

## **Collaborating for Maximum Impact: Presenting the Nile Project at Boston University**

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### **Introduction**

There is a great deal of literature available on partnerships, alliances, and collaboration for business, nonprofits, and arts organizations. The literature on collaboration, in particular within the nonprofit context, tends to focus on a few specific benefits including resource sharing, cost savings, and efficiency (Guo and Acar, 2005; Stengel, 2013). However, there is little written on the process and benefits of collaborating within the university context, particularly around the arts. While the core benefits of any collaboration still apply, collaborating within the university presents a unique context in which to develop unique and impactful arts programming. A great deal of such programming at universities is inherently interdisciplinary, culturally relevant, and highly engaging, and thus is directly relevant to the specific, historical mission of the university, “the search for knowledge”, “teaching”, and “service to the community” (Morphew & Hartley, p. 458). It is also worth noting that,

American universities and colleges, taken together, are likely to be the biggest single arts patrons in America. They commission new work; they employ thousands of artists as teachers and scholars and train even more professional artists every year; they house performance halls, sponsor performing arts series, host resident theatres, own museums and countless cultural artifacts, and serve as the site for more than a hundred thousand student-based arts and cultural organizations (Tepper, “Riding The Train,” pp. 2-3).

In 2004, the American Assembly made a variety of recommendations aimed at sustaining and improving arts training and programming at colleges and universities. One such recommendation was that “faculty members and administrators should be fully engaged in relating artistic production and performances to their education and research missions” (“The Creative Campus,” p. 14). A variety of suggestions were also made regarding the execution of major arts programming, including to “engage faculty members early in discussion, and to “link course work” (“The Creative Campus,” p. 14). This article will articulate the specific process of not simply engaging, but collaborating directly with an experienced and passionate faculty member in the planning, execution, and assessment of every aspect of a five-day residency at Boston University. Twelve musicians from the Nile Basin region spent five days at Boston University in March of 2015; they were called The Nile Project. This article will focus on the working relationship and contributions of the key faculty collaborator, as well as highlighting specific tasks, programs, and other collaborations that were instrumental to the successful execution of the residency.

### **The Players**

Boston University (BU) is the fourth largest private, research university in the US, with over 33,000 undergraduate and graduate students in 17 schools and colleges. The arts at BU include training and academic programs in music, theatre, film, visual arts, creative writing, and the history of art and architecture, along with approximately 70 arts related student groups. BU has two campuses within the city of Boston, the Charles River campus on the west side of Boston and the Medical campus in the South end of Boston. There are currently no university wide

undergraduate, general education requirements at Boston University, so opportunities for shared academic experiences among the undergraduate students are few. Like many large universities, most academic programs operate very independently, including program specific academic requirements and class schedules.

The BU Arts Initiative was created by the Provost and Chief Academic Officer of Boston University, Jean Morrison, in September of 2012 after charging five deans and the Associate Provost for Strategic Initiatives with developing a framework and initial goals. The most basic mission of the BU Arts Initiative is to engage BU students in the arts so that “the arts are fundamental to the BU student experience inside and outside of the classroom” (J. Morrison, personal communication, March 19, 2013). Essentially it is hoped, as Tepper puts it, that BU “students leave campus having had a meaningful and important artistic experience” and with “a heightened curiosity about the world” (“Taking the Measure,” 2006, p. 5). In addition, the BU Arts Initiative is charged with raising the visibility and profile of the arts at Boston University. Specifically, the BU Arts Initiative does internal and external marketing of arts events presented by a variety of entities across campus, and provides financial and administrative support for faculty, student, and staff coordinated events that engage BU students and the community in the arts. Additionally, one major artist or arts scholar is presented on campus each semester. Prior to the Nile Project residency, the BU Arts Initiative had launched the following programs: weekly email notices of on campus arts events, social media promotions, arts grants, and the arts insiders – a program that provides free tickets to BU students for arts events in the Boston area.

The goal in presenting at BU is to provide high impact, high profile events, that provide visibility and significant, interdisciplinary academic engagement. These events always have components that allow students to directly engage with the artists or scholars, and when possible include opportunities to open up programming to the greater Boston community, which as noted in *The Creative Campus* is “an important strategy for fulfilling the service mission of colleges and universities” (2005, P. 14).

The BU Arts Initiative is a direct result of university leadership that understands the powerful role of the arts in both personal and community development. The artists and scholars the BU Arts Initiative presents are intentionally interdisciplinary and deeply connected to the academic mission of the university through class visits and specially designed programming and collaborations with faculty. Because the BU Arts Initiative is a small administrative office with only two full-time staff and a half-time graduate assistant, collaborating with campus and community faculty and organizations, and building positive trusting relationships both on and off campus, has been key to executing successful, well-attended, impactful arts programming. The BU Arts Initiative is committed to meaningful, interdisciplinary arts engagement, an approach to presenting that falls in line with what Oberstein describes,

Campus arts presenters have redefined their roles, developing a comprehensive approach to university arts engagement. Interdisciplinary collaboration and engagement have become a mandate of sorts, and the term ‘presenter’ no longer seems to encapsulate the many responsibilities of a campus-based arts administrator in the 21st century (2011, p. 207).

Marié Abe is an Assistant Professor of Music in the Department of Musicology and Ethnomusicology in the Boston University School of Music. She holds an MA and a PhD in Ethnomusicology from the University of California, Berkeley, and a degree in sociology, anthropology, and ethnomusicology from Swarthmore College. Her scholarship explores politics of space and sound, critical cultural theory, and Japanese popular performing arts. Abe began teaching at Boston University in the fall of 2011. Before coming to Boston University, she taught in the Department of Music and Asian Studies Program at UC Berkeley, and in the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University, where she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies. Abe is an active performer of the accordion and piano, with frequent concert tours and collaborations with recording artists from the United States and Japan. Upon her arrival to Boston University, Abe began curating what she called the Global Music Lunchtime Concert Series. Since then, she has presented nearly a dozen programs featuring music from or inspired by countries including: Africa, Ukraine, Serbia, Japan, and China.

Egyptian ethnomusicologist Mina Girgis and Ethiopian-American singer Meklit Hadero conceived the Nile Project in 2011. Recognizing that there are few avenues for the population of the Nile Basin to connect beyond state borders, the mission of the Nile Project is to educate, inspire, and empower the citizens of the Nile basin to foster the sustainability of the Nile River's ecosystem. The primary component of the project is music. The Nile Project focuses on building community and addressing issues of water politics and cultural conflict in the area through musical collaboration. It is hoped that by "developing this new Nile sound, the Nile Project is creating a community of engaged Nile citizens working to address the region's most pressing issues" (A. Abate, "Faces," p. 21). The Nile Project consists of approximately a dozen musicians from nearly every country bordering the Nile River. The primary activity of the program takes place in North Africa (the first meeting and concert was held in Aswan, Egypt); but the musicians toured the United States in early 2015 to share the fruit of their three-year long collaboration and raise awareness of the ecological challenges of the Nile. The Nile Project's first recording, *Aswan*, was named among NPR's top must-hear International albums of 2013, who said "the results are joyous and even raucous...you can hear just how much fun the crowd is having — and how tight the band is, even as their instrumental multitudes adeptly combine everything from indigenous instruments like the Ugandan adungu lyre to saxophone and bass" (retrieved October 22, 2015 from <http://www.npr.org/2013/09/30/227854789/from-bollywood-disco-to-yemeni-45s-5-must-hear-international-albums>)

### **The Genesis of the Collaboration**

In April of 2013 Abe approached the staff of the BU Arts Initiative to discuss collaborating to bring the Nile Project to Boston University for a multiple day residency. As a relatively new office, the BU Arts Initiative had yet to tackle a project of this nature, and Abe was willing to share the administrative burden of planning and executing the program. Abe felt that presenting the Nile Project at Boston University would accomplish a number of things, all of which were well aligned with the mission of the Arts Initiative, as well as with current best practices for university presenters. Specifically, this residency would provide the opportunity to intentionally "define the types of desired impacts ...through programming and curriculum-based learning" (Oberstein, p. 207.). Specifically Abe wanted to,

Increase the visibility of the interdisciplinarity of ethnomusicology; add diversity to the programming of musical events on campus; provide hands on educational experiences to

our students; foster better connections with individual faculty members and programs on campus; and raise awareness of BU as a destination for higher-caliber work music experiences in greater Boston (personal communication, October 15, 2015).

With Abe's expertise in ethnomusicology and presenting world music, she was the ideal collaborator for the BU Arts Initiative on the first residency program. Her passion for the project and full commitment to share planning and execution duties was absolutely key to the success of this residency, and made it easy to share "curatorial control" ("Leveraging the Arts," p.16) of the residency with her. In addition, Abe's status as a faculty member gave the program a critical foundation in the academic mission of the university, and was instrumental in securing funding and programming support from both the School of Music, and the African Studies Program.

In early 2013 the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College received an expeditions planning grant from the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) to assist them in planning a New England tour for the Nile Project. With support from NEFA, Dartmouth had time and resources to bring potential presenters together to meet the Nile Project founders along with musical director Miles Jay. In August of 2013, more than 30 presenters and community arts administrators met at Dartmouth to explore the possibility of presenting the Nile Project at various locations in New England. In the end, seven regional presenters, including the Boston University Arts Initiative, received direct financial support from NEFA to present the Nile Project (A. Petrillo, personal communication, October 17, 2015).

WorldMusic/CRASHarts, a critically acclaimed, Boston area music and dance presenter was also interested in bringing the Nile Project to region. Through a number of meetings and conversations in the spring of 2013 with Girgis, the Nile Project booking agency, and Maure Aronson the Executive Director of WorldMusic/CRASHarts, it was decided that BU would submit a bid for a five-day Nile Project residency and that the BU Arts Initiative would serve as the primary sponsor for the residency. WorldMusic/CRASHarts would collaborate specifically on the presentation of three performances, for which they would provide production management. In turn, WorldMusic/CRASHarts would have exclusive rights to sell tickets to the second of two evening performance, which they would market as a collaboration between their organization and the BU Arts Initiative, while the BU Arts Initiative would recognize them as a co-sponsor of the residency. The performances would take place in the Tsai Performance Center at BU, and the BU Arts Initiative would pay the facility and equipment rental fees. No money would be exchanged between BU and WorldMusic/CRASHarts. This very important external collaboration would be the most traditional of the residency; what Guo and Acar describe as "... what occurs when different nonprofit organizations work together to address problems through joint effort, resources, and decision making, and share ownership of the final product or service" (p. 342-343).

### **Collaborating on leadership and objectives**

Kramer notes in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, that successful collaborations take "effective leadership", "clear and aligned objectives", and "resources and expertise" (2013). Over the course of approximately six months beginning in the spring of 2013, Abe and the staff of the BU Arts Initiative met to develop a working process and articulate shared goals for the five-day residency of the Nile Project at Boston University. The shared goals for the residency became: to

engage BU students in the arts, to raise the visibility of the arts at BU and establish BU as an arts destination, to highlight musicology and ethnomusicology as academic pursuits, to build and advance relationships with key faculty across campus, and explore the residency model for future Arts Initiative programming.

The BU Arts Initiative contracted to host a Nile Project residency at Boston University during the week of March 23rd through the 27th in 2015. In tackling such a significant program it became clear that the process would, as Oberstein notes, “require time for planning and implementation,” and to “develop partnerships and trust” (2011, p.15) with potential collaborators across campus. Early in the planning stages, the BU Arts Initiative staff met with Abe once every couple of months, and occasionally, together met with other university faculty and staff that were identified as potential collaborators. Those meetings were an opportunity to explain the goals of the residency, and to solicit potential support and programming ideas. It was clear that this residency was an excellent opportunity to explore what Abe described as, “powerful critical analysis of the social, political, economic, and environmental contexts in which various musical practices take place” (personal communication, October 15, 2015). It was also clear that critical analysis had to be done in a truly interdisciplinary way so that the residency could effectively engage as many faculty and students as possible. Other key tasks that were completed in the planning stages were: identifying marketing opportunities, deciding upon marketing tactics and content, developing draft communications to solicit faculty participation, securing financial support, exploring programming locations on campus, determining the feasibility of a school matinee, and creating contact spreadsheets for press, VIP invitations, marketing outlets, and local ethnomusicologists. It was also decided that all programs of the residency, except the Friday evening performance, would be free for participants.

In March of 2014, planning meetings became much more focused and regular, happening at least once a month. By that time, financial commitments to support the residency from both the School of Music and the African Studies Center had been secured. Barbara Brown, Director of the Outreach Program for the African Studies Center served as our primary contact there, while Abe maintained the relationship with the School of Music. Brown had participated in what was called the Nile Gathering in Jan 2013, “a five-day program in Aswan, bringing together about 30 community education leaders/activists from the different Nile countries and the US” (personal communication, November 11, 2015). Brown’s prior connection to the Nile Project and understanding of the program made her a valuable and welcome collaborator, and she was instrumental in securing financial support from the African Studies Program. Brown highly encouraged the student matinee and provided a number of contacts for possible school participation. She was also able to assist in securing educational resources for those students, including discounted rates for copies of “Faces” magazine, an educational publication geared to children 10 to 14 years of age. After her participation in the Nile Gathering, Brown encouraged “Faces” to do an issue on peoples of the Nile, which they subsequently did, and provided several hundred copies to the BU Arts Initiative.

By December of 2014, additional programming collaboration commitments from several offices at Boston University were secured, including the Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer Range Future, which would host and facilitate a panel discussion on water politics and the Nile River. Commitments for marketing and promotions support came from the following Boston

University offices: Global Programs, *sustainability@BU*, the Middle Eastern and North Africa Program, Music Education, Alumni Relations, and the department of Earth and Environment. Additionally, the BU Art Gallery included Nile Project residency information in printed program materials for a photography exhibit run in advance of and simultaneous to the Nile Project residency titled *Dignity: Tribes in Transition* by Dana Gluckstein, honoring indigenous peoples worldwide. Finally, the Boston University African Students Organization approached the BU Arts Initiative and proposed hosting a dinner for the Nile Project artists during the residency.

Because the planning team was small and Abe continued her teaching, writing, and research duties, planning meetings needed to be efficient and mission focused (2015, *The Good Project*). Each meeting had a specific beginning and end time, a set agenda (jointly determined), and included time to discuss new and emerging ideas or challenges. The plan was to develop a broad set of programs that were interdisciplinary, offered a great deal of opportunity for student contact with the Nile Project artists and staff, and provided opportunities for engaging the general public. Meeting agendas focused on following up on past assigned tasks, planning program specifics, determining next steps, and assigning responsibility for future tasks.

Collectively, Abe, Brown, and the Arts Initiative staff felt strongly that this residency provided an ideal opportunity to serve the greater Boston community, so in addition to the student matinee, Brown strongly urged the development of a program that would have a lasting impact beyond the five-day residency and suggested that a music teacher workshop be included.

By January of 2015 the programs for the residency were set. It was decided that the residency would consist of the following programs that were open to the public:

- A Friday evening performance, marketed and managed by WorldMusic/CRASHarts
- A public lecture and demonstration of music styles of the Nile region
- A panel discussion on art and social action, including artists and scholars from the Boston region and beyond
- A student matinee for middle school children with pre and post educational materials coordinated by the graduate assistant in the BU Arts Initiative
- A music education workshop with BU students and local music teachers
- A panel discussion on water politics and the Nile including scholars from Boston University and the University of South Carolina

The residency also included the following events that were exclusively for the BU Community.

- A Thursday evening performance for BU community and invited guests, which included 60 local alumni
- A spring semester class developed and taught by Abe called *Sound, Music and Ecology*, open to graduate and undergraduate students
- A dinner and reception hosted by the African Students Organization for the Nile Project musicians
- Eight different class visits within the following academic programs: Musicology/Ethnomusicology, Earth and Environment, Questrom School of Business, African Studies, and Middle East and North Africa Studies

### **Execution of the Residency**

As noted, the BU Arts Initiative managed all financial pieces of the program including artist fees, travel, parking, food, housing, and technical equipment costs. All other program planning details and tasks, including securing program space and marketing were shared between Abe and the BU Arts Initiative staff. Marketing the residency, in particular the programs open to the public, began in earnest in January of 2015. Advanced planning, developing and maintaining a broad range of on and off campus relationships, effective use of social media, and other marketing tactics paid off. During the residency most programs went exceptionally well. Hundreds of Boston University students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as local community members had the opportunity to not only hear the Nile Project perform, but to engage with the artists and staff on timely social and ecological issues related to the Nile River. In total, more than 2,000 people attended programs and performances during the residency. Based on the information available, that included students from every school and college within Boston University, except the dental school.

It is worth highlighting four components of the residency that, in particular, were successful not only because of the effective shared leadership with Abe, but because of other passionate and dedicated campus and external collaborators.

### **The Student Matinee**

The student matinee included 335 sixth through ninth grade students from four local schools. If necessary, the BU Arts Initiative covered the minimal cost of transporting the students to the performance venue, as it was important to the planning team that there be as few barriers as possible for the schools and teachers. The performance was held at 10 a.m. on Thursday, and was a condensed 50-minute presentation. The students were exceptionally well behaved and enthusiastic during the performance. Feedback from the teachers and students was overwhelmingly positive, including one teacher who wrote, “It was amazing! Students and teachers alike were floored by how dynamic and engaging it was. We had a wonderful time” (C. Segrest, personal communication, April 5, 2015). In advance of the performance, teachers were provided with educational materials including a lesson plan on the Nile River developed by a former Boston University student and a study guide developed by the education team at the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College. The study guide was an invaluable contribution to our student matinee. Because of the size of the staff, the BU Arts Initiative would have never been able to develop such a resource, and the collegiality of the Hopkins Center staff was much appreciated. At the conclusion of the performance, teachers from each school were also provided with one copy per student of the October 2014 issue of *FACES, People, Places, and Culture*. The entire issue was focused on the Nile River region and featured an article about the Nile Project. This was the issue that Brown had encouraged, and on which she also served as co-consulting editor. The success of that student matinee was a direct result of the shared resources of the Hopkins Center for the arts, the production management of WorldMusic/CRASHarts, and building positive relationships with the school teachers, which included providing timely information, transportation support, and patience in working out details with busy and often overwhelmed school teachers and administrators.



The Nile Project at the Tsai Performance Center, Boston University.  
Photo by Ty Furman. Used with permission.

## **The BU Community Performance**

It is important to note that, with the exception of the panel discussion on water politics and the Nile River, all residency activities happened in advance of the three performances. This gave an opportunity for more than 1,000 BU students, faculty, and staff to connect with the Nile Project musicians and staff before the performance. The Thursday evening performance was free

to the entire BU community, including local alumni who received the program information via email notifications from the Boston University alumni relations office. Successful marketing and promotion, including a vast network of collaborating colleagues, supportive campus peers, and more than a dozen engaged faculty, along with the meaningful residency activities prior to the performance, meant that reservations for the BU community show hit seating capacity a full week in advance of the performance. After the performance, several attendees noted that the concert was exceptional. A number of campus colleagues commented on the beauty and power of the music and the charisma of the performers. In fact, the Musical Director of the Nile Project noted that it was “the best performance to date of the tour” (M. Jay, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Without the collaboration with WorldMusic/CRASHarts and their expertise in presenting world music, BU staff would have been overwhelmed with production details, and would have had to spend countless hours and thousands of additional dollars hiring professional staff to manage the production needs of the performances.

## **The Leadership Class**

While all of the scheduled class visits went well and provided important opportunities for students to talk directly with the Nile Project staff and musicians, one of the class visits stood out for its unique audience and focus. Jack McCarthy teaches leadership in the Questrom School of Business at Boston University. McCarthy regularly incorporates the arts into his classes, including live opera, theatre, jazz, and other performances. He is the lead instructor on a course entitled *Dynamics of Leading Organizations*, which has multiple sections led by other Questrom faculty. Together the various sections, that semester, enrolled approximately 500 students. In the course of the semester there are a number of occasions where all sections had planned to meet together. It was for one of those joint sessions that McCarthy brought the Nile Project co-founder Mina Girgis and several musicians to address the students. The musicians played a few pieces and together they discussed issues of leadership, community building, and social engagement in relation to building a social change movement around the ecological challenges of the Nile River. McCarthy is particularly adept at using arts programs to explore team building, mission, goals, and leadership. His passion for finding engaging ways to discuss these topics through art is tremendous, and this class visit was definitely a highlight of the week. In particular, this was



one of the more specific activities that illuminated the interdisciplinary nature of the Nile Project residency.

### **Abe's Sound, Music, and Ecology Course**

The course description for Abe's class read,

*How might critical attention to sound and music yield new insights into the interactions among societies and their environment? In this course, through specific ethnographic case studies, we will examine how the ecological relationships between humans and their surroundings are expressed, sustained, and sometimes challenged through musical sounds* (M. Abe, personal communication, November 25, 2014).

Having a number of graduate and undergraduate students participate in Abe's class for an entire semester not only gave them a unique opportunity to explore the connection of sounds and music to a variety of ecological contexts and issues, but built such affinity and passion for the Nile Project that those students served as effective and educated ambassadors for the residency. In short, they became another valuable set of collaborators, particularly in terms of marketing and promotions. They attended nearly every event during the week, posted regularly on social media, and frequently brought friends and classmates to residency events. Combined with the class visits like the one with Jack McCarthy, Abe's course was tremendously effective in "embedding the arts into students' academic journey" ("Leveraging the Arts," p. 11).

### **Evaluating Success**

In the end, the Nile Project residency met and at times exceeded the goals established for the residency. Within two months of the conclusion of the residency, the planning team met several times to develop surveys for program hosts and participants. The team also spent a great deal of time evaluating the success and challenges of the residency as a whole, as well as each individual element. The surveys solicited feedback from all faculty that either hosted a class visit or participated in the planning or execution of other elements of the residency. Surveys were also sent to all music education workshop attendees, Nile Project organizers, and performance attendees. Below is a summary of the findings.

#### *Engage BU students in the arts*

A number of events, including the panel discussion on water politics and the Nile River, attracted audiences that surpassed the seating capacity of the program space. Based on information available, more than 700 Boston University students attended public programming or classes in which Nile Project artists made visits, while approximately 240 students attended the performance on Thursday evening.

#### *Raise the visibility of the arts at BU and establish BU as an arts destination*

The residency was highly visible externally thanks in large part to an advanced article in the Boston Globe and an on-air interview early in the residency conducted by Marco Werman of Public Radio International's *The World* with Mina Girgis. Several months in advance National Public Radio published an online article about the Nile Project and their upcoming US tour which mentioned Boston University as a presenter. Internally, *BU Today*, the university's online news outlet, published a detailed article with photos on the first day of the residency. During and in advance of the residency dozens of social media were shared by a variety of local arts

organizations and arts lovers. Finally, the Boston Globe also published a review of the Friday performance.

### *Highlight musicology and ethnomusicology as academic pursuits*

According to a post residency student survey, the Nile Project was successful in providing opportunities for students to be exposed to a new culture or social issue with more than 75% agreeing or strongly agreeing. The survey and individual feedback also showed that the residency served to highlight, through presentations, performances, and panel discussions the ability for music to build community and create social bonds, while celebrating culture and collaboration.

### *Build and advance relationships with key faculty, and explore the residency model for future Arts Initiative programming*

In total, more than 60 Boston University faculty members participated in the residency by hosting artist visits, participating in panel discussions, or attending programming and performances. Those who hosted Nile Project artists, when surveyed, were overwhelmingly positive about the experience and expressed interest in future residency programming. The Boston University residency also stood out in the eyes of Nile Project co-founder, Girgis who stated that “the Nile Project’s residency at BU was the best one in our US Tour;” which he attributed to it being “multi-layered and multidisciplinary” and the fact that BU “identified relevant faculty, speakers, and students who would either participate and/or benefit from attending the activities” (personal communication, October 22, 2015). With this positive feedback, it was clear that the Nile Project residency could serve as a model for future programming.

It cannot be overstated how critical the collaborating partners both on and off campus were to the success of the Nile Project residency. Being specific and intentional with advanced planning, sharing full ownership with Abe, maintaining frequent and open communication with all collaborators, and building trusting relationships, all contributed immensely to the success of the residency. It was also noted in post residency evaluation discussions that it was a significant benefit to the execution of the residency, that Abe and the BU Arts Initiative leadership have been or are practicing, professional artists. With that experience, all were keenly aware of the necessity to be deliberate about specific collaborations and expectations, and recognizing the challenges artists in residence face. Understanding and meeting those needs, which included dedicated rehearsal time, enough personal time, a welcoming atmosphere, and acclimation to the community, meant the commitment and energy level of the Nile Project company was at it’s best during their Boston University residency.

### **Challenges**

Of course any project of this nature will present challenges and opportunities for learning. Upon reflection, it was noted that there were obvious missed opportunities for fruitful collaboration and engagement during the residency. In particular, while the graduate assistant working with the BU Arts Initiative gained valuable experience planning the student matinee and assisting with other residency duties, opportunities could have been created to connect other graduate students studying arts management at Boston University with the Nile Project. There was also a missed opportunity to work with the BU Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies program in exploring

the role of women in music, in Africa, and in activism. Because the Arts Initiative staff does not include a full-time marketing and promotions expert, it was determined that there were missed promotional opportunities, particularly with radio and television. Finally, not every session met the planning teams expectations or those of the participants. While the music education workshop had a respectable turnout of more than 20 individuals and featured a terrific dialogue on learning opportunities and resources, feedback from participants showed that it failed to meet the expectations of some of the participants with regard to practical lesson plan building.

### **Conclusion**

There were a great many collaborations and relationships that made the Nile Project residency successful, from the support and shared resources of the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College and the New England Foundation of the Arts to WorldMusic/CRASHarts, the thoughtful faculty at Boston University and engaged students. The Nile Project residency at Boston University was truly a collaborative event. While some relationships did involve the exchange of money, including the Tsai Center for Performance, sound/audio technicians, and the university marketing and communications office, maintaining a collaborative attitude toward each of those relationships was vital to success. The visibility provided for the arts at Boston University through the two Boston Globe articles and time on Public Radio International's *The World* continued to solidify the university's presence as an arts destination for the region. Through this residency Boston University has further established itself as an institution that values the arts and invests in significant opportunities for arts engagement with BU students and the surrounding community. Of course, the Nile Project residency would have never occurred without Abe's collaboration and commitment to making it happen. Abe was passionate about maximizing the impact of the residency both on campus and off, and worked tirelessly to see that happen. For nearly two years, Abe spent countless hours, outside of her normal teaching, writing, and research expectations, working with the BU Arts Initiative to see this project through. Her commitment to providing this kind of artistic and educational experience to the students and community of BU and Boston was inspiring.

### **The Future**

Because of the success of the Nile Project residency, collaborations both on and off campus have indeed become the model for how the BU Arts Initiative will continue to provide arts programming at Boston University. Plans are being finalized for a five-day residency in March of 2016 with the international theatre company Theatre Nohgaku. Once again, a single faculty member has stepped up to fully collaborate on goals, programming, and execution. Other Boston University program collaborators and supporters of this residency include the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program, the Center for the Study of Asia, and the English Department within the College of Arts and Sciences. External relationships are being developed with the Japan Society of Boston and other cultural organizations. Future residencies are also being explored with a variety of academic programs at BU, including the College of General Studies, the College of Communication, the Creative Writing Program, and the Holocaust and Genocide Studies Program.

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