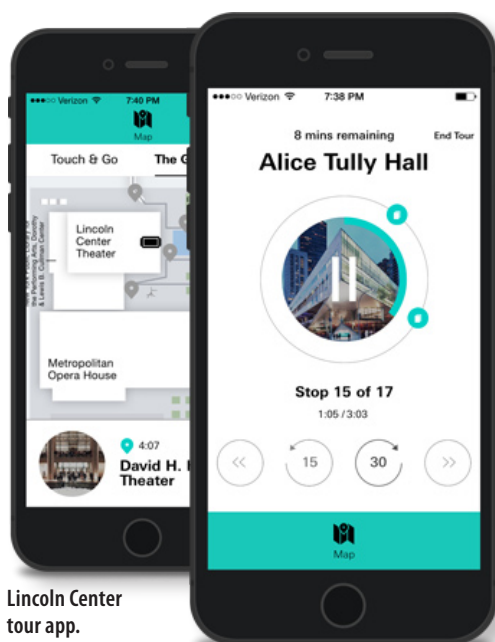
Lincoln Center VP for Brand & Marketing Peter Duffin.

voice, HD Wi-Fi, and broadcast technology. With their mobile devices, fans can do everything from order a drink at their seats to download and share exclusive in-venue content on social media.

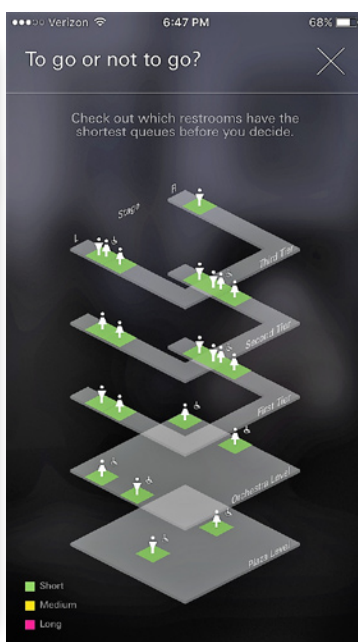
"They call it a BYOD stadium—bring your own device," says Duffin. "I'm a big believer that those of us working in the not-for-profit space need to learn from people in the for-profit space in parallel industries—and sports definitely is one—who may have more resources at their fingertips.

To that end, Lincoln Center now offers free public Wi-Fi throughout its 16-acre campus and provides a mobile app at certain of its venues that enables the user to pre-order intermission drinks or track the length of the rest-room line. There's also an [app with a tour of the center](#).

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Lincoln Center tour app.



Some Lincoln Center venues offer an app that indicates rest-room lines.

Nobody is posting selfies during New York Phil concerts—yet. “For us, we draw the distinction between what I call the doughnut around the performance, the pre- and post-performance space, and the actual performance,” Duffin says. “In sports, connectivity takes place constantly during the performance, but we try to keep the in-performance experience free of digital clutter. Our drink ordering shuts off when the show starts. We don’t want you to be playing with your phone. We want you to be focused on the stage.”

LiveNote in Philadelphia

For selected concerts, the [Philadelphia Orchestra](#) encourages audience members to keep their mobile devices on and download

High-tech hopes for Geffen

With Geffen Hall, home of the New York Philharmonic, scheduled to undergo a projected \$500 million renovation starting in 2019, the building’s digital infrastructure will be a priority, though Duffin says it is still under development. “We want all of our venues to be very digitally enabled, but we don’t have a crystal ball. How do we build these buildings so they can enable whatever the technology is down the road? We talk a lot about making sure there are holes in the venues to facilitate whatever new wiring is going to be needed.”

Demographics is an urgent reason for the introduction of more technology into the performing arts, says Duffin. “Obviously, for younger generations, their experience of the world is mediated through their phone, and we have to meet that demand. Plus, there are things you can do with mobile technology that you really couldn’t do in any other way.”



A \$500 million upgrade says Geffen Hall will be “very digitally enabled.”

LiveNote, an app that provides program notes and other information in synch with the performance.

Developed by the orchestra in collaboration with Drexel University starting in 2011, at a cost of about \$300,000, LiveNote is like having a slide show on your phone, with multiple options to guide you through a piece. There are several tracks from which to choose: one for a user with no music background that brings in historical and cultural references, another that is more specific to the score, explaining such aspects as thematic development, key change, instrumentation, motivic material, and so forth. A third track is geared to kids. Also available is an overall map of the music being played.



Philadelphia Orchestra’s LiveNote app provides program commentary in synch with performance.

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"Developing the content is the art form in this," says Jeremy Rothman, the orchestra's vice president for artistic planning. "You can have really slick technology, it can interface well with the concert, but if the content is just mediocre, then what's the point?"

Ben Roe, a longtime public radio and TV broadcaster who is now executive director of the Heifetz International Music Institute, has created much of the LiveNote content.

"The idea is that you have somebody sitting right next to you," continues Rothman, "telling you at just the right moment what's about to happen, or what to listen for. It's like somebody tapping you on the shoulder and saying, 'Coming up is one of the most famous oboe solos in the repertoire. Check it out.' And then your hear it."

LiveNote has been gradually introduced to audiences over the past two years. At several concerts in which it was available last season, about 18 percent of the audience downloaded it.

This season, LiveNote is being offered on eight subscription programs, for works such as Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, the Shostakovich Fourth Symphony, Canteloube's *Songs of the Auvergne*, Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, and Mason Bates's *Alternative Energy*.

Though LiveNote may be responsive to a younger demographic that constantly interacts with its smartphones, Rothman views the app primarily in artistic terms. "I don't think this is so much about demographics. This is not a gimmick to get people interested in the orchestra. This is about enhancing the musical experience with the tools we have today."

Solving the translation problem

Rothman finds LiveNote especially useful for following text and translations for opera and oratorios. "Rather than there being a supertitle screen above the stage, you have the text in your hand," he says. "I'm somebody who likes to see the original language and look at it next to the translation. You can't do that with supertitles. You can do that with a printed program, but a program doesn't track



Philadelphia Orchestra VP
for Artistic Planning
Jeremy Rothman.



LiveNote graphics use muted colors so the screens can be used anywhere in the hall.

along with the music in real time. The other drawback of supertitles is that if you miss something, it's gone, whereas with this app, you can flip back a couple of slides, read the translation of what was sung, then hit the live button to jump right back to where you are in the piece."

The app features a dark screen and grey lettering and graphics in muted colors. "Frankly, I find it less obtrusive than sitting next to somebody flipping pages in the playbill, or shining their penlight on the page to read the text in the dark," says Rothman. The app is designed for use anywhere in the hall. "We worked hard to make it very subtle, very unobtrusive to somebody sitting next to you," he continues. "Ultimately, we came to the conclusion that if we didn't feel it could be everywhere in the hall, then it should be nowhere in the hall. We didn't want to sequester people."

Rothman calls LiveNote "a more personalized experience" and reports far less "blowback" with its use in the hall than with in-concert video. "Video is more in your face," he says.

"What we've learned in surveys," says Ryan Fleur, vice president for advancement "is that people who have used the app either really like it or are neutral. Those who haven't tried it tend not to like it. So the goal, the key, is to get it into people's hands and let them try it. Because nobody who tried LiveNote hated it."

In addition to the \$300,000 in development and software costs, Fleur estimates the orchestra paid between \$50,000 and \$100,000 to equip Verizon Hall with Wi-Fi to operate LiveNote. "It's a closed network, and once they're on it, it's difficult for people to check their email or go on Facebook," he says. Other performing arts organizations have expressed interest in the app, which the orchestra is looking into licensing. "We've heard

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from about 40 organizations asking about LiveNote, ranging from the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam to the Pensacola Symphony.

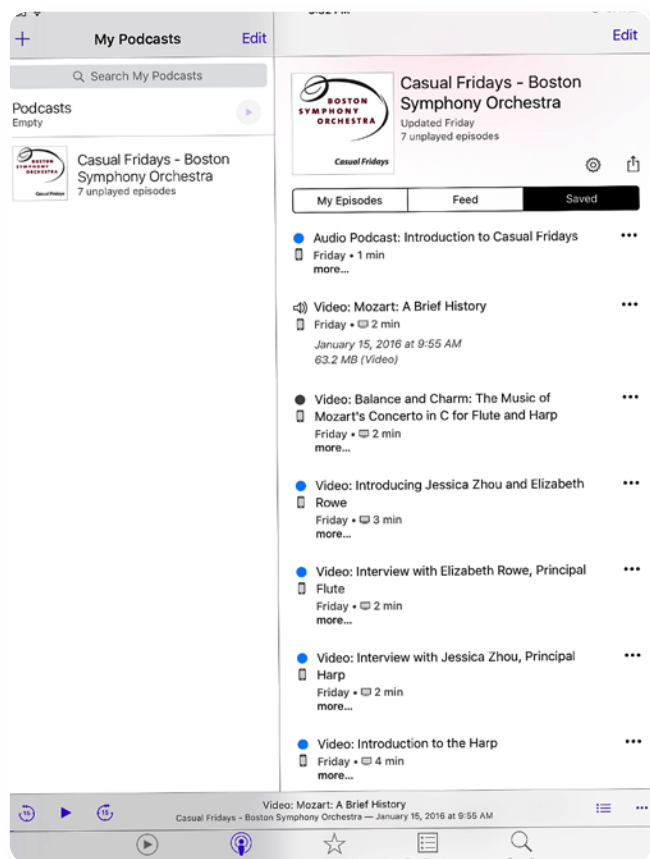
Free iPads get mixed results in Boston

For three “Casual Fridays” concerts last season, the [Boston Symphony Orchestra](#) offered iPads pre-loaded with program notes, scores, and interviews with soloists. Ticket-buyers could use the devices in a 100-seat technology area at the rear of Symphony Hall that featured video monitors showing the conductor from the orchestra’s point of view. The conductor cam was popular, the iPads, not so much.

“We came to the conclusion that people didn’t want to use devices during concerts,” says



Boston Symphony Orchestra Chief Operating and Communications Officer Kim Noltemy.



Menu options for Boston Symphony Orchestra Casual Fridays iPad experiment.



Boston Symphony Orchestra conductor cam in action.

Kim Noltemy, the BSO’s chief operating and communications officer. “Honestly, we found that people, other than using the iPad as a score reader, almost didn’t look at it at all during the concert. There wasn’t a lot of demand for it. We had 100 iPads available to start this off, and we never even had 100 requested.”

The orchestra has discontinued the iPad project, although the conductor cam remains, viewable from 100 seats (\$25 a piece) in a certain section of the hall. “There was incredible enthusiasm for that,” Noltemy says. “People were riveted.”

The Tanglewood Lawncast

The BSO first experimented with using mobile devices during concerts in 2014, with a Lawncast at its summer home at the Tanglewood Music Center. Concertgoers could access content about the all-Dvořák program and live video on smartphones and tablets. “We had a designated area on the lawn, which we pushed pretty hard, but it was not popular at all,” Noltemy says. “I think maybe what could work at Tanglewood is more of social media kind of thing, something interactive.” But building the infrastructure for that would be incredibly expensive, says Noltemy. “With the trees and the wind and the weather, having a stable Wi-Fi connection on our lawn proved to be far more challenging than we anticipated.”

With a small staff, Noltemy outsources most of the BSO’s tech work. “The challenging part for all of us who are not technology companies is the process,” she says. “There’s nothing that comes out of a box. Whenever you do something it’s very time consuming and labor intensive. To launch a new app might take six to nine months. I can’t just go buy the software, spend a week filling in our content, and then it’s ready. Every bit of

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Screenshot from 2014 Tanglewood Lawncast.

content has to be current. You can't have anything old. Even an orchestra member's bio is going to be invalid after one year because you have to update all the new and important things that have happened. I don't think there's a nonprofit in the country adequately staffed for what needs to be done today."

The BSO has mixed feelings about the use of mobile devices during performances. "A lot of patrons are very much against it," says Noltemy. "In surveys, at least 30 percent are strongly opposed. This is an organization that has existed for a really long time and lot of people are happy with the way it is. But of course we know that complacency is not good."

Tweet seats at Opera Theater of St. Louis

"Tweet seats," for people who do real-time Twitter commentary on a production, are not uncommon among opera companies. San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Minnesota Opera, LA Opera, and San Diego Opera are among those that invite tweeters to do their thing from a specific section of the theater—but only at dress rehearsals.

[Opera Theater of St. Louis](#) is rare, in that it has tweet seats during one or two actual performances, beginning in 2013 with *The Pirates of Penzance*. This past season, there was a Twitter stream for two performances of *La Bohème* at #otslboheme.

"A dress rehearsal is not a performance in terms



Opera Theater of St. Louis General Director Timothy O'Leary.

of electricity and the polish of a performance," OTSL General Director Timothy O'Leary says. "If we're inviting the public to evaluate the performance and share that evaluation with their Twitter followers, we want them to be experiencing the real thing."

Opera Theater requires live tweeters to apply for the complimentary tickets (usually \$50 to \$89) and "demonstrate that they have a large enough following on Twitter," O'Leary says. "It wouldn't be worth our while to provide comps for someone who has 10 followers." The numbers of followers for the 43 live tweeters during *La Bohème* ranged from 43 to 5,003.



Group shot of OTSL *La Bohème* Twitter users; their followers ranged from 43 to 5,003.

The tweet seats are in two back rows of the 954-seat theater, with a buffer row between them and other audience members. Tweeters are told to use cellphones and not tablets or laptops, which emit more light, and the phones must be on silent. "Because they're in the back of the center bay, you can't see the tweeters from anywhere else in the house," says Joe Gfaller, director of marketing and public relations. "They're largely blocked off by the physical landscape of the theater. They're not visible unless you're really looking for them." Gfaller says he has heard only one complaint about live tweeting in the four years it has been going on.

Critics on the fly

Tweeters are treated like members of the press. "They get a press kit, and we allow them to download photos already approved for the press that they can use while they're tweeting," Gfaller says. "There was only one time when someone broke the rules and took their

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This set is just so Seventies splendorific. It's like a game show where the prize is a disco with Don Basilio. #otslbarber - @krystinarneson

9:22 PM - 27 May 2015

3 3

Twitter commentary posted at hashtag #otslbarber during OTSL dress rehearsal.

own photo during the performance, and they quickly took it down and were very apologetic."

The Twitter stream has included as many as 1,200 tweets during a single performance. In 2014, the OTSL staging of *The Magic Flute*, directed and designed by famous fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi, even drew a response from Mizrahi himself. "Given Isaac Mizrahi's reach on Twitter, that meant that hash tag #otslflute went out to tens of thousands of his followers very quickly," Gfaller says.

The cast is in on the act

Many singers are active Twitter users, and cast members often join the stream during intermission. In 2014, tenor Rene Barbera, singing Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love*, got into a Twitter conversation with one of the live tweeters, who was a volunteer at Kingdom House, a social service organization in St. Louis. "The end result was that during the run Rene visited Kingdom House to sing for a group of young people there," O'Leary says. "A traditional performance would never have had the opportunity for something like that to happen."

Opera Theater has stuck with standard repertory for live tweeting. "We're drawn toward pieces that are comedies, that are visually compelling and that have a strong foundation in the pantheon of great opera," Gfaller says. "The people coming to live tweet are more likely to be new operagoers themselves. They are less critics and more lifestyle bloggers." Surprisingly, the tweeters have not necessarily fit the stereotype of tech-savvy youngsters. "I assumed it would mostly be Millennials, but in practice, we've had people into their 60s doing this."

O'Leary says it's hard to measure the direct impact of the live tweeting on ticket sales. "The value of doing it is the tremendous capacity of Twitter and social media in general to create word of mouth and make the kind of impact that is less and less available from traditional media coverage."

Twitter Q&A in San Francisco—cue the set change

Sometimes, the stage action between acts is as interesting as the performance. [San Francisco Opera](#)'s Open Curtain capitalizes on that, with the curtain remaining up at intermission at selected performances so audience members can watch the stage crew; people use a hashtag on Twitter to ask questions of the crew.

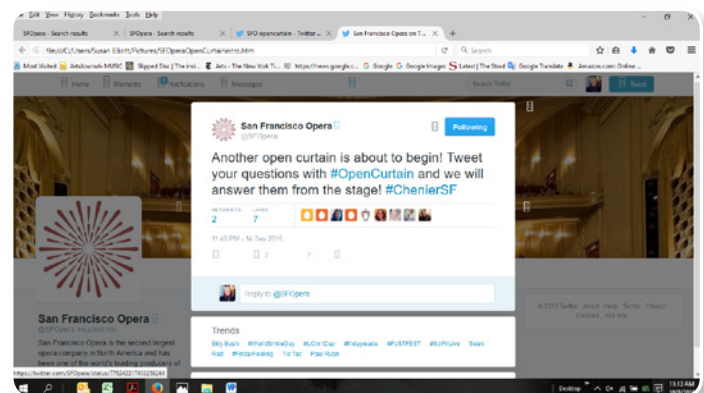
For an Open Curtain during *Andrea Chénier* in September, Ted Schaller, the company's digital content manager, fielded tweets from the audience on his phone and relayed questions to Daniel Knapp, the company's director of production. "It was a particularly interesting set change because the stagehands were pulling chandeliers off the ceiling, tearing down walls, putting up new doors, setting up new tables," Schaller says. "The stagecraft that goes on behind the scenes is almost more choreographed than the opera itself, and people love seeing that. They love having the magic of opera revealed."

SFO management reached an agreement with the stage employees union to accommodate Open Curtain, which started in the summer season of 2015. In September, it began being posted on Facebook Live, and the *Andrea Chénier* session had more than 3,400 views.

Other intermission participants have included composer Bright Sheng and Director Stan Lai to answer questions about the premiere of Sheng's *Dream of the Red Chamber*.



San Francisco Opera Digital Content Manager Ted Schaller.



San Francisco Opera Open Curtain during recent *Andrea Chénier* intermission.

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Question from the audience for SFO Open Curtain session.

Twitter solves the logistical problem of conducting a Q&A in the 3,200-seat War Memorial Opera House. "It's an easy way to collect questions so we can answer them that night live," Schaller says. "We have about 10 minutes to take the tweets and get anywhere from two to 15 questions. We aim for about two Open Curtains per run of each show." He adds that Open Curtain makes the opera experience more interactive, as well as educational and more fun.

Death and the Powers in Dallas—and Around the World

Speaking of interactive, Tod Machover's 2014 *Death and the Powers* for the [Dallas Opera](#) is still gaining kudos for having broken new ground in the performing arts. "I wanted to bring a piece to Dallas that was much more innovative than anything we had done in our history," says Keith Cerny, who arrived as CEO in 2010. "I wanted people here to think about opera in very different terms."



"Powers Live" app initializes for Tod Machover's opera *Death and the Powers*.

Mission accomplished. *Death and the Powers*, a tech-heavy work by [Musical America 2016 Composer of the Year Machover](#) and his Opera of the Future group at the MIT Media Lab, is to date the boldest use of mobile technology by a major company. The 2014 Dallas performance was simulcast to nine sites in the U.S. and Europe, where audience members could not only watch the opera on a large screen but also use a "Powers Live" app to access it on their tablets and phones. They could even affect certain aspects of what was happening onstage at the Winspear Opera House.



...Powers composer Tod Machover.

"This was astonishingly complex from a technical point of

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Dallas Opera CEO Keith Cerny: "I wanted people here to think about opera in very different terms."

1,000 audience members in the remote locations (out of total attendance of 1,700 for the simulcast) downloaded the app. Total cost of the simulcast was about \$250,000, largely underwritten by a pair of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs.

Death and the Powers, previously staged without a simulcast and app in Monte Carlo, Boston, and Chicago, is an opera about mortality. Its protagonist, a tycoon named Simon Powers, seeks to transcend death by downloading aspects of himself into "The System," a sort of computer matrix depicted in a sci-fi staging that included a Greek chorus of robots and three 15-foot electronic panels that pulsated with color.

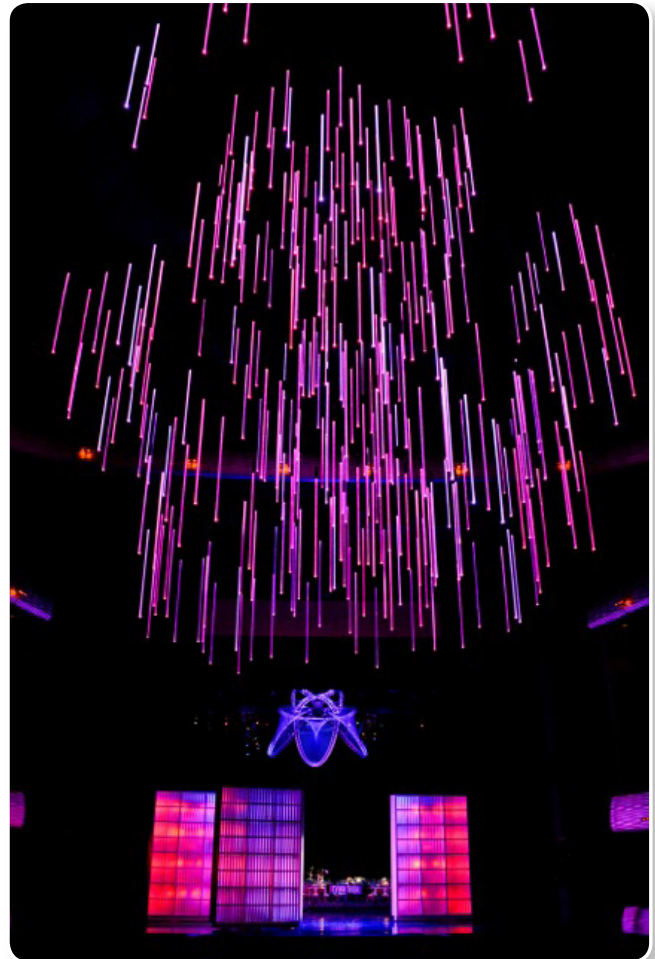
Audience as stage director

Machover, who has long worked at the intersection of technology and art, tapped into the motorized chandelier in the opera house as a vehicle for app users to interact with. "During a couple of scenes, we allowed people on their devices around the world to influence the lighting of the chandelier—how bright and how variable and how synchronized it was—and a little bit of its motion, right over the heads of the audience," he says. "It gave extra life to the [opera] because people knew they were influencing it, and it made their presence felt in the opera house."

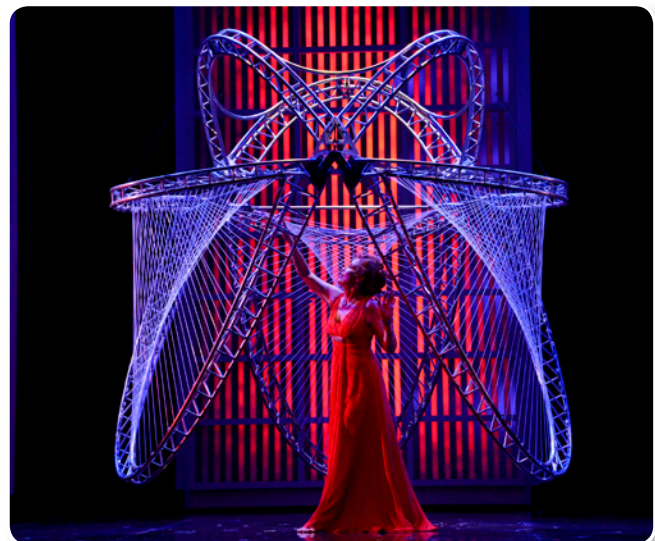
The singer playing Powers (Robert Orth in Dallas) was onstage in only the first and last of the opera's eight scenes. Otherwise he was inside The System, performing from a booth in the orchestra pit, and the app allowed users to see video of him there. "So people with the mobile devices were seeing something nobody in the opera house could see," Machover says.

The app also supplied abstract imagery. "There was always something on your mobile screen, even if it was just a texture or a color related to something in the lighting or the movement,"

view," Cerny says. "Not only in terms of the actual production, but we had to have bandwidth on three separate satellites to reach all nine locations, and in some locations, an enhanced Wi-Fi network to ensure the app would run without latency. This pushed every technical limit I can think of." About



Audience members used their mobile devices to influence the lighting of the chandelier during . . . *Powers*.



Live shot from Dallas Opera's production of *Death and the Powers*: Mezzo-soprano Patricia Risley.

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he says. "It never went blank, and like prayer beads, there was always something that happened if you touched the screen—say, if there was a texture on the screen and you moved your finger gently, the texture might follow your finger. All these sorts of things allowed you to feel connected to the mobile device" and, by turns, to the opera.

Machover has moved on to incorporate mobile devices into the making of a series of City Symphonies that include homages to Detroit, Toronto, Amsterdam, and Lucerne. "We are currently developing a whole new generation of mobile experiences for our next round of City Symphonies," he says. "These new apps will let people mix and morph sounds directly on their mobile devices, modify sound mixes depending on the way one moves through the city, and to add these sounds to the overall mix during live performances."

Car Opera in Los Angeles

As artistic director of L.A.-based production company [The Industry](#), Yuval Sharon says his aim is "to bring new, experimental opera into the civic life of L.A." Cars are a big part of that civic life, as are mobile devices, and the combination of the two played a central role in *Hopscotch*, the six-year-old company's sprawling, site-specific work inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. It ran last fall, involving 24 limousines driving



The opera *Hopscotch* involved 24 limousines driving around Los Angeles; video was taken by audience members on their smartphones.

around Los Angeles and video taken by audience members on smartphones.

Hopscotch, conceived and directed by Sharon, had a cast of 126 musicians, dancers, and actors, as well as a production team of almost 100. Six composers contributed to the score. With a budget of about \$1 million, the 90-minute work was performed three times daily on weekends in a sold-out run (tickets were \$125 and \$155) in October and November 2015.

Each limousine was occupied by four audience members plus actors or musicians, and on their routes they stopped at sites like City Hall, the Bradbury Building (a location for the



The Central Hub for *Hopscotch* was used for both performers...



and audience; it was equipped with 24 monitors and wireless headphones.

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Yuval Sharon, artistic director of LA-based production company The Industry.

1982 cult film *Blade Runner*), and the Los Angeles River. At each stop a scene took place that represented one chapter in the overall story. Cameras in the cars produced a live stream shown on 24 monitors that were part of the production's Central Hub, a temporary structure in a parking lot that was open for free viewing and listening via wireless headphones.

Audience as camera-persons


"What happened is that in some cars there would be a phone with a camera that we put on a holder, and one of the audience members became the cameraman," Sharon says. "People were amazingly fluent with it. We are so used to video on our phones capturing friends doing this, that, or the other activity that it felt very familiar. The kind of sharing that we do in our everyday lives actually became part of the opera."

A few critics described *Hopscotch* as Wagnerian in its ambition to achieve the German concept *Gesamtkunstwerk*—or "total work of art"—and Sharon suggests, laughingly, that if Wagner was working today he would indeed not just be composing the music and writing the libretto but also designing the app for his operas. "I really have tried to make interactivity an integral part of Industry projects, making sure that the technology doesn't just feel like it was pasted onto the presentation," he says. "I think

that when the technology becomes a crucial component of the storytelling we'll really be creating something of our time."

Mobile and live performance—stimulation or distraction?

Sharon doesn't think it is necessarily a problem for an audience to have its attention divided between live performance and the screens of mobile devices. "Your attention in a normal opera house is already very divided. You're looking at the stage, you're listening to the music, you're reading the titles. It's what Brecht called a complex way of seeing in the theater. Your attention is going back and forth between a lot of different stimuli. I think that's very positive. What people call distraction could actually be stimulation."

However, he acknowledges the challenges. "The problem comes when one person's divided attention is a distraction to the person sitting next to them. Everybody should still be able to have the experience that they want, and that might be simply sitting and listening to the music. That is going to make it harder for traditional opera companies and symphony orchestras to find their connections to these kinds of technologies." 



JOHN FLEMING

John Fleming writes for Classical Voice North America, Opera News, and other publications. For 22 years, he covered the Florida music scene as performing arts critic of the Tampa Bay Times.

3 Mobile Solutions, Years Later

By Nancy Malitz

In our 2013 Special Report [Mobile Marketing: The Arts in Motion](#), we checked in with a number of organizations to find out how they were using mobile technology. Three years and a steep learning curve later, here's an update on their progress.

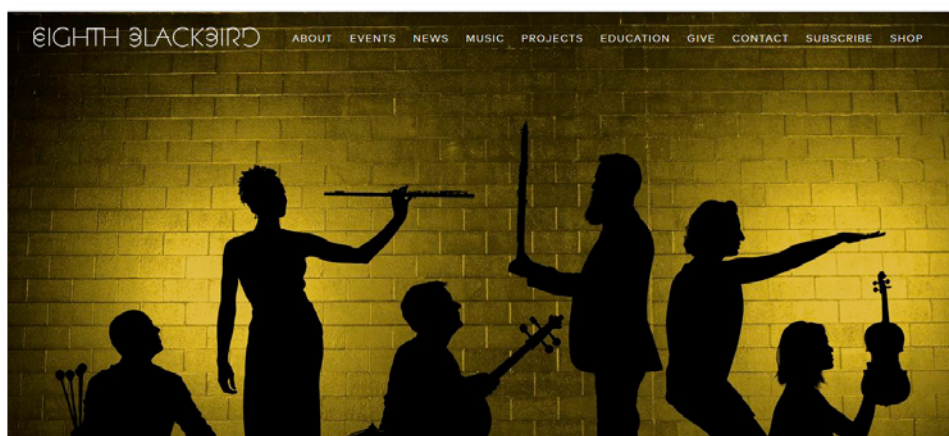
Eighth Blackbird

Sweat equity, WordPress, and a musician-friendly design

Issue: In 2013, clarinetist Michael J. Maccaferri, a member of the contemporary group [Eighth Blackbird](#), searched through a vast

array of [WordPress](#) templates (themes) and add-on tools (plugins) to create a website that would look as good on cellphones as it did on laptops while reflecting the group's sense of style. Wordpress today powers about 75 million websites worldwide and has legions of do-it-yourselfers in an open-source environment

that encourages sharing. For small budget organizations with patience and a knack for experimentation, Wordpress was—and still is—a good way to go.



Eighth Blackbird's home screen on desktop.

Mobile Factor: All members of the group are heavy mobile users and believe their fans are also. Their original thought was to design a one-size-fits-all responsive website that would work fluidly across all

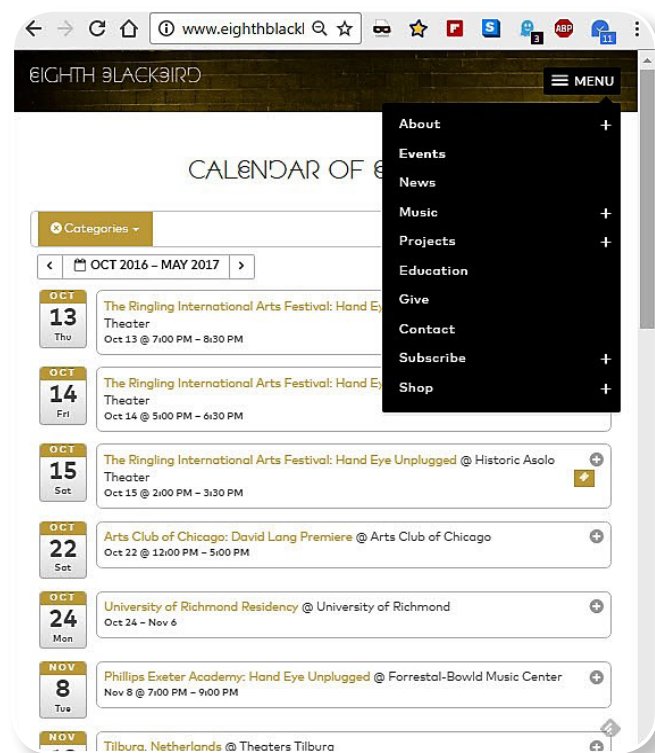
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Eighth Blackbird clarinetist and web man Michael J. Maccaferri.

as much as he could, living with the extra work of keeping them both up to date.

Challenge: The original name eighth blackbird became Eighth Blackbird as part of an extensive rebranding process as the ensemble entered its 20th-anniversary year. “We had been using the same logo and typeface since the beginning and we thought we should reestablish our look,” Maccaferri said. “So that gave us an opportunity for a website makeover, too.” At the end of August 2016, mobile users accounted for 27 percent of the visitors and the percentage was continuing to trend upward.



Eighth Blackbird calendar on a tablet, with pop-out menu.

mobile devices by detecting the screen size and lining up the elements accordingly. But the idea was fairly new in 2013, and the experiment didn’t scroll correctly or look right on all platforms. So Maccaferri chose similar themes, one for phones and one for the main site, and made them resemble each other

Solution: With help from a communication design company called [Thirst](#), the ensemble was able to identify a new generation of beautifully streamlined themes that are responsive to all screen sizes, ultimately choosing “[Two-Tone](#)” from a company called [AudioTheme](#), designed specifically with musicians in mind. “The back end has really great built-ins for streaming audio and displaying a tour calendar,” Maccaferri said. “We had to make some tweaks but it’s much more flexible than what we had, it looks great on all screens, and it saves me time because I don’t have to set device sizes and re-do the layout. I was shocked to see how far the CSS has come,” he said, in reference to the built-in “cascading style sheets” of code that dictate how the content will look on a dizzying array of screens. “It makes the functionality really fluid so spacing works cleanly on even the smallest devices.”

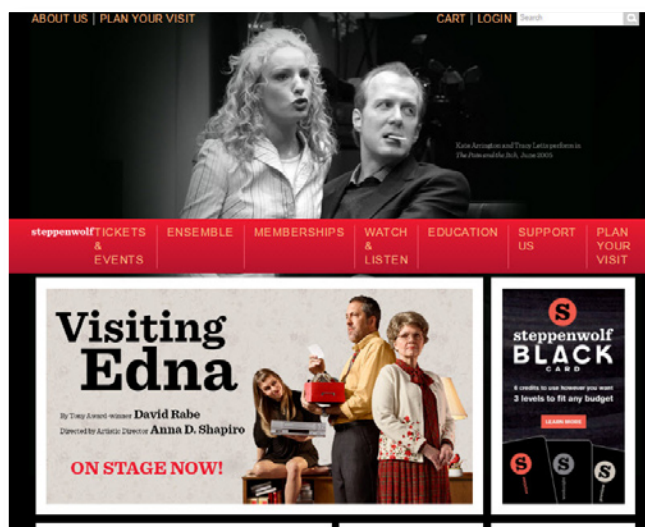
Upgrades: Until recently Eighth Blackbird handled its sales offsite through Amazon and iTunes, but now the group sells its own recordings and other merchandise using [WooCommerce](#), a free WordPress shopping-cart plugin, and PayPal. Both are mobile compatible. The group works with a Chicago company called [Creative Partners](#), which handles customer relations and fund-raising on behalf of three Chicago non-profits, sharing the overhead among them. Instead of [Tessitura](#), which is used as the customer relations database by organizations with bigger budgets, Creative Partners uses [MailChimp](#) to capture subscriber information and [Patron Manager](#) to store customer information for future development. “We’re still learning to do things more efficiently,” Maccaferri said.

Steppenwolf Theater Company

Streamlining to stay ahead of the curve

Issue: [Steppenwolf](#) was on the cutting edge of expressive web design back in 2013, when it underwent an elegant and extensive web makeover. At that time a mobile solution for buying tickets was not something that Steppenwolf’s back-end [Tessitura](#) system could handle, so the company cobbled together a solution using [CloudTix](#) for mobile phone users who wanted to buy a ticket. Within a year, mobile traffic had increased from 10 percent to 15 percent. Today, Steppenwolf’s mobile traffic is at 34.73 percent, and 58 percent of Steppenwolf’s email communiqués are accessed on mobile devices.

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Steppenwolf home screen on a desktop.

Mobile Factor: The CloudTix platform was basically a one-size-fits-all solution, and pretty basic, according to Steppenwolf's Digital Marketing Manager Kevin Castillo. "It was great for its day, but there was just a simple template calendar and layout, with room for a blurb about the show, and the opportunity to purchase a ticket, but that was about it."



Steppenwolf Digital Marketing Manager Kevin Castillo.

Challenge: Steppenwolf was running three separate content management systems back then. There was the Tessitura database for all the donor and subscription business operations, which was separate from the features and informational content on the website, and then there was the CloudTix platform for mobile ticket purchases. Interaction was very limited. But mobile use was exploding: "It was our fastest growing segment, and we ran up against the limitations of having that separate mobile site. Our mobile users expected the full experience, with videos and photos. They didn't want to be told they had to visit the desktop site to see all that."

Solution: Steppenwolf pulled the strands together with a cloud-based product called [EpiServer](#) that combines content

and transactions, linking these to Tessitura via an interface made by [Adage Technologies](#). Now subscribers and donors can check in via mobile and be recognized, and the Steppenwolf website is fully responsive to all screens. "It was very tricky to implement," Castillo said. "We had to develop a new structure while the old one was in place. First we made the transactional path responsive while we continued to work on the rest of it. We finally flipped the whole thing over in mid-July."



Steppenwolf home screen on a smart phone.

Ahead: Steppenwolf is one of the first sizable arts organizations with a website that is fully responsive to all screen sizes. "The biggest challenge is that digital change is coming so quickly," Castillo said. "We try to be as proactive as possible, identifying trends early, reading articles every day, sifting through the changes. But it's not easy. We're now at the point where 65 percent of people's online time is spent on mobile devices with desktop as the secondary touchpoint. It's like that hockey analogy—what makes a player great is that he doesn't skate to where the puck is. He skates to where it's going to be."

Brooklyn Academy of Music

A work-in-progress with New Wave paving the way

Issue: [BAM](#) is a multi-arts center with a reputation for adventure across all its events including theater, music, dance, cinema, club acts, and individual artists. Although the company has been through multiple technology upgrades in the last three years, its sprawling website is not yet fully responsive for mobile devices.

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BAM Next Wave Festival home screen on desktop.

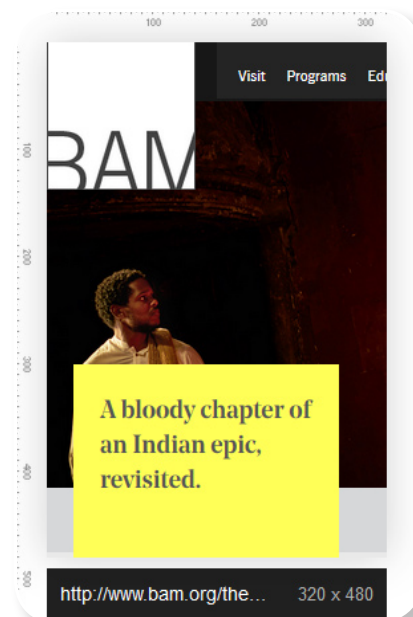
Mobile factor: In March 2013 BAM expanded its [Tessitura ticketing](#) services into mobile phones, optimized for thumbs but offering the same look and feel that customers had on the web. People didn't have to fill out any forms to buy a ticket if they had done it before. Within a week of the launch, BAM was doing nine percent of its ticketing services on mobile platforms. But in today's world, its mobile screens are due for an upgrade, said John Lanasa, BAM's VP of marketing and communications, who previously served as marketing director at the Metropolitan Opera.



Brooklyn Academy of Music VP of Marketing and Communications
John Lanasa.

Challenge: "Ticketing is really the only thing the BAM mobile design does well," Lanasa said. "Five years ago, people were using phones for what they needed this minute, but today they are using phones most of the time, for everything. So we are ready for an upgrade. We're in the process of figuring out what mobile needs to be."


Solution: BAM wants to move to a responsive website, one solution for all screens, Lanasa said: "But the new thinking is to design for the phone first, and then iterate to the browser, rather than to think about the website first and then scale it down." BAM website traffic is split at about 60-40 between desktop and mobile, and phone use is continuing to grow. "We don't need to



BAM Next Wave Festival screen as it would look on a smart phone, via Screenfly.

push everybody to the phone, but we do want to make sure it is as positive an experience as possible," Lanasa said. "For a large performing arts organization like ours, a cultural purchase is a complicated one that often takes many visits, so people might be doing research on the phone and going to the desktop later, or vice versa."

A trial: Nine BAM employees from various departments worked to create new [responsive pages](#) for the 2016 Next Wave Festival, using [Screenfly](#) to get a sense of how it looks on various screens. "You can spot the difference right away," said Lanasa. "There is lots of yellow, more fluidity and flexibility. On the older pages, we're using templates that are rather fixed and rigid, with one 'big moment' for information and everything else stuck at the bottom of the page. The new design is more modular, and it takes advantage of the fact that people are accustomed to scrolling now, so we have about six different kinds of toys that we can stack on the page, whether it's a video or some photos or a quote, whatever makes sense to show that event to best advantage."

Ahead: With further incremental steps along the way, Lanasa's goal is that BAM's website operation be completely responsive by June 2018. 

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