

Executive Committee - My comments for 2012.EX25.5 on November 19, 2012 Executive Committee

From: Isabel Menanno <isabel@sonycentre.ca>
To: "'exc@toronto.ca"' <exc@toronto.ca>
Date: 11/15/2012 10:13 AM
Subject: My comments for 2012.EX25.5 on November 19, 2012 Executive Committee
CC: Dan Brambilla <dan@sonycentre.ca>
Attachments: Daniel Brambilla - Letter toExecutive Commitee - 2012 EX25.5 (Special).pdf

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the November 19, 2012 Executive Committee meeting on item 2012.EX25.5, Future of the Three Major Civic Theatres - Directions Resulting from the Request for Expressions of Interest No. 9101-12-7008

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Please see comments in the attached letter from Daniel Brambilla, to be included in the above-noted agenda.

Thank you.

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**From the Desk of
Daniel D. Brambilla**

November 15, 2012

Dear Members of the Executive Committee,

**Re: 2012.EX25.5 (Special) - Future of the Three Major Civic Theatres -
Directions Resulting from the Request for Expressions of Interest No. 9101-
12-7008**

I am writing in my capacity as CEO of both the Sony Centre as well as Toronto Theatre Trust Inc.

I must point out three very troubling aspects of the Report with which I do not agree:

- Firstly, the Report talks about divesting the theatre for “adaptive reuse”. This means that, subject to zoning or rezoning, the theatre could become a bowling alley, car dealership or OLGC Off-Track Betting parlour or some other such use that would be inconsistent with the fabric of the local community. I would ask that the Executive Committee remove this phrase from the Report before it goes to Council. In fact, the theatre should be maintained not only as a theatre but a theatre that continues to provide important multicultural programming to the citizens of Toronto, as is discussed in more detail below.
- Secondly, the Report states that the Sony Centre is a commercial theatre and that is the reason it should not continue to be supported by the City. It cites the fact that we present concerts such as Jack White and the comedian Louis CK. Of course we do and of course they are commercial. However, the Report fails to disclose that those shows represent only about 10% of our offerings and are presented so that we can make enough money to present the multicultural shows which don't make nearly as much revenue (see Attachment A for a list of Sony Centre's recent and upcoming multicultural productions).

The Report also erroneously states that we compete with the Mirvish Organization and with Live Nation when in fact, we do not. The programming of the Sony Centre and that of the Mirvish Organization is completely different and in fact they work with us to help promote our multicultural programming because what we do is important to the City. With respect to Live Nation, we often rent the

Sony Centre to Live Nation and at times partner with them on the shows they do at the Centre. So how is that competing with them?

It makes me wonder where the City is getting this information that is clearly misinformed and which will act as the basis for Council making a similarly misinformed decision on the future of the Centre.

It is interesting to note that the TCA, which was the home of Dancap for a few years and which presented clearly commercial shows, was not deemed to be commercial. The reason no doubt is because the venue is also used by hundreds of community and non profit users, as is the St. Lawrence Centre. But the Report fails to acknowledge that our users are the hundreds of thousands of citizens who live throughout the GTA, your constituents, who praise us for honouring their culture through the presentation of their native art forms and performers.

The Report's conclusion that the Sony Centre should be divested by the City fails to acknowledge the significant contribution that the Sony Centre makes to the fabric of Toronto. Not only is it a historic venue but, most importantly, it is the only venue that programmes artistic performances from around the world to honour the thousands of people from multiple cultures that have come to call Toronto their home. We are a global City and the Sony Centre is the epitome of our motto Diversity Our Strength. The City should continue to fund the Centre's great work.

However, if, despite all this, the Executive Committee wants to divest the theatre because it wants to save money then it should do so with the requirement that the theatre should stay not only as a theatre but more importantly, as a theatre that continues to serve the City's motto and its diverse citizenry.

- The third troubling aspect of the Report is its lack of transparency.

When Council requested to move forward with the REOI process, Management of the Sony Centre wanted to help the City find a solution. In fact, Management believes that it has a fiduciary obligation to the City as the shareholder of the Sony Centre to do exactly that. In this regard, Management formed a not-for-profit corporation, Toronto Theatre Trust Inc. for the purpose of helping the City achieve its goal with respect to the future of the theatres.

Through this company, Management found a philanthropic investor and submitted a formal response to the REOI pursuant to which the Trust would give the City virtually everything it has asked for:

- A. The Trust would take on all of the operating obligations of the Sony Centre, leaving the City with no recurring annual liability for grants or funding of operating losses for a savings of over \$1M annually.
- B. The Trust would take on all of the large capital expenses as well as state of good repair expenses in accordance with the existing Heritage Easement Agreement, leaving the City with no obligation with respect thereto for a savings of \$750K annually.
- C. The Trust would assume virtually all of the contingent liabilities the City would suffer should the theatre be closed or transferred to a third party other than the Trust, for a savings of approximately \$15M.
- D. The Trust would continue to operate the theatre according to its mandate of providing multicultural programming to the diverse citizens of Toronto.
- E. In addition, the Trust made proposals that would save the City money by suggesting that the Trust could manage the other two venues.

Unfortunately, none of this detailed information was made public in the Report. In fact, the Report is misleading in that it states that:

"The results of the REOI did not yield transformative options for the three civic theatres to operate without City support in the short term to medium term future."

This statement, for some reason, ignores the fact that Toronto Theatre Trust proposed to do exactly that i.e. to operate the Sony Centre without City support. Why was this not cited in the Report?

Furthermore the Report states that:

"Only the Sony Centre attracted interest in the transfer of assets, but with continued City subsidies factored into the future revenues."

This statement is simply not true. The Toronto Theatre Trust proposal does not require any continued City subsidy. Why was this not cited in the Report?

Without this crucial information, I do not see how it is possible for Council to make an informed decision as to how to proceed. Accordingly, I would ask this Committee to instruct the City Manager's Office to correct the errors in the Report and have the Report sent to Council with a complete and thorough description of Management's proposal so that Council can properly decide how to instruct the City Manager to proceed to explore the divestment of the Sony Centre.

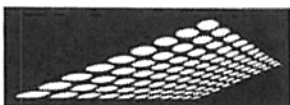
In summary, I propose the following:

1. Remove the language regarding "adaptive reuse."
2. Require the theatre to stay as a theatre which makes multicultural programming its mandate.
3. Require the Report to correct its errors and make full disclosure of the details of the Toronto Theatre Trust's proposal to take divestment of the theatre.

I further ask that any next steps proceed at an expeditious pace to put an end to the continuing difficulty of maintaining our staff and clients due to this uncertainty hanging over our heads.

Sincerely

Daniel D. Brambilla



ATTACHMENT A

Sony Centre for the Performing Arts

PROGRAMMING:

Since departure of the Canadian Opera Company and National Ballet of Canada through August 2013.

	Country of Origin	Primary Community Served
12 Girls Band	China	Chinese
2011 STOMP Urban Dance Competition/Showcase	Canada (Toronto)	Urban
A Leahy Family Christmas	Canada	Celtic
African Footprint	South Africa	Afro-Canadian
Alan Tam	China	Chinese
Alexandrov Red Army Chorus	Russia	Russian
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater	USA	Afro-Canadian/Western
Aziz Ansari	USA	South Asian/Multiple
Bharati	South Asian	South Asian
Celtic Thunder	United Kingdom	Celtic
Celtic Woman	Ireland	Celtic
Charles Aznavour	France	French Canadian/French/Russian
China Carnival	China	Chinese
Chinese New Year Celebration	China	Chinese
Chris de Burgh	United Kingdom	Multiple
Chris Wong	China	Chinese
Church Girl	USA	Afro-Canadian/Caribbean
Cultures of China	China	Chinese
Daniel O'Donnell	Ireland	Irish
Disabled Artists of China	China	Chinese/Multiple
Dream of the Red Chamber	China	Chinese
Emir Kusterica and the No Smoking Band	Bosnia	Balkan
Festival of India/Zakir Hussein	India	South Asian
FeTNA Convention (Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America)	North American	Tamil
Gary Valenciano	Philippines	Filipino
Goran Bregovic and His Wedding and Funeral Orchestra	Serbian	Balkan
Guangzhou Ballet	China	Chinese
Harlem Gospel Choir	USA	Afro-Canadian/Multiple
Iranian Sounds of Peace	Iran	Iranian
Jamaica 50th Celebration	Jamaica	Caribbean
Kevin Hart	USA	Urban/Multiple
Kings of Salsa	Cuba	Cuban/Multiple
Kodo Drummers of Japan	Japan	Multiple
Kumar Shanu & Alka Yagnik	India	South Asian
La Scala Chamber Orchestra	Italy	Italian
Lani Misalucha & Society of Seven	Philippines	Filipino
Liza Wang Starlight Concert Tour	China	Chinese
Maria Pages	Spain	Multiple
Master Mohammed Reza	Iran	Persian
Mazowsze	Poland	Polish
Merchants of Bollywood	India	South Asian
Mike Epps	USA	Urban
Moein & Mansour	Iran	Iranian

Mohsen Namjoo in A Minor	Iran	Iranian
Moiseyev Dance Company	Russia	Russian
National Chinese Acrobats	China	Chinese/Multiple
National Folkloric Ballet of Chile	Chile	Latin American
Paco de Lucia	Spain	Multiple
Philip Kirkorov	Russia	Russian
Qingming Riverside	China	Chinese
Rafael Carrasco	Spain	Multiple
Rafet El Roman	Turkey	Turkish
Ragheb Alame Bassem Feghali	Lebanon	Lebanese
Riverdance	Ireland	Multiple
Rumi Symphony Project	Iran	Persian
Shaolin Warriors	China	Chinese/Multiple
Sharam & Hafez Nazeri	Iran	Persian
Shen Yun	China	Multiple
Show Choirs Canada	Canada	Multiple
Shumka at 50	Canada	Ukrainian/Multiple
Sonu Nigam	India	South Asian
Soweto Gospel Choir	South Africa	Afro-Canadian/Caribbean
Spin - The Rebirth of Diabolo	Taiwan	Chinese
Stars of the 21st Century	Multi-National	Multiple
Steven Ma	China	Chinese
STOMP - Urban Dance Competition	Canada	Urban/Multiple
Sunidhi Chauhan	India	South Asian
Tango Pasion	Argentina	Latin American
TAO	Japan	Multiple
The Diary of Black Men	USA	Afro-Canadian/Caribbean
The Dream	China	Chinese
Tich Nhat Hanh	Vietnam	Multiple
Tracy Morgan	USA	Urban/Multiple
Trinity Irish Dance	USA	Celtic
Twelfth Siyum HaShas of Daf Yomi	Canada	Jewish
Udit and Aditya Narayan	Nepal/India	South Asian
Volyn Ukrainian Song and Dance	Ukraine	Ukrainian
Wong Tze Wah Stand-up Comedy Show	China	Chinese

COMPANIES OF WORLD RENOWN

Adventures in Motion	United Kingdom	Multiple
Alberta Ballet Theatre	Canada (Alberta)	Multiple
Bolshoi Ballet	Russia	Multiple
Eifman Ballet	Russia	Multiple
Guangzhou Ballet	China	Multiple
LaLaLa Human Steps	Canada (Montreal)	Multiple
Les Grand Ballets Canadiens	Canada (Montreal)	Multiple
Luminato Festival	USA	Multiple
Marie Chouinard Dance Company	Canada (Montreal)	Multiple
Martinsky (Kirov) Ballet	Russia	Multiple
Robert Le Page/Ex Machina	Canada/France	Multiple
Royal Winnipeg Ballet	Canada (Winnipeg)	Multiple
Sankai Juku	Japan	Multiple