

Envisioning an arts spectacle of music, dance and spoken word to celebrate Rochester's unique arts culture

It dawned on me. Not right away, but it dawned on me.

It was one week in May.

My wife, Nita, was away on a trip with our youngest daughter, and I was on an eight-hour drive to see our older daughter in South Bend, Ind.

My driving companion was one Ms. Hazel D. Cat, a 16-year-old calico, to whom God gave a warm and cuddly nature but left lacking in complex communication skills.

My mind wandered to thinking about the RPO Eclipse Spectacular show in April. I am still over the moon about it.

The show had it all – classical music, gospel music, laser lights, videos, acrobatics. The RPO produced an extravaganza that appealed to thousands of people, regardless of their age and background. There were so many ways to enjoy the event, no wonder so many people attended. It truly was a community experience.

The Eclipse Spectacular also was on my mind as I was looking over the guest list for my No-Nonsense Round Table radio show and podcast. Over the past 5 ½ years, I've had the pleasure to host performers and people behind the scenes in the worlds of music, dance and theater.

I reminisced about guests such as Jeff Tyzik, Gene Cornish, Ralph Meranto, Michael Cunningham, Marc Iacona, Mark Cuddy, Karl LaPorta. In some cases, the composers, singers, screenwriters and impresarios are known internationally, but all certainly have fame in upstate New York.

Passing by Buffalo, I was thinking "Buffalo has a certain culture." Passing by Cleveland I was thinking "Cleveland has a culture." I couldn't make a call on



THE TALK AT THE TABLE
Dom Genova

Toledo but my destination, South Bend, home of Notre Dame, certainly has a culture.

The more I thought about other cities, the more I realized that Rochester has a certain culture. It's a culture we need to celebrate.

Many fine organizations like the Eastman House and the Rochester Music Hall of Fame give credence to this. But these organizations act independently.

I envision an event like Kennedy Center Honors that focuses on what makes the Rochester performing arts scene so special.

We have the RPO and RBTL, Garth Fagan Dance and Geva Theatre Center. We also have Borinquen Dance Theatre, and the dance and theatre departments of Brockport and Nazareth universities. We have vibrant community theater.

All of this give us an identity that is not like other cities. We are rich in the arts. Let's combine our screenwriters, our dancers, our Emmy-Award winners, National Rock and Roll Hall of Famers and all that Rochester has to offer in the performing arts and celebrate it in one place.

Just as the RPO brought together so many different yet complementary performers that appealed to a diverse audience for the Eclipse Spectacular, we can create an arts spectacle of music, dance and spoken word to bring together

people of different ages and backgrounds.

You may say that we already have the Rochester Music Hall of Fame, and the Eastman House celebrates film with the George Eastman Award. Why would we need more?

Our "Kennedy Center" style event won't duplicate or take away from anything that already honors music or performing arts. Rather, it will provide a bigger stage with performances that can attract a new audience. Think of it this way: the rock group The Eagles are in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the band was a Kennedy Center honoree.

I see our celebration of all the performing arts as part of Rochester's revitalization. . Businesses are coming back to historic downtown buildings. We have a reputation for innovation with our startups, our universities and our recent designation as part of one of the 31 technology hubs in the nation.

If we can be an incubator for business, we can be one for performing arts. We have an asset that many communities would envy. It's time for a discussion of how we can showcase our artistic identity and make it shine.

The RPO proved something to me with the Eclipse Spectacular.

An event such as I am proposing can be done.

I would like to hear what you think. Go to my NoNonsenseRoundtable Facebook page (facebook.com/nononsenseroundtable/). There you will see a post pinned to the top of my feed about this very concept. Please share your thoughts in the comment section.

Oh, and be brutally honest. I can take it.

After all, I did survive the car business. Thanks.