

FREE NIGHT HOUSTON 2011

A NATIONAL COLLABORATION

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Free Night of Theater is the single largest national initiative aimed at bringing new audiences to America's theaters. This year, the Theatre Communications Group anticipates giving away nearly 100,000 free tickets for theater companies in more than 800 theaters from coast to coast.

The idea for *Free Night of Theater* came about during a 2003 National Conference held in response to the field-wide threat of declining audiences. The program has been designed to help stimulate attendance at live theater through an annual nationwide event and public awareness campaign. The goal is simple: for the theater community to put aside competition and work together to overcome the perceived barriers of price and time that discourage patrons from attending live shows. The idea that surfaced was even simpler: on a chosen date participating theaters would open their doors to new audience members FOR FREE. In 2009, *Free Night Houston* joined the national initiative with 20 organizations and since then has grown to almost 40 organizations from all performing arts disciplines.

Free Night Houston strives to:

- Attract new and diverse audiences to American performing arts organizations
- Build future audiences by targeting new and infrequent arts patrons
- Reach first time and non-traditional arts patrons

Since its introduction in 2005, *Free Night of Theater* has boosted awareness of our nation's performing arts organizations, driven single ticket sales and introduced almost 200,000 new patrons to the thrill of live performance. In 2010, over 600 organizations offered more than 55,000 tickets to over 1,800 multi-disciplinary performances. Continuing in this tradition, *Free Night Houston 2011* will kick off citywide on October 1st.

WHY YOU SHOULD GET INVOLVED

- Since 2005, Free Night has grown to include over 120 cities and has introduced almost 250,000 new patrons to the thrill of live performance.
- Participation is easy! The managing partners take care of all marketing, communications, management of the program and ticket distribution.
- Gain exposure on Free Night collaterals as a participant in this exciting country-wide initiative.
- Join an exciting collaboration that is supporting, promoting, and advancing America's regional performing arts organizations.

PERCEPTIONS VS. REALITY

PERCEPTIONS

- I will have to give away my entire house for one night.
- This program is only about audience development.
- I can't participate if I don't have a show during the month of October.
- *Free Night of Theater* attracts traditional audiences who want to see free performances, not future patrons or season ticket holders.

REALITY

- You decide how many seats your organization can provide.
- The backbone of this program is awareness. Help your colleagues create a day of awareness for the performing arts field.
- Yes, the participation dates for 2011 are October 1-23 BUT there are different ways to participate, including staged readings, events or collaborations.
- In the last three years, the national *Free Night of Theater* program has attracted non-traditional audiences; 35% under the age of 35, over 28% were non-white, 70% had never been to that theatre before, 40% returned and 2% bought season tickets (*national averages*).

ATTRACT **NEW THEATERGOERS**. BUILD **SINGLE TICKET BUYERS**. JOIN A **NATIONAL MOVEMENT**.

FREE NIGHT HOUSTON 2011

BRING NEW AUDIENCES TO YOUR THEATER!

Since its inception in 2005, *Free Night of Theater* has boosted awareness of our nation's regional performing arts organizations while building new audiences and driving single ticket sales. Continuing in this tradition, *Free Night Houston 2011* will seek out new audiences, invite current patrons to try new organizations and disciplines, as well as ignite interest and create awareness about the variety of performing arts organizations in Houston.

OBJECTIVE:

Increase single ticket buyers while building **general awareness** of Houston's performing arts community.

STRATEGY:

- Attract new audiences, invite current patrons to try something new, and ignite interest in, and create awareness of, the variety of performing arts options across the Greater Houston area.
- Create a no-risk entry point for new patrons.
- Collect participant contact information/demographics.
- Engage *Free Night Houston* patrons with post-performance events, parties and offers designed to entice them to return to the theater - single ticket retention.
- Facilitate organizations' use of a centralized ticket distribution website and program management templates (advertising, marketing and PR).

FREE NIGHT OF THEATER 2010 AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS (NATIONAL AVERAGES)

Age: 67% 18 to 44 years old

Gender: 32% Male/ 68% Female

Education: 43% College Graduate/ 28% Graduate or Professional Degree

Ethnicity: 52% White, not Hispanic / 48% People of Color

Income: 57% less than \$75,000

FREE NIGHT HOUSTON 2009 AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS (HOUSTON AVERAGES)

Age: 69% 18 to 44 years old

Gender: 30% Male/ 70% Female

Education: 39% College Graduate/ 28% Graduate or Professional Degree

Ethnicity: 36% White, not Hispanic / 54% People of Color

Income: 57% less than \$75,000

BENEFITS OF *FREE NIGHT HOUSTON*:

- An experience opportunity for patrons to try new disciplines and new organizations.
- A marketing opportunity for participating organizations to gather information on prospective new patrons.
- Research opportunities to learn about what patrons are interested in attending and how they experience your events.

Take part in *Free Night Houston 2011* and join the national movement for new theater audiences! For more information please contact:

Janel Badrina at Janel@haatx.com or visit www.HoustonArtsAlliance.com.

What would you say to a
free night of theater?

Bravo!

Free Night Houston returns October 1-23, 2011.

For more information visit www.freenighthouston.com

