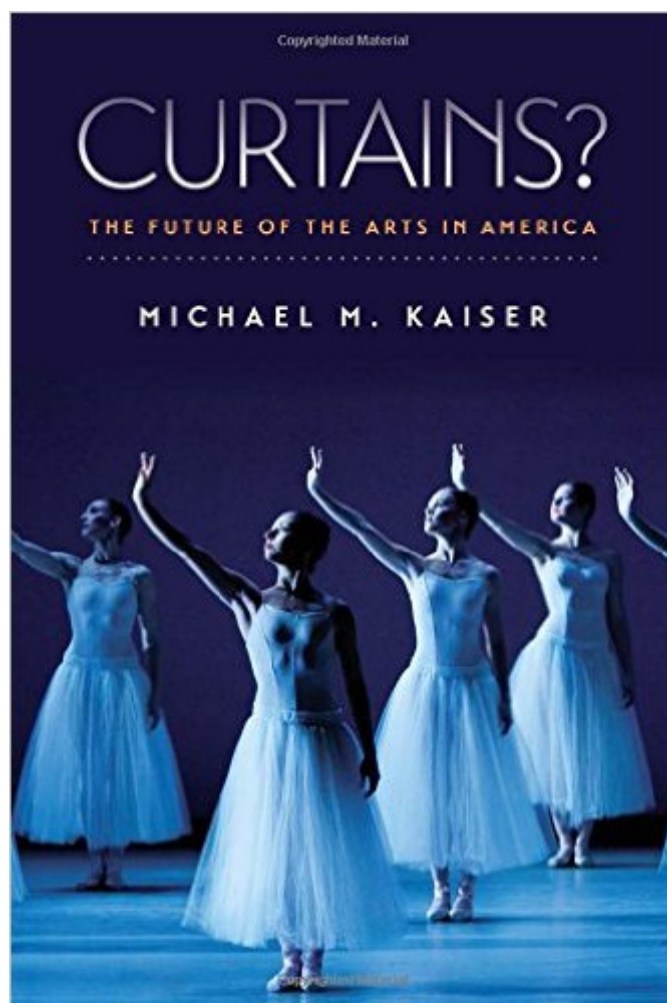


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# Curtains?: The Future Of The Arts In America



## Synopsis

In this clear-minded but sobering book, Michael M. Kaiser assesses the current state of arts institutions—orchestras; opera, ballet, modern dance, and theater companies; and even museums. According to Kaiser, new developments in the twenty-first century, including the Internet explosion, the death of the recording industry, the near-death of subscriptions, economic instability, the focus on STEM education in schools, the introduction of movie-theater opera, the erosion of newspapers, the threat to serious arts criticism, and the aging of the donor base have together created tremendous challenges for all arts organizations. Using Michael Porter's model of industry structure to describe how industries evolve, Kaiser argues persuasively that unless steps are taken now, midsize performing arts institutions will have all but evaporated by 2035. Only the largest arts organizations will survive, with tickets priced for the very wealthy and programming limited to the most popular and lucrative productions. Kaiser concludes with a call to arms. With three extraordinary decades' experience as an arts administrator behind him, he advocates passionately for risk-taking in programming and more creative marketing, and details what needs to happen now—building strong donor bases, creating effective boards, and collective action—to sustain the performing arts for generations to come.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you were hoping for a book that explored the future of arts organizations in America in an upbeat way -- this isn't your book. If you are interested in tough talk about what will likely be the years ahead by an author that has had a distinguished practice of running such well-known institutions as

the Kennedy Center and the American Ballet Theatre â “ he is your guy. And boy the talk is tough. In "Curtains?" Mr. Kaiser autopsies the arts explosion period (1950-2000), the have and have not period (2001-present) and makes a prediction on the Brave New World that is likely to be the arts in 2035. I guess the greatest generation gave us the best arts support as well as winning World War 2 for us. He focuses on theater, ballet, dance, museums and opera in his historical review and his predictions. In a change from many books evaluating the future of the arts, Mr. Kaiser uses economic concepts of supply, demand, competition and substitution in evaluating problems facing the arts in America. While the book offers an excellent look at the problems facing arts institutions today such as increasing labor costs, competition from entertainment in new platforms (internet, telecasts) it is much weaker â “and bleaker-- on what can be done. There are some current trends such as the lack of arts education in todayâ™s educational curriculum that I felt he overstated. While I think he is correct in analyzing the threats to the arts it seems he is bleaker on his perception of arts in the future than he needs to be. While arts education has mostly eliminated in elementary schools across America (and I agree we are the worse for it), it seems to be flourishing in afterschool, weekend and summer programs.

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