

ART

Arts Patrons, the Next Generation

By KATHRYN SHATTUCK

Published: June 29, 2008

THE dinner last month at the French Consulate on Fifth Avenue honoring Lin Arison, the Miami arts patron, and her book “Travels With [van Gogh](#) and the Impressionists: Discovering the Connections,” seemed like just another night on New York’s high-end art circuit. Luminaries like Agnes Gund, the former president of the Museum of Modern Art, and the patrons Steven and Kimberly Rockefeller studied the guest list. The meal — of dishes van Gogh ate at the Auberge Ravoux outside Paris, prepared by [Daniel Boulud](#), Yosuke Suga and [Jacques Torres](#) — was displayed on blue glass plates set beneath sky-high shoots of yellow sunflowers in homage to the artist.

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Moris Moreno for The New York Times

Lin Arison, the Miami arts patron, with her granddaughter Sarah Arison, president of the Arison Arts Foundation.

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Robert Presutti for The New York Times

Jonathan G. Maurer, in dark shirt, on the board of the Maurer Family Foundation of Palm Beach, created by his parents to support the arts, with his son, Alexander, 15.

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Patsy Tarr, in dark suit, a supporter of dance in New York, with her daughter, Jennie Tarr Coyne, the vice president of 2wice Arts Foundation, founded by Mrs. Tarr.

Circulating with the self-assurance of someone who had worked a room for decades was 23-year-old Sarah Arison, granddaughter of the guest of honor and president of the Arison Arts Foundation in Miami. Meanwhile, holding court next to Patsy Tarr, the indefatigable supporter of dance in New York, was her 28-year-old daughter, Jennie Tarr Coyne, a museum educator and the vice president of 2wice Arts Foundation, a group founded by her mother in 1989.

Young faces at such events are of course not unusual. Arts institutions have been cultivating people in their 20s and 30s for years as a way of shoring up future donors. But Ms. Arison and Ms. Coyne are not merely passing through, writing a check and dressing up for a night in order to rub the right shoulders. They are among a small and privileged group who hope, and are being groomed, to do much more: to take over the family business, so to speak — that business being arts patronage.

Their position is a rare one. Not many people have a foundation in the family. But the journey ahead of them poses some interesting questions. It is one thing to pass on a casual appreciation of the arts, but can one also pass on a lifetime commitment? How does one learn the ropes? And how do foundations integrate the sometimes different priorities of younger and older members?

“Arts institutions are now seeing more young people who want to be involved in and respect family histories,” said Virginia M. Esposito, president of the National Center for Family Philanthropy. She added that such donors “also want to ensure that those institutions reflect their changing values and experiences.”

In 2005, when she was in her third year of college, Sarah Arison was named to head the Arison Arts Foundation, a nonprofit organization created that same year by her grandmother to encourage arts across America, particularly in high schools and conservatories, and to ensure the longevity and expansion of the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts (whose core program is called YoungArts) and the New World Symphony, both of which her grandparents founded.

A self-proclaimed academic traditionalist who had, in her adolescence, considered artists, including her mother, to

be “slackers,” Sarah wasn’t the obvious choice to ensure the continuation of the Arison vision. But as her grandmother, Lin Arison, explained, “She’s the one, the only one out of all 12 of them that came to me and said, ‘You and Grandpa started these organizations, and I want to help you.’ ”

Sarah was just 15 when her grandmother, grieving after the death of her husband, Ted, the founder of Carnival Cruise Lines, took her to France to retrace the steps of van Gogh and the Impressionists (a trip later recounted in Lin Arison’s book.)

At the Auberge Ravoux in Auvers-sur-Oise, Sarah remembers, she wept after visiting the closet-size room where van Gogh spent his final 70 days.

“I realized that for him being an artist wasn’t a choice,” said Sarah, who lives in Miami. “And just as much as I would have been unhappy being an artist, he would have been unhappy not being one. It was the biggest realization at that age — that both points are completely valid and should be supported.”

Once it dawned on her that she might want to follow in her grandmother’s footsteps, Sarah gave up her plans to pursue science and instead majored in French and business at [Emory University](#), disciplines she thought would be more helpful for a life devoted to the arts.

But her greatest education, she said, came simply from watching her grandmother. “Sarah has been with me a lot these past few years and by osmosis has taken in how I think and what I do,” Lin Arison said. “She is already taking those basics and dealing with the organizations in her own way.”

Eight years after she first started trailing her grandmother around, Sarah is now starting to take over a few responsibilities wholesale: helping to develop programs for YoungArts and attending board meetings for both YoungArts and the New World Symphony, something Lin Arison rarely does these days.

“It’s a lot of responsibility,” said Sarah, who is pursuing a parallel career in fashion journalism in New York with the blessing of her grandmother, who believes Sarah should have the same experiences as any typical young adult.

While a previous generation of women turned to philanthropy because their career options were often limited, today’s young women (and men) have far wider horizons. Writing checks and attending benefits are a pretty easy sell for those who can afford it, but beyond that, full-time arts patronage means life in the nonprofit trenches. It is not necessarily something everyone wants to do.

“Real funding is not about parties,” said Patsy Tarr, a tireless dance advocate through twice Arts Foundation, which supports art, film, dance and performance through grants and charitable gifts, and publishes a magazine by the same name. “Real funding is about attendance, about sitting in the back of the theater during rehearsals and performances, about witnessing creation.”

Mrs. Tarr’s daughter, Jennie Tarr Coyne, knows her way around benefits; most recently she served as a co-chairwoman of the Dance With the Dancers gala at [New York City Ballet](#) (her first time at the helm). But she is also learning, as she puts it, that in order to be a true patron, “You have to be the real deal.”

This means drudge work like paying bills, fielding phone calls, answering mail and going to rehearsals to become more fully informed about an artist or choreographer. “I believe passionately that philanthropists are handmaidens to the art they support,” said Mrs. Tarr. “We do not see ourselves in the world of philanthropy at all. We see ourselves in dance and museum education.”

After a childhood overflowing with concerts and museums — sometimes two or three a weekend — and the occasional dance session with [Twyla Tharp](#), Ms. Tarr Coyne, who now describes herself as a nonprofit professional, majored in art history at Harvard and then went on to earn a master’s in museum studies from Bank Street College in New York. In addition to working full time she volunteers at the Met, has served on the boards of various dance companies and has written a children’s book on women artists.

“Jennie will most likely, if she wants it, eventually have the ability to give out grant money, but that is far off in the future,” Mrs. Tarr added. “We are not yet at that level, and I am easing her into the nonprofit world ever so gently as I try to prepare her for life without her parents, which hopefully is decades away.”

Among the families that have successfully passed the torch down through successive generations are the Rockefellers in New York, the Fields in Chicago and the Haases in San Francisco. But incorporating young people into an established board can require finesse, especially if there are a large number of them. Young perspectives are critical to the future of any organization, but first-time board members also have to be sensitive to

the board's overall focus.

The Maurer Family Foundation of Palm Beach, Fla., founded in 1996 by Ann and Gilbert Maurer to support the arts in the United States, has a board on which three generations sit, including the three oldest grandchildren. Now the two children of Jonathan G. Maurer, a son of Ann and Gilbert and a director and treasurer on the board, are not too far off from turning 18, when they will be eligible for the board. Mr. Maurer said that he and the rest of the board were having second thoughts about offering positions to their mature children, including his daughter, Stephanie, 16, and son, Alexander, 15.

“My daughter is the oldest of kind of a big group that over the next eight years will reach that age,” Mr. Maurer said. “We’re trying to figure out whether we can, as an organization, support that many members from an expense standpoint. But the flip side is, can we afford not to since they are in effect going to be the stewards of this foundation 20 or 30 years down the road?”

The Maurer family had considered forming a children’s board, an idea they gleaned from Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, and of giving them small amounts of money to do with as they desired.

“But there’s a kind of schism on the board,” Mr. Maurer said. “The kids have broader interests. And they haven’t totally developed a giving or service type of mentality. There are those who would rather have them learn on their own than to have the board teach them.”

The Tecovas Foundation went in the opposite direction when two older members died, leaving a board with four of the seven members under 30.

“That not only left a strange vacancy on the board but reinfused the foundation with a lot of money it didn’t anticipate having,” said Mary Galeti, the 25-year-old vice chairwoman of the foundation, which grew from \$700,000 to \$11 million in the course of a few years because of gifts left after the death of her mother and aunt.

Suddenly the youthful trustees found themselves reconsidering the direction of the foundation, which was established in 1998 by Caroline Bush Emeny, who was 88 at the time, for the creation of the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts in Amarillo, Tex.

“We saw the priority of arts funding,” Ms. Galeti said, “but we also saw that there are a lot of other priorities out there.”

Four years later the trustees have reached a forward-looking compromise: the foundation has broadened its outreach with grants to international-development organizations like the Hunger Project and the Women’s Trade and Finance Council. And though it continues to support the [Cleveland Orchestra](#) and the Cleveland Play House, the foundation imposes some 21st-century criteria on its gifts — for example, that an education program at the Globe-News center include remote-site possibilities so that students in rural areas could participate through the Internet.

“I think a lot of folks are struggling with legacy,” said Ms. Galeti, who also helps small nonprofit organizations set up Web sites through [grassroots.org](#). “They struggle with how we honor those people while doing their own work.

“The thing about my generation is that we are more directly interested in leaving our mark, building something that will create a lasting impact, whatever that may be.”