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## **VOLUNTEER'S IMPACT IS BACKSTAGE AT ECLECTIC THEATRE COMPANY**

**PHILADELPHIA, PA – April 24, 2009** – Imagine how pleased your boss would be if, over a two-year period, you tripled revenue. Your boss would be even more pleased to discover that you earned no salary doing it.

That's what Michelle Hong has done for the Pig Iron Theatre Company over the last three years where technically speaking, she didn't even have a boss because she's a volunteer. And on Friday, May 15, Hong will be recognized by the Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia as the Business On Board Member of the Year at its Awards 2009 Luncheon to be held at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, with TD Bank as presenting sponsor.

A long-time fan, Hong asked to be matched with Pig Iron as part of a 2006 training session with the Arts & Business Council's Business On Board program. "As an audience member, I had found their productions to be so artistically accomplished that I wasn't sure if they needed someone like me," Hong says. "But now I realize there is always a need for committed, passionate volunteers."

For Pig Iron, it was practically love at first site. We sensed "from the start that we had hit the proverbial jackpot," says John Frisbee, Managing Director of the Pig Iron Theatre Company. Normally "we are extremely wary about bringing new people onto our Board because of our idiosyncratic nature and adventurous, risky productions. But we voted Michelle onto our Board within six months," Frisbee said of Hong, whose day job is as an attorney and Director of Wealth Planning at Brown Brothers Harriman & Co., a private bank in Philadelphia.

And Hong's corporate background is one aspect of her volunteerism that is most valued by Pig Iron leaders. "She absolutely insists that we maintain a high level of professionalism and polish in all our efforts while making it clear that the procedural work is in service to our unique artistic ethos, rather than an attempt to homogenize it," Frisbee adds.

Specifically, Hong led an effort to revise the theatre group's bylaws and created a user-friendly Board handbook. She has also redefined the office of Treasurer. A former board member who is now a funder in the arts community says that Pig Iron will thrive as an organization rather than a group of talented individual artists because of the structure Michelle has provided.

Financially, Hong has been chairing Pig Iron's annual benefit, described as a "hybrid rock-n-roll cabaret held at the Trocadero." Frisbee says that income doubled in her first year from \$9,000 to \$17,000 and jumped again in 2008 to \$27,000.

The Arts & Business Council estimates that Hong's efforts are valued at over \$47,000 over the last two years. She has accomplished this through a combination of finance expertise, connections in the corporate sector and a flair for generating auction items, fellow board members say.

### **About the Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia**

An affiliate of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce since 1981, the Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia develops relationships between business and the arts for the mutual benefit of both and in support of the advancement of the Greater Philadelphia Region. For more information, please visit [www.artsandbusinessphila.org](http://www.artsandbusinessphila.org) or call 215.790.3620.

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