Visualizing the Artist/Audience Relationship

What follows are the twenty word clouds generated from our conversations with artistic leaders from companies large and small across the country. Word clouds are best read sort of like those Magic Eye images that were so popular in the 1990’s: unfocus your eyes, pull back from the page, and see what floats out of each one for you.

Look for example, at the relative prevalence of different words that one might think should figure into a conversation about audiences. How prevalent is the word “audience?” What about “community?” What about more progressive words like “experience,” “engagement” or “conversation?”

When I look at these clouds, I see a diverse set smart people grappling with how to address the dramatic changes that are occurring in our audiences, our funding model and our form. Some of them, the words show, are interested mostly in staying the course, while others of them, a relative few, speak strongly of new concepts of inclusion, engagement and experimentation.

As a start, here are the numbers of interviews for which, when I did the Magic Eye thing, the following words showed up prominently (let’s say in approximately the top 5 words):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist/Artistic/Artistry</th>
<th>Want</th>
<th>Artist/Artistic/Artistry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience/Audiences</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Audience/Audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre/Theater</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Theatre/Theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Like</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Want 3  Need 0  Get 3  Think 8  Know 3  Impact 2  Experience 1  Conversation 2  Engagement 1

Keeping in mind the findings of the WolfBrown report, namely the importance of anticipation, accurate expectations and pre- and post-engagement—and that startling finding that single ticket buyers are actually more impacted by the work they see than subscribers—what do these clouds, and these conversations, say about our way forward? – CL
Anne Bogart
SITI Company
David Kilpatrick
La Crosse Community Theatre
Bill Rauch
Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Audience
People

Like long thing year get something go terms kind front members groups think talk never audiences hate directors companies theaters change something go terms make play play get art artistic for things prey...
Martha Lavey
Steppenwolf Theatre Company
Sixto Wagan
DiverseWorks
Susan Atkinson and Keith Baker
Bristol Riverside Theatre
Dudley Cocke
Roadside Theater
Diane Paulus
American Repertory Theatre