

**Sustainability in Theater Unconference**  
**August 19-20, 2013**  
**NOTES**

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## Open Space

Major theme is

Renew, reuse, regenerate – understanding the impact of changes on traditions in theatre

Village marketplace, principles –

- Those present are the only ones here.
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.
- When “it” happens, it will happen in its own time.
- When it is over, it is over.

Law of two feet – move to a new conversation, step into a new one

## Open Space Session Topics

### Day 1 – 1<sup>st</sup> time slot

- Role of technology in theatre and the industry (smartphone) – Damon
- Use of ‘waste stream’ materials in the production of stage craft – Chris & Peggy
- Sustainable funding models for small & unconventional theatres – Cate (session moved to Day 2)

### Day 1 – 2<sup>nd</sup> time slot

- Pragmatic sustainability planning for building owners & managers: from infrastructure to operations; marketing to community engagement – Stephen
- Creating a theater maker guild in the Twin Cities theater community – Sean
- Collaborations between Twin Cities & rural for innovative work - Cate

### Day 1 – 3<sup>rd</sup> time slot

- SIT Group purposes, goals, best way to serve community – Erin (session moved to Day 2)
- Textile waste diversion & arts market resource share – online directory – Leah & Alicia
- Communications & Marketing – needs to support sustainability initiatives & other theater efforts – Heather

### Day 1 – 4<sup>th</sup> time slot

- Share & Tell (Announcements) – Alicia (session moved to Day 2)

### Day 2 – 1<sup>st</sup> time slot

- Engaging audiences on sustainability

### Day 2 – 2<sup>nd</sup> time slot

- Sustainable funding models

### Day 2 – 3<sup>rd</sup> time slot

- Accessibility & bringing theater outside the “THEATRE”

### Day 2 – 4<sup>th</sup> time slot

- Moving forward – next steps!

## Technology (Smart phones) and theater

### During performances

- Always “on”
- Erin and Rachel, BNW #, silence
- Space makes the difference
- Designated sections and times
- Comedy makes the difference
- OK when it's OK in context (comedy, improv maybe), but what about "Night Mother?"
- Tweet seats, Tweet nights, lights-up night at movies, Mixed Blood has a Tweet moderator and streams Tweets to a monitor in the lobby.
- Article in American Theatre Magazine (<http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/issue/featuredstory.cfm?story=2&indexID=34>) about breaking down the rules about where/how audience sits/participates
- If I'm 17, you're making an exception for how I function for me to walk in your door.
- At concerts you can't see the show for all the phones video recording and photographing. Wouldn't want to see that happen at theatre.
- Walker Art Center talking right now about issues – if we video record something is still live art or is it now video art?
- If someone unauthorized videos and web publishes, is my company responsible for rights infringement?
- Maybe technology will get better (dimmer backlight?)
- What about the hypocrisy of us saying DON'T use your phone during the show, but PLEASE DO use your phone to tell everyone after the show?
- Scott Stratten (<http://www.unmarketing.com/>): talks about the awesome and un-awesome. you can't control it, this is antiquate, and you're killing yourself and your industry
- Some of us love social media interaction, some of us hate it. Not just generational. Maybe the next generation will learn to moderate their interaction.
- Google glasses?

### Before and after show

- PollEverywhere.com <<http://PollEverywhere.com>> to gather feedback from a certain locations
- How do financial models shift from transactional?
- Social media is still no substitute for face to face, word of mouth.
- Social media is the new TV, just another tool.
- Does everyone have a phone?

### Practical applications

- Links/QR in playbill to more info.

- Can we move playbill to the web?
  - People still have an attachment to paper playbills. Maybe print on demand?
  - Should someone (MTA?) make a playbill app?
    - Article about why Playbill should make an app:  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-sims/the-future-of-playbills-r\\_b\\_803540.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-sims/the-future-of-playbills-r_b_803540.html)
  - Artistic Director at LaMaMa reads the playbill out loud for people unable to read.
- How does our audience and community respond to so many fractured systems and different tools?

#### Shifting rituals

- Where is the ritual? 90% of Millennials check their phone before getting out of bed. What about old rituals of social interaction and meditative space associated with live theater? Next generation will have new rituals.
- Is there a value proposition to live art being a place that is different from digital media?
- How do we use technology to break down barriers, change expectations for people discovering our sacred space/ritual?
- We are hard-wired for storytelling. People wouldn't be scattered, distracted while an elder was leading a story at a campfire.
- BNW uses email to set expectations the day of a performance, with info about parking, video preview, things to get them in the right frame of mind to relax and enjoy the show.
  - Stephen muses this is a bit like giving them a serotonin boost the way checking your email or social media does.

#### How to make a conversation

- Audience participation
- The extra inside info
- Behind the scenes
- Theaters could be hosting their own salons like "How Dare You" (<http://www.skewedvisions.org/2012/12/how-dare-you>)

## Use of Waste Stream Material in Production of Stage Craft

- Sustainability can mean so many things –what about our bodies, how much time it takes to make, etc.
- Guild – how can we set ourselves up for sustainability?
  - o Royalties
  - o Protect ourselves
  - o Paid for our time
- Are the needs of a guild being met in other places? USITT? Do we need to start another group? We spend so much time creating new organizations couldn't a few organizations come together to help get this guild off the ground?
- Makers are a unique group – overworked and underpaid
- When people design and build things, they are not thinking how can I reuse this from the start – they must! Instead we are trying to make things up as we go, scrapping together resources
- Waste stream offers fabulous material – what is waste to some is gold to others
- REUSE MN – trade association that connects people in the reuse business – focus on REUSE rather than recycle – collection of partners, people and organizations, that partner to reuse materials – working on a web app to post things you need / want / have
- MN MATERIAL EXCHANGE – Free waste diversion – website to post info for pick-up, etc. Like a free craigslist for waste stream materials
- HABITAT RESTORE – excess materials from Habitat for Humanity builds to buy or rent
- PROP IT UP – A place to store your props! And rent other props! 1209 Tyler Street
- Let's not duplicate! Let's use these other orgs to our advantage / partnerships - Before we create a space to store everything, let's think about carbon impact of buildings – find partnerships before creating a new space – waste materials are such a small percent, while buildings are a large percent
- Building to a standard – all flats work together
- Also working to a standard and being careful not to set the standard of bottom feeder – to say “we can do it with nothing” might hurt funding overall
- How can we show that we can be part of the upstream, while using the waste stream? Proving better use of funds
- Best asset – Guthrie props storage / rental
- Use REUSE CENTER for hazardous materials
- Example: Materials for the Arts in NYC partnered with City Sanitation Dept so the city pays for overhead of organization
- Could we partner with the City of Mpls to use an old parks building for storage? City of Mpls has a budget line item for ReUse, perhaps this could be part of that budget?

- How do we find cool waste stream materials to work with? A lot of artists have personal connections – can we do a database of where / what days we can pick up materials and what artists have which connections?
- Example: Winona is a manufacturing town – get industries on board to avoid waste – they will call you when materials are available
- First thing you do – find what waste is being generated near you & see how you can use the materials – develop a partnership
- Find other people in other industries that we can connect with – who are the sustainability people at big corporations & get them in a room together to let them know that theater people can use their waste stream materials!
- State Fair Eco Building – Sustainability stage that does Call to Action performances
- Example: Barebones Dumpster Duels – waste on a stage & improv actors use waste on the spot to create scenes – use this idea with Brave New Workshop corporate shows to get people thinking about how waste stream materials can be used
- A trash fashion show – waste stream costume challenge
- Minnesota goes Green Expo
- Cross-pollinate! I don't want theater trash, I want industrial trash!
- Alicia Wold is a cross pollinator – get to know her!
- Marketing!! How do we let people know about the databases & resources that already exist? How can we make it more useful?
- Two modalities for using waste stream: 1) find materials for your design; 2) make your design around your materials
- Example: Use plastic for sculpture work
- Sell to the industries – industries can use this passing of waste stream materials as 'green practices' for their own marketing – get waste stream diversion from company and sell back how you used it so the company gets credit
- We need a place or event to share success stories – how have you used waste stream? Help companies see the possibilities
- Next year's Northern Boundary conference – propose a demonstration – 90 minute session of sets / props / costumes made from waste stream materials
- Better conversation between designers & builders; materials & design
- Most exciting outcome: New York looks to Mpls for innovative waste stream design ideas! Stimulate and foster innovative design work based on waste nationwide

## Sustainability in Theater Buildings

### **In attendance**

Peggy from WSU

Erin from BNW

SR

### **Conversation**

Peggy

45 y/o bldg

LED theatricals

E

LED conversion at Prgm at BNW

Xcel rebate program

P

Aged infrastructure

Increases costs

Student made remote prgm for iPad use

Discussion on power correction

HVAC discussion

### **Peggy**

HVAC too loud

How to remedy?

Great River Shakespeare is motivator

### **Erin**

Conversation on sustainability journey

Start small

Make the business case

Interanal advocate

Move to staffer

Top down/bottom up initiatives

Proof of concenpt

Cost savings

Reducing waste builds

Audiences appreciative

Organizational initiatives



Org culture shift is set in now and things are set in stone  
Yes and culture and let it fail...but it

**Stephen**

Lots of good resources available

Reach out to your Xcel rep and then the Shakespeare Company to see if you can work something out to qualify for the grants and incentives

See SIT website for resources

CEE (Center for Energy and the Environment)

Alicia Wold at The Costume shop

## Makers' Guild

### Damon's Notes

Not building something from the ground up  
but getting a network of the theatre makers in town.

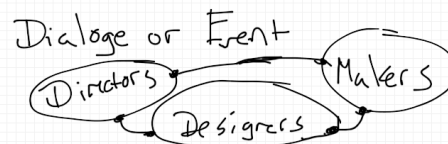
Expand network in a way that is useful

Support System

State-wide becomes more Valuable than just MSP

2 needs

- network of resources
- education of tech
  - set
  - props
  - costumes
  - make physical thing



Side effect of power dynamic  
Perspectives / working together

↳ opportunity to have this convo.

Bitch session is where it starts but where does it go.

Guild - connotation of education

opportunity to get hands on so that people can understand the reality of what it takes to make something

textile center - University Ave  
Shared space that helps facilitate cross learning  
How to help makers make contact

Change order process  
How to elevate the conversation so people are protected: expectations are set.

Underbidding how it impacts each maker.

Could a guild help set various standards

Have the beginnings of a network.

What would it provide?  
W.I.I.F.M

Apprenticeships - truly track development.

One place to call to find resources between the various.

### Ashley's Notes

- We need one syndicated bulletin board
- PARTNERSHOPS!
- What is the role of the Alliance in connecting these organizations and individuals?
- Educating other artists what it actually takes to make
- Educating artists on contracts! How to make sure you and your works are protected AND you are able to make a living
- Royalties for sets, props, costumes that get passed on
- If things change, make a work order change! Like in other construction professions
- Stress the importance of contracts!
- Relationships are complicated – stress the importance of contracts even when working with your friends – how do we avoid making enemies with each other by clearly communicating our roles and responsibilities – what exactly is needed for the production and how are we going to get there – HONESTLY!
- Often times expectations from directors are totally unrealistic – talk about expectations up front
- Making sure the business is included in the art – it is SO important
- Where do we go if contracts are broken?
- Underbidding in the community is a huge problem! Maybe a guild will help set standards
- How do we make a guild happen? We have the beginnings of connections

- Maybe start with a forum for makers to ask questions like: how much should I charge? How much time will this take? What materials could I use?
- Guild Mission – educating others in the field AND educating the next generation of prop builders and makers – a sounding board for apprenticeships
- Makers and Seekers connect! The Alliance could act as a sounding board
- SIT Calendar could act as a strike calendar for the time being – resource sharing
- Example – Jason Allen and the Sustainable Scene Shop

## Collaborations between Twin Cities & rural for innovative work

- Are there young people who are interested in taking over a beautiful plot of land in Northern Minnesota for a multimedia art and performance space? Cate Belleveau is looking for partners!
- Perhaps partnership through Universities would be a good way to get young people to rural communities
- What about The Hive?
- Try to break down the country mouse / city mouse dichotomy that exists in the arts
- How do we get metro artists to take the leap and commit to the time it takes to invest in rural communities?
- Strong connection to the land and the Native American community
- Look into the MSAB grant for artist residency / arts tour programs
- Once you set up a residency program, market it on Springboard & MNPlaylist – post opportunities on resource websites – many artists would like this kind of ‘retreat’
- There are a lot of resources for a very small arts community, rural communities want to collaborate with Twin Cities artists, just not sure how to make the approach
- Artists can reach out to rural communities as well! Conversations like this are the first step to building that bridge

## "ArtsMarket" resource sharing web site directory

Alliance is planning to submit a proposal to MRAC capital grant program to fund creation of web site. This conversation was to get input and ideas.

- Look at what TCG is doing. (Couldn't find any info about it online)
- Damon can join Leah visiting LA Stage Alliance co-op storage space in September
- Look at Stagebitz (<http://stagebitz.com/>) – primarily project management software, system for tracking whole life cycle of inventory.
- How do we get people to enter items? Motivation might need to be rental.
- Future fantasy: a thrift/pawn/consignment shop where you could buy stuff, modify it, sell it back.
  - Hey, look Prop it Up Now is a new business in downtown Minneapolis that does consignment rental of props. They also have a very basic online inventory (<http://www.propitupnow.com>)
- Alicia has a contact interested in "corralling" (?)
- Other features we would like to see:
  - Ability to import many items at once from spreadsheet
  - Metrics for tracking reuse and reduction of waste
- If we wanted a space, how would we staff it?
  - Utilize marginalized populations in a job-training program.
  - Partners could include MCTC, Dunwoody, HIRED, PPL
- What about revenue?
  - Rental to events?
  - Be a subject matter expert on materials exchanges.

### **Some updates since the SIT-U conference:**

Scope management: we'll start with an online presence for now, research facilities for the long-term future.

We are receiving proposals from three software firms, but have also spoken with iWaste, a company that makes materials exchange web sites, including the local MNExchange, which is available for "piggybacking" on to reduce cost of them developing a similar site for arts specifically. They are looking at our RFP and getting me a proposal.

## Marketing of sustainable group, practices

### Heather's Notes

#sustainabletheater rather than a central repository

LinkedIn – not effective

Facebook – not effective

Listserv?

Website –

- Get new domain name
- Aggregate the conversation, Twitter
- Google calendar
- Partners resource directory database

Not print

Does the info need to be password-protected?

No

Outreach

Communicate

Not necessarily activities, but sharing resources and results of those activities

I don't want to be part of yet another group

Theater Alliance

- SpaceMart (database framework from Fractured Atlas)

Audiences –

- Theater and arts – Prop it Up
- Artists and independent creative – artistic directors, admin (SpringBoard, MAP), (heavy on the production side)
- Other nonprofit organizations – Habitat ReStore
- Retail and consumer goods – OfficeMax?
- Industries that have waste, materials – Reuse Center, Minnesota Materials Exchange, ReUseIt Center at UofMN
- Sustainability directors, service/knowledge – shared best practices
- Government, policymakers – county, city, state
- Funders

Video?

- How to sustainable theater advice, material use, zero-waste events, signage
- Look what I made
- Before and afters – stage, energy upgrades, plumbing upgrades
- Costuming, prop finds
- Fundraising, grantwriting, marketing?

State of MN, MNSCU

Has to throw away materials, rather than give-away or sell

Maybe give to ReUseIt

Media database

- Arts reporters, critics, bloggers
- Daily, community newspapers
- Radio, television
- Web
- Wire services
- News release templates

### **Ashley's Notes**

- Talking to each other is first, then to greater community
- Sustainable theater # - using twitter, facebook, social media
- The struggle is that everyone is doing other thing and it is hard to commit to yet another group and yet another thing to do
- Open source website – no information needs to be protected
- Alliance could act as syndicate and aggregate for all groups and information
- What about a theater groups calendar? Like Springboard's Google Grant Calendar but for all the monthly meetings? Alliance could add conferences, dates, group meetings, etc.
- SIT own domain name for website – it gets lost if you try to search for it
- Foster partnerships through:
  - Database
  - Calendar
  - Resource Directory
- How do we reach others industries beyond the theater community?
- What about individual artists and other mediums?
- MAP for Non-profits and the magazine MAKE might be good places to spread the word
- What about a YouTube How To channel for SIT
- MNSCU and State of Minnesota does not allow sharing of props, etc. You must throw away instead of share – then tell people they can come get it from the dumpster – Could the Alliance have an advocacy role in helping to make sure this stuff doesn't end up in the waste stream? REUSE Center at the U of M could help and the Sustainability Committee in Winona is trying to fight this
- How about an open source press list for the state – arts or performance based? Heather would be willing to help compile a list of statewide arts writers (we could update on an annual basis)
- PR News Wire – wire services that send to local newspapers and radio stations



## Engaging audiences on sustainability

- Large percentage of carbon footprint is audience coming to see shows – if we are educating audience about these issues it is offsetting the carbon footprint
- Pairing artists and scientists – theater makers and scientists to try new ways of educating
- Earth Matters On Stage Conference – New plays festival and symposium,; contact is Theresa May – connected to Rachel at Brave New Workshop
- We have a captive audience – what kind of messaging could we do to help the cause
- Example: Essay challenge for students – how can we make this building more environmentally friendly? Not caught up on the HOW – just willing to dream! Engage your audience around these issues
- The ritual and community of theater – how can we choose to do what we want with in this space / audience? We make a lot of choices in the theater community that don't reflect the world we want to live in / create – but we could!
- The Alliance could find free PSAs with good messaging that can be running in our lobbies – ie. first world problems on monitors for comedy show
- Be careful not to be superficial – how can we get deeper?
- Asking corporate sponsors to showcase their sustainability
- Synching the message with the show
- Using art as a means for social and environmental justice – ECO Justice Theater & Forum Theater – Eco Justice Festival
- Young people can do it better than us – we need to ask them!

## Sustainable Funding for small theaters

- Brave New Workshop – for-profit model with non-profit arm
- Mask & Rose – ticket / free labor / grants
  - o MSAB Operating and Touring Grants
  - o Cargill Foundation – Native American, women, arts, rural focus
  - o Connect with New Native Theater
- Everyone wants to start their own theater company and have their own space – why? How can we foster more partnerships and shared space / shared admin / shared marketing? Southern is experimenting with shared space and new ideas as platform model (make sure you are being clear about collaborations and finances)
- It has been the cultural narrative for 40 years – become a non-profit, get a building, become an institution – things are changing
- The only right solution is the one that fits your community – put in the time to find the solution that fits the community you want to serve
- Ask yourself – are we SURE there is no one else already doing that that we could partner with? Alliance could increase awareness of other models and possibilities for collaborations
- Power Systems – break them down!
- Example: 13P existed only to create 13 shows
- Educational aspect – directing, design & tech workshops – engage the makers and builders, the local craftspeople that don't know they are makers and builders yet!
- The challenge is – they can make more money outside of the theater – set a higher standard in the field
- Seeing opportunity instead of obstacle
- Example: Frank Theater – brings in specialists on shows / themes, partnering with orgs and companies that share your theme, equal payment and time
- Funding and training in other arts fields
- Bloomberg business training and Shannon Leadership Institute
- “Balance Yourself” – the more yes you say the less you can give to each yes! You diminish the quality of your yes
- BOD – assemble a team that you can use! Find your business / law person
- Don't underestimate the power of microchange
- Track what you STOP doing and watch your productivity go up!
- Revelation: Use your creative brain on business challenges! Let the left and right side help each other!

## Accessibility & bringing theater outside the “THEATRE”

- Accessible performances poorly attended –Why? Stories? Barriers? Affordability? Transportation?
- Interpreters are important – they are performers – list the interpreters and their bios in the program because they also have a following – find out who the ‘star’ interpreters are
- ASL is a theatrical language
- Could the Alliance facilitate an Accessibility Advisory Committee?
- AmericanTheaterWing.org – in the wings
- Check out TCG – I AM Theater
- We don’t understand what each other do in the theater industry, how can we expect others to understand?
- What is the format in which we can constructively criticize each other’s work – especially in Minnesota?!?!?
- Theater criticism forum – importance of critical feedback, outside of the university setting
- Evaluation! What is its role?
  - o You don’t know if you don’t ask!
  - o Evaluation of the piece (as an artwork) – from other artists
  - o Evaluation from community – from the audience
- We need to have a conversation after each show to talk about our working relationships – as well as response from audience – and don’t forget to include the tech team in this conversation! It would be beneficial to have if facilitated by an outside source
- Call it a FUTURE MORTEM instead of a postmortem after the show – how can we work better together in the future
- U of M Evaluation students – they can help!!

### Sparkwise:

- <http://sparkwi.se/>
- <http://www.fastcodesign.com/1670095/how-a-web-app-can-help-nonprofits-tell-better-stories-and-raise-cash>
- Alliance will look into creating an access advisory committee to generate some/best practices for the field. Also, how about an award for best ASL interpreter and best audio describer?

## Future plans for SIT group

### Moving forward – next steps!

- Organizing another open space!
  - o Topics: Theater Makers Guild – shared space
  - o Arts Database / resource sharing
- SIT Group – what do you mean by sustainability?
  - o People, planet, purpose, profit
- Connecting to resources
  - o Springboard is too broad and focus on visual arts! Need resources that focus on theater / performing arts
- Monthly meetings might be too many – quarterly retreat, open space style
- Facebook group! For SIT
- Public Google Calendar
- The Alliance should join REUSE MN to funnel info to the theater world
- Hands on skill presentation for USITT – eco experience building waste stream set
- Damon will plan next unconference
- Field trip to Bemidji!
- One unconference a year in greater Minnesota
- Sustainable theater idea – discount to people who ride their bike to the theater
- Check out Project Art Share and Siti Company weekly video blog