

Annual Report
fiscal year 2009

chf

Chicago Humanities Festival



Dear Friends and Supporters,



Willard G. Fraumann,
Chairman,
CHF Board of Directors

On behalf of my fellow Chicago Humanities Festival directors and the Festival's dedicated and talented staff, I am pleased to present the annual report for our 2009 fiscal year. During our nineteenth year, we accomplished a great deal. This report describes these achievements and some of the challenges we faced. Last fall, "Thinking Big" brought many of the world's foremost writers, scholars, artists, and intellectuals to Chicago. These exceptional individuals included David McCullough, Jeffrey Sachs, Mary Beard, Ronald Mallett, Audrey Niffenegger, and many others who addressed capacity crowds and discussed their complex visions and innovative ideas. This three-week intellectual odyssey of programs, speakers, performances, and exhibitions offered us an unprecedented opportunity to explore together myriad fascinating topics framing big ideas, big concepts, and big things.

Our "Once in a Lifetime" gala kicked off the Festival in grand style. Three legends of the musical stage – Dianne Reeves, Frederica von Stade, and Barbara Cook – combined talents and forces for the first time for an audience of more than 1,400. The momentum of this event carried us to our second Festival Day in Hyde Park, presented in partnership with the University of Chicago, and nearly three weeks of downtown Chicago events. As an extraordinary cohort of presenters and performers addressed big crowds, the biggest story of the year unfolded as past CHF presenter and early Festival participant Barack Obama marched toward the presidency. Many of our speakers – some of whom had flown across oceans and continents – were thrilled to be here as our city took center stage. Presenter after presenter reflected on the historical nature of being in Chicago at this particular moment and witnessing the events leading to such a dramatic change in the political landscape of our country.

The Festival's numbers were also big. Attendance at our events exceeded 60,000 and more than one-third of our programs were sold out.

Our other "big idea" was to separate our children's festival from the Fall Festival. By moving it to the spring and broadening its age appeal, the staff was able to produce an exceptional three-week festival that included the world premiere of a commissioned bilingual play, "The Blue House," and the North American premiere of "The Japanese Garden" from Italy's Teatro di Piazza D'Occasione. Attendance at the festival exceeded expectations with more than 7,000 audience members. We also extended our partnership with the Chicago Public Schools, resulting in the attendance of more than 4,000 students from 37 schools.

In the education area, Words@PLAY, CHF's award-winning partnership with the Chicago Park District, continued to thrive. This program provides over 150 youth from ten parks in Chicago the opportunity to explore poetry and performance to make words play.

Lastly, we are close to bringing online and testing the new CHF website. The site introduces a new era for CHF, as it will have many interactive features and, when fully implemented, will allow users to access our past and future programming at any time.

While we had a significant share of success in 2009, we, like so many other nonprofit institutions, also faced challenges. Philanthropic support from foundations, individuals, and corporations slowed dramatically. Fortunately, our founders were financially astute. They established and built a reserve fund. This year we used our reserve for the first time. We are currently working diligently to raise the funds necessary to mount the quality programs you expect, and we appreciate all of your support.

This year marks our 20th Festival and we will celebrate our anniversary with “Laughter,” a most appropriate theme for these trying times. The staff has lined up an amazing array of programs and speakers to entertain, educate, and, most importantly, make us laugh. As CHF enters its twentieth year, we consider ourselves very fortunate that the Festival is as vital as it has ever been. We continue to believe that we are stronger when schools, colleges, universities, and cultural and arts organizations unite for a shared purpose, the critical examination of ideas. We will also continue to play a vital role in bringing the humanities to the public through our festivals and our new website.

The most fundamental factor in CHF’s success is the overwhelmingly generous support we receive from the individuals who attend our programs and believe in our mission. Thank you for your support. I look forward to laughing and learning with you this fall.



Willard G. Fraumann, Chairman,
CHF Board of Directors

A unique and wonderful institution



Stuart Flack,
CHF Executive Director

It is a very exciting time for the Chicago Humanities Festival. As we prepare this annual report in May 2009, we are not only putting the finishing touches on “Laughter,” our Fall Festival, but we are also working toward the launch of our new website.

Traditionally, the humanities are delivered to students in a classroom. Twenty years ago the Festival’s great innovation was to take the humanities from the classroom to the public in an accessible, engaging way. Our new website – made possible through the generous support of our board and a number of longtime supporters – is the next step in the Festival’s evolution. Free and perpetually available, the site will be continually stocked with fresh features, articles, videos, podcasts, and photo essays drawn from the vast archive of past, present and future programs, as well as our partners’ work. It will prominently link to humanities events worldwide and will further Chicago’s position as an internationally-recognized hub for the humanities. We imagine the site as a place where humanities institutions can refine and experiment with new forms of programming and content. As a resource, it will provide daily, lifelong learning opportunities for students, teachers, and adults and through the use of social media will eventually become a national public forum for the humanities.

Launching this website with our twentieth festival celebrates a significant milestone. In 20 years, our festival grew from one day to more than three weeks. We recognize that our organization’s achievement is a direct result of the strong foundation our staff, board, and members have built. We are forever indebted to their commitment and work, and to the thousands who recognize the importance of the humanities and attend our programs each year. Please be sure to visit us at www.chicagohumanities.org in September of 2009.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S Flack". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Stuart Flack,
CHF Executive Director



Lawrence Weschler,
CHF Artistic Director

November 2009 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the Chicago Humanities Festival, and to celebrate, your trusty gremlins here at Fort Humane have been busy fashioning something special, a season entirely given over to the theme of Laughter. Not “Happiness,” mind you: happiness is smug and bland and self-satisfied. Laughter, on the other hand, runs the gamut: from blithe to bitter, raucous to subdued, fond to angry, knowing to clueless, high to low, broad to pinpoint specific. Its history wends back past Aristophanes and Job (the comedy of suffering, after all) on up through Rabelais and Cervantes, and then right to the present – please understand that around here we think of Samuel Beckett as one the funniest playwrights of the twentieth century.

There are all the different ethnic and cultural shadings of laughter: African-American, Jewish, Irish, Russian, Persian, Korean, Hispanic, and on and on – each with its own knotty tradition, and its airy cross-pollinations. Laughter has its vexations: battles around political correctness and totalitarian suppression. There is gallows humor and Gaelic humor. Psychologists, anthropologists, economists, philosophers, and historians all have their two cents to offer. As of course do artists, from New Yorker cartoonists through the latest crop of graphic novelists. Modern theater begins in mime and commedia dell'arte, and then blossoms forth with Shakespeare's jesters and Moliere's bourgeois buffoons and Chekhov's funny-sad provincials. Stand-up, sit-down, sleight of hand, slapstick Borscht Belt through flouncy vaudeville. The sound of laughter, from Mozart through John Adams. And vintage screen comedy, from Buster Keaton (who we will be considering alongside Wittgenstein, naturally) through Harpo Marx. With presenters as various as Jules Feiffer, Dick Gregory, Matt Groening, Lynda Barry, Harold Ramis, Simon Schama, Sarah Jones, Billy Collins, Kay Ryan, Sandra Tsing Loh, Robert Reich, Don Byron channeling Mickey Katz, Ian Frazier, Margo Jefferson, John Hodgman, and dozens more.

And where better to do all this than in Chicago itself, incubator and home to some of the most influential improvisatory comedy around: don't even get us started on Second City and its many progeny. Midtown, of course, but with a special daylong pre-Festival in Hyde Park, and a gala given over to celebrating those divinely paired cut-ups, Rich and Barbara Franke, godparents to the entire twenty-year CHF parade. So, yeah, Laughter, you betcha: we stand ready to pitch our antic glee against any depression the gods seem intent on sending us. Now all we need is you!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Lawrence Weschler".

Lawrence Weschler,
CHF Artistic Director

Financial Summary

		For the year ended February 28, 2009
		in \$
Statement of Financial Position	Assets	
	Cash & Cash Equivalents	654,017
	Accounts Receivable	22,511
	Grants & Pledges Receivable	299,522
	Deposits & Other Current Assets	48,043
	Fixed Assets	1,775,868
	Endowment Pledges Receivable	633,000
	Endowment Investments	3,645,472
	Total Assets	7,078,433
	Liabilities and Equity	
	Liabilities	
	Accounts Payable	957,705
	Deferred Revenue	531,844
	Total Liabilities	1,489,549
	Equity	
	Endowment Funds	4,278,472
	Undesignated Reserve	1,310,412
	Total Equity	5,588,884
Total Liabilities and Equity	7,078,433	

About Our Annual Report

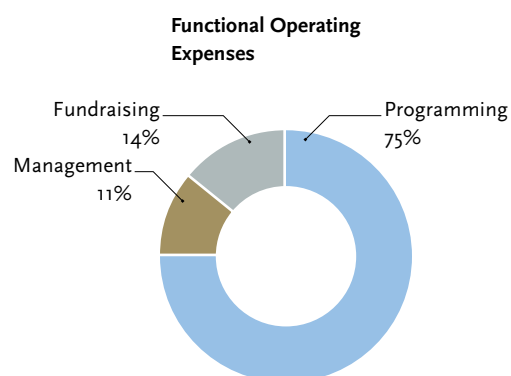
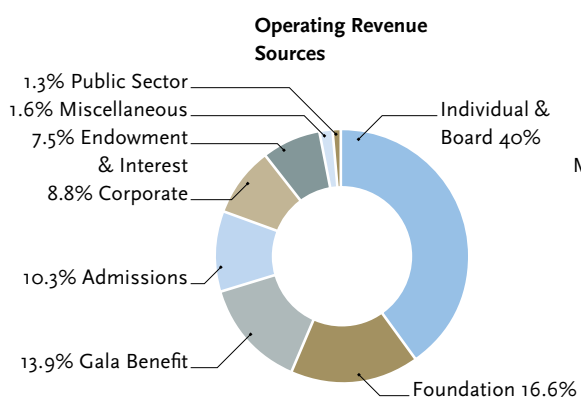
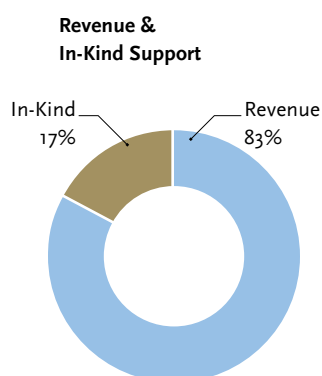
Without the support and generosity of the philanthropic community and committed individuals, the Chicago Humanities Festival would not be the thriving, growing, world-class collection of riches it is today.

To fulfill its mission, the Festival relies on the funding it receives from both public and private sources, as well as the generous in-kind support of time, goods, and resources it receives from individuals, suppliers, presenters, and partners.

Because of the great foresight of its founders, the Festival was fortunate to have \$600,000 in reserves and approximately \$160,000 in proceeds from its endowment to meet the financial challenges of the past fiscal year. It would not be possible to nourish the minds of children, students and people of all backgrounds while maintaining affordable ticket prices without the additional \$442,000 of in-kind contributions received, the efforts of more than 300 volunteers and venue coordinators who donated 1,750 hours to cover 378 shifts; and 11 interns who worked more than 1,700 hours over the course of the year. Through their combined efforts, the CHF saved approximately \$60,000.

This Annual Report is an accounting to you, our members, funding providers and supporters, about how we steward these valuable resources to fulfill our objectives in the reporting year. It also outlines our vision for the year ahead.

		For the year ended February 28, 2009
		in \$
Statement of Activity	Operating Revenue	
	Gala Benefit	291,804
	Admissions	215,172
	Corporate Contributions	183,500
	Foundation Contributions	347,500
	Individual & Board Contributions	838,687
	Public Sector Contributions	26,586
	Endowment Distribution & Interest	158,166
	Special Events & Miscellaneous	34,317
	Total Operating Revenue	2,095,732
	In-Kind	442,047
	Total Operating Revenue & In-Kind Revenue	2,537,779
	Functional Operating Expenses	
	Programming	2,053,137
	Management & General	301,127
	Fundraising	383,252
	Total Functional Operating Expenses	2,737,516
	In-Kind	442,047
	Total Functional Operations & In-Kind Expenses	3,179,563
Decrease in Net Assets from Operations	(641,784)	
Endowment Market Value Loss	(1,295,180)	
Digital Initiative Restricted Revenue	1,351,200	
Net Decrease in Assets	(585,784)	



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- ‡ Includes In-Kind support
- § Includes Endowment Contribution
- * Includes support to Digital Initiative

Our Mission

We at the Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) believe that the active, life-long study of the humanities enriches and enhances the lives of individuals, their communities, and the world in which we all live.

Our purpose is to create opportunities for people of all ages and circumstances to explore, enjoy, and be enriched by the arts and humanities. We accomplish this through our annual festivals, the fall Chicago Humanities Festival and the spring Stages, Sights & Sounds, and by presenting educational programs throughout the year that encourage the study and enjoyment of the humanities.

To make a contribution or for more information, you may contact the CHF's Development Office:

phone 312-661-1028

fax 312-661-1018

Please visit our website at www.chfestival.org to find out how you can more fully explore, enjoy and support the humanities.



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