Photograph courtesy of the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Cleveland.

As Drew Carey says, Cleveland rocks. But the home of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum also lays claim to the world-renowned Cleveland Orchestra, a distinct source of civic pride in this struggling rust-belt city.

One reason for the orchestra's strong ties to the community is its roster of educational programs, which began with its founding in 1918 and continues today. More than 70,000 young people and adults annually attend concerts at Severance Hall, the orchestra's home, and more than 100,000 Clevelanders flock each year to free Fourth of July concerts and other events.

Despite its importance, the Cleveland Orchestra has experienced financial hard times in the past five years. At the end of 2002 it was $1.3 million in the hole. So even though its enviable endowment should ensure that it will be around for some time to come, the orchestra still set out to cut costs. It suspended its national radio broadcasts, delayed repairs to Severance Hall and instituted a salary freeze for some employees and voluntary pay cuts for senior administrators. Still, the next year it posted an even bigger deficit: $1.9 million on a $36.1 million budget.

The city's other key treasure, the heavily endowed Cleveland Museum of Art, has faced a similar plight. In July 2003 it was forced to lay off employees, freeze salaries and cut pay by 5 percent for senior management in order to trim its $33.3 million budget by $3.3 million.

And these prestige institutions are the lucky ones. In the past five years, companies that have gone out of business include the Cleveland Ballet, once hailed as among the nation's top classical dance companies; the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, which served as the ballet's pit orchestra; and the Cleveland Signstage Theatre, a theater company for the deaf. For a city with such premier cultural facilities, the vexing problem is how to make sure other institutions don't also close their doors.

At the Cleveland Play House, the nation's oldest continuously operating nonprofit theater company, executive director Dean Gladden pointed—literally—to one of the reasons for the Cleveland arts scene's woes. "B.P. America, gone. TRW, sold last year," he says, reading names from a plaque installed in 1983 that honors corporate donors. "White Consolidated Industries, gone. LTV Steel Company, bankrupt. Gone."

In the 1990s, no fewer than 11 corporations

"It's not just arts for arts' sake anymore."

Kathleen Cerveny
senior program officer
The Cleveland Foundation.

moved their headquarters out of Cleveland. OfficeMax recently joined the exodus, leaving Cleveland alone among the top 20 largest U.S. cities to show a net loss of large corporate headquarters. "The single biggest area of concern is that Cleveland's corporate population has been declining and continues to decline," says Gary Hanson, the orchestra's executive director. "Consequently, corporate support for the arts has been declining."

And when the corporations moved or shut down, plenty of management-level and other jobs went with them. Census figures show that the region lost 1.3 percent of its population during the 1990s, while the U.S. population as a whole grew by more than 13 percent. What's more, young people moved out of the area at a rate more than twice the national average, including nearly 20 percent of those 25 to 34 years of age. "We try new things every year, and our subscription base is still diminishing," says Gladden, who has seen Play House subscribers dwindle from 14,000 in 1983 to 7,000 this season. "Instead of saying they don't have time, they're saying, 'We're worried about our jobs.' Or they don't have a job, and they're trying to save money."

Another demographic shift that has hurt institutions like the Play House is movement from inner-ring suburbs like Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights to communities farther outside the city such as Solon, Hudson and Bainbridge. For those residents, a trip to and from Cleveland for a night's entertainment is now more complicated and time-consuming.

Meanwhile, the city's cultural community has faced problems common to arts groups nationwide. Post-September 11, ticket sales dropped, and the falling stock market caused a decrease in foundation support and private giving. For example, the Cleveland Foundation's arts grants totaled $8.6 million in both 1999 and 2002 but dipped to $7.1 million in 2003. At the same time, the Cleveland-based George Gund Foundation reduced its grants overall by $1 million, falling to $19 million in 2002 and $18 million the following year. "I think it can be stabilized, but I think we'll lose more organizations," says Marcie Goodman, executive director of the Cleveland Film Society, which was pulled back from the brink of bankruptcy in 2003. "I don't see population increasing. I think it's more a matter of just stabilizing and building a more devoted audience, and reaching out to new audiences."

Making matters worse is the fact that Cleveland is one of the few cities its size with little public funding for culture. The city spends less than $100,000 on the arts—despite a study released in 2000 that showed the arts and cultural industry generates more than $1 billion in economic activity and employs 3,700 full-time workers in the region. In fact, in order to fund the Cleveland Browns Stadium, the city enacted a parking tax that didn't exempt nonprofit groups; a percentage of their parking fees therefore goes to subsidize one of the richest pro sports teams in the country. And the city's major

ARTS&LIFE

Newhart visits 'ER' for 3 shows

Breaking the silence

A man of few words, artist Jasper Johns spares a moment

Coming Sunday

Vienna State Opera's archivist shares some amazing treasures

The Plain Dealer

investment in the popular arts—the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, designed by I.M. Pei and opened in 1995—draws mainly tourists and has not proven itself to be an incubator for arts-related businesses.

The last five years have been bleak, but those who toil in the nonprofit arts world are nothing if not optimistic. Some might even argue that hard times have given rise to positive developments, such as the formation of the Community Partnership for the Arts and Culture (C-PAC), which has become an arts-advocacy coalition and a clearinghouse for information.

In the meantime, help has gone out to some troubled groups in the form of the Cleveland Foundation's Advancement Program for Mid-Sized Arts Organizations. Announced in May 2004, the three-year, $5 million initiative is designed to assist groups across a range of disciplines—Apollo's Fire: The Cleveland Baroque Orchestra, Cleveland Film Society, Cleveland Public Art, Great Lakes Theater Festival, Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland and Young Audiences of Greater Cleveland—in strengthening their balance sheets and developing a core of skilled leaders.

Furthermore, new troupes have arisen from the demise of old ones. Among the most innovative and artistically well-regarded are Red, an orchestra formed in 2001 by former members of the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, and GroundWorks, a dance company founded in 1998 by former Cleveland Ballet dancer David Shimotakahara. Other new ventures are helping to revitalize the scene as well. A group called Sparx in the City, for example, has organized such events as a tour of 50 art galleries, designed both to highlight the arts and stimulate merchant activity in downtown Cleveland.

Perhaps the biggest change to come out of the troubled times is a new mindset about the role of culture in general. "It's not just arts for arts' sake anymore," says Kathleen Cerveny, senior program officer of the Cleveland Foundation. "The arts have to make the case that they contribute to economic and community development, not just to the quality of life and perpetuating old elitist values."

Cerveny, for one, sees hope even in the March 2004 defeat of Issue 31, a property-tax initiative that would have raised nearly $21 million to help the local economy and cultural activity. "Even though it failed, the arts community was enormously energized," she says. "There was recognition overnight that the arts were a sector to be contended with."

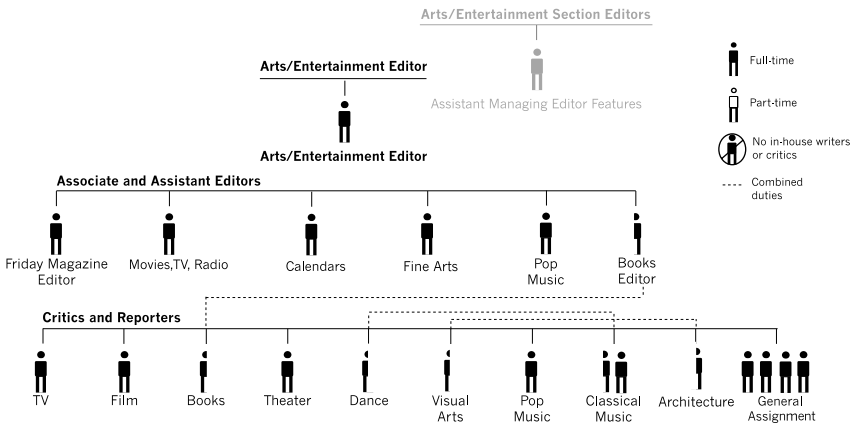
By Valerie Takahama

"I don't see population increasing. I think it's more a matter of just stabilizing and building a more devoted audience, and reaching out to new audiences."

Marcie Goodman
executive director
Cleveland Film Society

Owner: Newhouse Newspapers **Daily Circulation:** 367,528 **Sunday Circulation:** 480,540

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)



THE PLAIN DEALER

1998-2003

Daily circulation: ➔

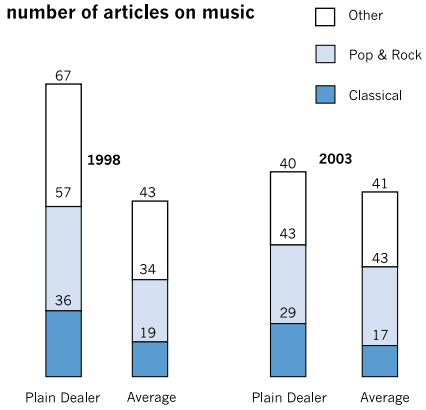
Arts-and-culture newshole: ↘

Number of arts-and-culture articles: ↓

In-house arts staff: ➔

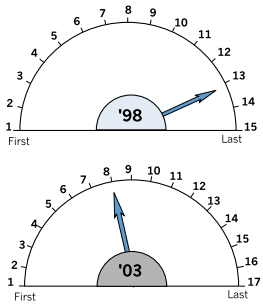
Music Journalism

number of articles on music



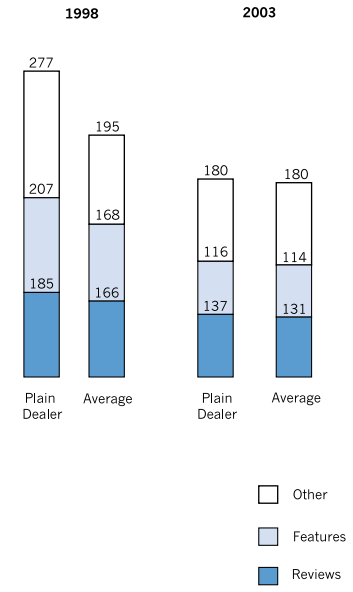
Weekend Journalism

ranking among all newspapers studied for space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture journalism (listings excluded) in weekend arts supplements



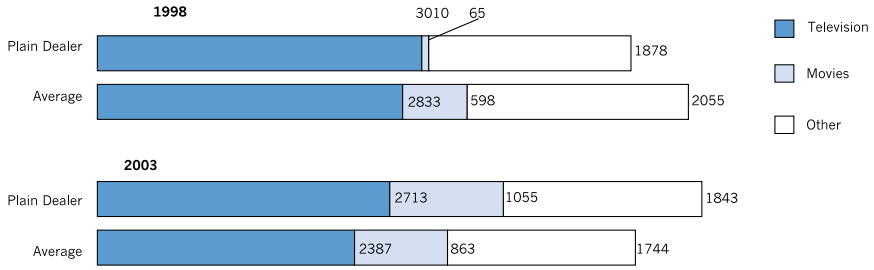
Story Count

number of arts-and-culture articles (listings exluded)



Newshole for Listings

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture listings



While Editor & Publisher magazine gave Cleveland's *Plain Dealer* accolades for its improvements, the paper's newshole for arts-and-culture articles has nonetheless been devastated during the past five years. The monthly story count plummeted from more than 650 articles to fewer than 450, causing the paper to go from being a leader in the arts coverage in October 1998 to merely average in 2003.

These huge cuts were the result of a revamping of *The Plain Dealer*'s daily arts journalism. Back in October 1998, its specialist arts section, entitled Entertainment, had a companion daily features section called Lifestyle. They have been merged into Arts & Life; the volume of daily arts journalism has been halved; and the new section has shifted its emphasis towards listings.

The Plain Dealer has also consolidated much of its weekly arts features into its previously undersized weekend supplements Friday! and Sunday Arts. On the weekends *The Plain Dealer* was one of four metropolitan newspapers in our study to increase both the articles and listings newshole in its arts sections. Nonetheless, the increase was from unusually low to slightly below average.

Over the last five years, *The Plain Dealer* has transformed its movie coverage by introducing voluminous listings, which now take up more space than journalism. Music has also shifted toward listings, but less drastically. The cutback in the number of articles was not applied across the board. The paper continues to be a leader in covering classical music. Theater and book reviews also survived relatively unscathed. Dance and painting, however, were hard-hit. It also virtually eliminated coverage of the decorative arts, a beat in which five years ago *The Plain Dealer* was a leader, making it one of the specialties of its now-defunct non-arts feature section.—**AT**

Arts Coverage in Cleveland: A Critical View

As Cleveland's arts institutions struggle to maintain audiences and funding, cultural leaders hope for more from the media than calendar listings and thumbs-up reviews. "It's more than 'What did you think of the *Hamlet* that opened last night?' It's the meaning of *Hamlet* being produced in the community," says Charles Fee, producing artistic director of the Great Lakes Theater Festival. "Unless the arts are seen as central to the ongoing discussion about the health of the community, you can forget about being at the table for any decisions about the community."

As one of the oldest, largest and most influential institutions in that community, *The Plain Dealer* appropriately has taken a leading role in stimulating discussion about Cleveland's need to reinvent itself from a manufacturing hub to a center for medical research and the biotech industry. At the same time, the paper continues to reveal the important role of the arts in that transformation.

It's fitting, too, because the paper, which is owned by Advance Publications, has experienced a renaissance of sorts under the leadership of Douglas Clifton, who took over as editor in June 1999 and was named Editor of the Year in 2003 by *Editor & Publisher* magazine. "Readers and reporters alike credit Clifton for quickly transforming *The Plain Dealer*, Ohio's largest newspaper by far, from a middling metro that wasn't even considered the best paper in the state to one that now appears as if it belongs among the nation's 25 biggest dailies," the magazine reported, citing improvements such as better graphics, a 2003 Pulitzer Prize finalist in feature writing and a change in image and attitude.

Readers seem to like what they see. Despite Cleveland's depressed economy, the paper has scored marginal but consistent circulation gains in the last three years. In late 2000, circulation was 359,978 daily and 477,515 Sundays. By the same time in 2003, circulation had risen to 367,528 daily and 480,540 Sundays.

Arts and entertainment coverage has traditionally been strong at *The Plain Dealer*, as noted in the 1999 *Reporting the Arts* study. At that time, the paper had recently introduced a 6- to 12-page daily stand-alone called Entertainment, which has since merged with the feature section to create Arts & Life.

Now, in addition to the daily section, the main venues for arts and entertainment stories are the 90-page tabloid-size Friday! weekend magazine and the 14-page Sunday Arts section. While overall space for arts coverage has decreased, and the number of arts articles has plummeted from 669 in October 1998 to 433 in October 2003, *The Plain Dealer* has not reduced its arts staff correspondingly. And in terms of content, the paper continues to devote considerable resources to series and special projects such as:

- "Quiet Crisis," a group of news stories, editorials and panel discussions that looked at the region's problems and the need to create a development plan "or face economic extinction." It included a 4,600-word, A1 story by staffer Carolyn Jack that focused on the arts' ability to boost the economy and compared Cleveland's lackluster support for the arts and stodgy image to arts-friendly Seattle and its hip mystique.

- Coverage of the Cleveland International Piano Competition, an August 2003 event that generated more than two dozen reviews, features and news stories including a look at the economic impact of the Van Cliburn piano competition in the Fort Worth area. "It's something that deserves coverage," says Clifton. "We recognize that it isn't for everybody, but sports isn't for everybody, either."

- A five-part series on "The Forgotten Valley" by architecture and visual-arts critic Steven Litt. Published in November 2000, it focused on the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, a new kind of national park that celebrates "commonplace landscapes and historical sites" and is meant to spark preservation and renewal.

- An architecture competition initiated by *The Plain Dealer* in November 2003 to devise design plans for Whiskey Island, an area that includes the Cleveland Browns Stadium, City Hall and several docks. Organizers had anticipated a few submissions but instead received 38 proposals, which were unveiled in front of a standing-room-only crowd of about 300 people.

At the same time, the paper has continued its comprehensive coverage of the local arts

"Touring is a whole different world, and that broad kind of coverage makes touring make sense to our audiences."

Nikki Scandalios
spokewoman
Cleveland Orchestra

scene as well as its policy of sending writers out of town for major events like the South by Southwest music festival and to New York and Los Angeles to stay up-to-date with their beats. The Cleveland Orchestra's concerts in Vienna last fall, for example, marked *Plain Dealer* classical music critic Donald Rosenberg's 12th tour with the ensemble. Other Cleveland-area news organizations sending journalists on the tour included WCLV 104.9, a commercial classical music station based in Lorain; WKSU 89.7, a public classical music station in Kent; and WVIZ/PBS and WCPN 90.3 Ideastream, a public-media partnership based in Cleveland.

So what does all the attention mean to the orchestra? "They provided a lot of context for the readers and listeners in Cleveland to understand why it is so important to perform on the world's stages," says orchestra spokeswoman Nikki Scandalios. "In addition to print stories, there were radio stories, interviews, lots of information on their Web sites, tons of photos, blogs. Touring is a whole different world, and that broad kind of coverage makes touring make sense to our audiences. It adds a whole new level of value to our audience in Cleveland."

Other media outlets covering the cultural scene include the *Akron Beacon Journal,* which has a circulation of 139,200 daily and 187,456 Sunday and covers major events in Cleveland. And a couple of other players on the Cleveland media scene recently made news themselves. In January 2003, New Times Media, which publishes the Cleveland newsweekly *Scene*, and Village Voice Media, publisher of the rival *Cleveland Free Times*, reached an agreement that ended a Justice Department antitrust investigation. The deal that triggered the inquiry was concocted in October 2002, when New Times Media paid $2 million to Village Voice Media to close the *Free Times*. New Times Media then agreed to stop publishing *New Times Los Angeles* in exchange for $11 million from Village Voice Media, which owns a rival Los Angeles alternative weekly. While there was no admission of guilt by either chain, each company was required to pay fines and fees of about $375,000 and to sell the papers so they could be reopened in each city. Subsequently the *Free Times* reappeared in May 2003 with a 112-page issue and a circulation of 70,000, about 20,000 fewer copies than before it was shut down.

The Internet boasts a lively new upstart in CoolCleveland.com, a weekly e-newsletter started in late 2002. Delivered to subscribers' inboxes on Wednesday mornings, it lists the week's arts, entertainment and community events along with interviews of cultural leaders, politicians and liberal activists. It now claims tens of thousands of subscribers and has expanded its bailiwick to host art, tech and dance parties drawing 450 people at a time to venues throughout downtown Cleveland. So now, instead of locals bemoaning, "There's nothing to do in this town," Clevelanders have more ways to connect with the arts than they did even a few years ago.

All in all, city residents are probably as well served by the media today as they were five years ago. "I think the arts coverage in Cleveland is very good," says Charles Fee, who came to Great Lakes Theater Festival from Idaho in 2002. "They're reporting on and talking about the arts on a regular basis in all the print media. It's the first time in my life when I've felt like media coverage has played a major role in selling the idea that it's worth saving a company."

By Valerie Takahama