

Patrons and Foundations Put Their Money Where Your Art Is

[John Toohey](#)

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As a career performing arts administrator, I believe in the power of the performing arts to improve our community. At [ARTS San Antonio](#), we work hard to bring globally significant and artistically excellent performers to San Antonio. I believe this work enriches lives and adds to our understanding of each other. If we don't take the complicated artistic and financial risks, it simply won't get done.

It's not financially profitable work – but every day we see payment in the form of the inspiring commitment of artists and patrons. We see art building communities.

At the forefront of these efforts is our [ARtsTEach](#) program that brings local artists into area schools and senior-living centers to give interactive, hands-on arts workshops. These workshops

make possible inspiring personal participation for students and seniors with limited arts activities.

We recently presented [Pilobolus Dance Theater](#), an innovative dance troupe from Connecticut that rarely visits San Antonio. On the morning of their performance, Pilobolus dancers conducted two master classes for 40 dance students at [Brandeis High School in Northside ISD](#).



ARTS SA made it possible for the students to attend the Pilobolus performance that evening and to meet and speak with the dancers following the performance. During my pre-performance curtain speech before a near-capacity audience, I gave a shout out to the Brandeis HS students. They loudly demonstrated their excitement by whooping and whistling with pride when I mentioned their presence.

[Sul Ross Middle School](#) orchestra students performed with world-famous cellist Yo-Yo Ma after attending his sold-out performance at the [Majestic Theatre](#) in 2011. In March 2013, Brandeis High School dance students worked directly with the top artistic leadership of the world-famous [Joffrey Ballet](#).

In each year for the past four years, up to 80 local dance students, young children, teens, and often their parents, have performed side-by-side with the professional dancers of [Mejia Ballet International](#) in its artistically excellent production of “The Nutcracker.” Imagine the impact this

close contact with professional artists has on aspiring, young performers.



Audiences for ARTS SA’s public performances have doubled in size over the past two years. This shows that San Antonians value the excellence and experiences we bring to our city. Last year, our performances and events brought nearly 25,000 persons to downtown San Antonio. We know that most reside in Bexar County but a surprising number travel to San Antonio for our performances.

Although we have have extremely high ratio of earned income to expense – more than 65 percent, among the highest in the U.S. for performing arts organizations – the remainder must be raised from contribution and grants. Ticket sales are not sufficient to sustain our work and we can’t do this alone. We need help from arts patrons, including local foundations. [Click here for a full list of our donors.](#)

The KCF Challenge

The staff and trustees of the [Kronkosky Charitable Foundation](#) (KCF) have consistently supported ARTS SA. KCF is known for carefully reviewing and evaluating the operations and finances of the nonprofits it supports. The Foundation's support is based on our financial reporting, our committed and stable board leadership, our staff's credentials and results and our strategic direction.

In May 2013, the KCF challenged the community to raise \$100,000 for ARTS SA, which the Foundation offered to match, dollar for dollar, for a total of \$200,000 in gifts. The challenge had two phases.

In the first phase, \$50,000 was to be raised between May and September 2013. In the second phase, \$50,000 was to be raised between October 2013 and August 2014. The Foundation's intent was for the Board and staff of ARTS SA to use the challenge to increase charitable giving. The challenge doubled the value of any gift obtained during the campaign.

It worked.

During the first phase ending September 30, 2013, [our supporters](#) made 221 contributions totaling \$156,104. We were able to maintain momentum and matched the goal for the second phase by December 31 by raising 155 gifts totaling \$85,767. Including the Kronkosky Foundation's matching gifts, we received a total of 380 gifts totaling \$341,871. The second phase was completed eight months ahead of schedule.



You can see the difference through this comparison: in the same timeframe a year earlier, ARTS SA received 190 gifts totaling \$206,312. The Kronkosky challenge resulted in a 100 percent increase in individual gifts, 190 additional gifts, and a 66 percent increase, \$135,559, in gifts.

“The Kronkosky Charitable Foundation is pleased to support ARTS San Antonio’s efforts to present diverse, culturally important performing arts and its ongoing commitment to providing enriching arts-education workshops to students and seniors in San Antonio,” said Palmer Moe, managing director of the Foundation.



Appeals were sent to prior ticket buyers and donors. New ticket purchasers added gifts to ticket orders. Local foundations, including family foundations with no history of supporting ARTS SA, stepped forward to participate in the challenge. Patrons, longtime and new, made gifts—some of them multiple times—in response to the different cultural events and performances ARTS SA promoted.



The challenge excited ARTS SA’s Board and supporters who wanted to reach and maximize our goal ahead of KCF’s original end date of August 2014. ARTS SA’s Board of Directors was the cornerstone of each campaign phase, making gifts and influencing personal giving from friends and family.

“Nothing is more fun than savoring a hard-earned fundraising success,” said ARTS SA’s Board Chair Will E. Liebmann. “It’s even more fun when so many people were involved in making it happen.”

Having achieved this, our job is not done. We realize that we must present quality performers throughout the year to attract patrons to our performances. We must continue to fundraise throughout the year. All this is necessary to sustain the excellence of ARTS SA’s services and financial health. We are committed to presenting culturally important performers throughout the year, making smart marketing choices and collaborating with a broad selection of local organizations.

John Toohey is president and executive director of ARTS San Antonio, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the education, enrichment and entertainment of the people, especially the children, of greater San Antonio. To make a gift to ARTS SA, visit artssa.org.