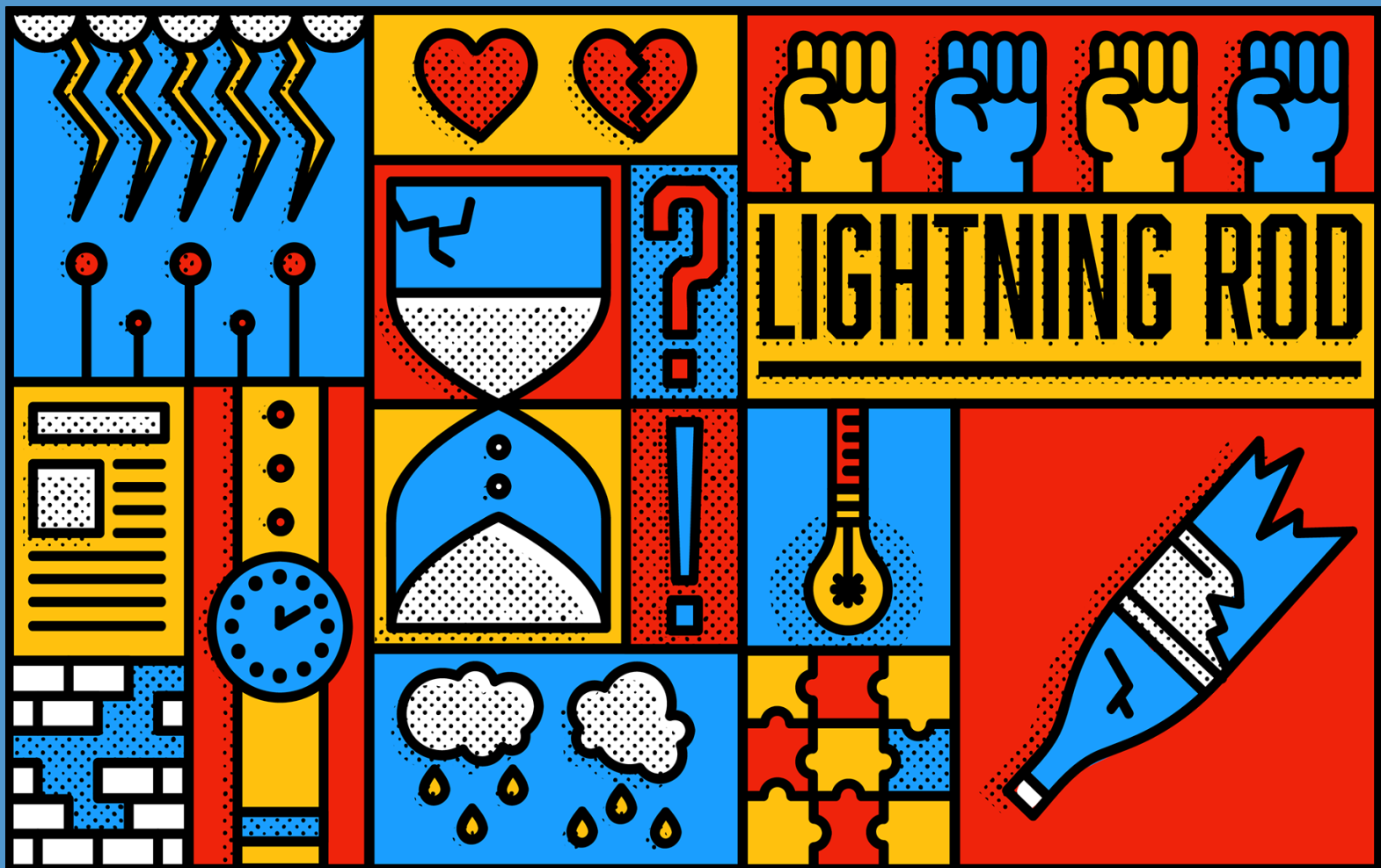


LIGHTNING ROD TOOLKIT

by Patrick's Cabaret

with Scott Artley, Kat Purcell and Marcela



**PATRICK'S
CABARET**

**CREAT
IVE EX
CHANGE**
SPRINGBOARD FOR THE ARTS

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This work modeled on the Lightning Rod Toolkit, by Patrick's Cabaret, with Scott Artley, Kat Purcell and Marcela. The toolkit was created in partnership with Springboard for the Arts via Creative Exchange. www.springboardexchange.org

Cover image: Lightning Rod promotional art for Patrick's Cabaret, created by Jared Maire

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INTRODUCTION

Lightning Rod is a collaborative performance process creating what we call ‘flash theater.’ In our version of this flexible framework, six teams of participants spend six days making and then performing devised (collaboratively created) work that responds to the immediacy of that week, generating performance from the prompt: “What needs to be said this week?” Drawing from curated prompts related to current events, and what’s on the hearts and minds of artists in our community, this unique event is a lightning rod to capture the electricity in the air.

Lightning Rod is designed to be a time- and resource-limited invitation for artists of all backgrounds and skill levels to embrace those limitations as opportunities. It is an action of community involvement and political action, and an exercise in the most basic qualities of collaborative performance-making.

Patrick’s Cabaret’s executive artistic director Scott Artley co-created Lightning Rod with independent theater-maker Kat Purcell in April 2017 at Intermedia Arts in Minneapolis. The project’s second iteration was in March 2018 at the Phoenix Theater in Minneapolis, adding an additional co-producer, multidisciplinary artist Marcela. The community of 37 artists who participated in each iteration played to full audiences, and spurred friendships and

collaborations, while inspiring participants to embrace a new way of responsive, socially engaged activist art.

Lightning Rod, from its initial conception, was always designed as a replicable model for social activism by artists. The basic framework is designed to require few resources other than the inspired commitment of participants and space. This framework is a methodology that is ultimately completely flexible to the needs and desires of the participants and leaders, and can be deployed in just about any community to do the work of investigating community needs and imagining potential community-based solutions.

In our iteration, we brought together Patrick’s Cabaret’s community of artists along with non-artists who had a background in political activism. But it could scale down easily. For example, the framework could be deployed with a group of just three participants in a retirement community conceiving, writing, rehearsing, and staging new short works of performance in the community room about what residents want to see instituted from the facility staff. Or it could scale up to engage 80 union workers in two weeks of performances to imagine how different collective bargaining outcomes could play out.



Lightning Rod 2017 performance. credit: Ari Newman

The audience is flexible, and we hope that it could become useful for a number of different communities, from activists in community contexts to facilitation practitioners interested in engaging participants in new ways of having conversations.

WHO IS LIGHTNING ROD FOR?

- Useful to theater practitioners who are interested in putting their work into a community context
- Accessible to any group of people who feel isolated from development programs or arts as community programs (such as small towns, retirement communities, neighborhood groups)
- Activists, organizers, advocates and changemakers looking for creative formats to move their work forward

LIGHTNING ROD CAN:

- Make space for catharsis, healing, and expression
- Generate dialogue and new ideas surrounding specific topic or event prompts
- Facilitate a platform for diverse voices and voices that are generally marginalized
- Bring people together that would otherwise not have the opportunity to be in conversation or work together
- Act as a tool of investigation/discovery on issues affecting the participating artists and audiences
- Build confidence and skills in storytelling and theatre-making
- Challenge artists to make bold statements and bold decisions in their art-making
- Strengthen community by illuminating shared and different experiences

VALUES/CORE PRINCIPLES

Since the November 2016 election, we've witnessed thousands of artists, audiences, and other folk become galvanized—either for the first time or renewing their commitment—to make some serious change. With this “electricity in the air,” we hope to see artists work with their whole emotional bodies and with the guidance of liberatory themes – liberation of body, time, labor, mind from systems and individuals that would rather we remain silent, isolated, and invisible. We hope to see artists taking the lead in helping audiences to witness themselves and their world.

With that in mind, consider how you will work with your team. You will encounter artists of different abilities, race, gender, and backgrounds in your work—possibly artists who disagree with your political and social views! Remember, the goal is to stir the pot. Don't pass up the opportunity to challenge your own proclivities and opinions.

PATRICK'S CABARET

Patrick's Cabaret was a queer-led performance art incubator, supporting the growth and development of artists on the edge of culture.

Patrick's Cabaret began in 1986 as a sin-

gle evening in the basement gymnasium of a Catholic school. Patrick Scully, an out gay man living with HIV, invited other artists to join him in a show of works-in-progress. In the midst of the Reagan Era, the Culture Wars, and some of the darkest days of the AIDS crisis, the evening proved so successful, and the need for a performing venue to support raw, experimental, challenging work so great, that Patrick's Cabaret grew rapidly into an essential community resource.

For three decades, Patrick's Cabaret maintained the original formula of presenting a shared evening with artists of mixed artistic disciplines and levels of experience, featuring thousands of performances by hundreds of local artists. The organization's role in the Twin Cities was to support artists doing challenging, experimental, subversive and community-driven work that might not otherwise find a home.

Patrick's Cabaret's vision was as follows:

“Our work centers artists of color, with disabilities, and with queer and trans identities. We grow new art and new artists by encouraging artists of all experience levels to try new things, take risks, and present works-in-progress. We connect artists to education, performance platforms, tangible resources, and

to each other, to put their talents to work. We build a diverse network of artists committed to forwarding a radically inclusive and progressive creative community where artists on the margins can thrive.”

In 2018, the Cabaret’s board and staff made the decision to sunset the organization, and began an intentional transition including preserving archives and passing on programming to other organizations.

Both 2017 and 2018 Lightning Rods were unmistakable Patrick’s Cabaret events because:

- Queer-led but not queer-exclusive
- Made space for adjacent marginalized identities including but not limited to participants who are BIPOC, women, with disabilities, with poverty/homelessness
- Manifested performances that relied on innovation, culture and audacity, rather than large materials budgets
- Celebrated bodies
- Uplifted personal stories and experiences

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIGHTNING ROD?

Connect with the creators of Lightning Rod at LightningRodProducers@gmail.com

WHAT ARE THE CORE ELEMENTS OF LIGHTNING ROD?

- This is a queer project, a product of intense self- and world-questioning, producing a new dynamic that engages with the reality of our circumstances and imagines possible worlds, BUT it can be accessed by folks that do not identify as queer
- An invitation to generate, a collective investigation
- Asking a community to develop itself by generating artistic content
- Resource constrained (specifically props, set, design)
- Time constrained (especially rehearsal)
- Topics and prompts are chosen by the community of artists (possibly audience!) who converge for the event
- Randomization: Lightning Rod mirrors the unexpected and rapidly changing nature of the world, which we as people must deal with every day. The goal of Lightning Rod is to work within circumstances similar to our political and social environments. Surprising participants with their teams, prompts, and mediums augments three dynamics:

1. Quick, bold choices and voices.

With not much time to develop subtlety, artists must trust their intuition and their experiences.

2. Generative disorder, collage.

Sometimes, when seemingly unrelated or incompatible ingredients enter the pot, magic happens!

3. Self-determination of participants.

The producers and curators “in charge” of Lightning Rod should also have little control over the prompts and other elements, so that they do not influence the outcome too much.



Clockwise from top: Lightning Rod 2018 Sunday gathering, 2017 performance, 2018 performance, Purcell and Marcela in 2018.
credits: Ari Newman

PROGRAM ELEMENTS & ACTIVITIES

The following pieces are excerpted from our planning materials for the first two iterations of Lightning Rod.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR THE WEEK OF LIGHTNING ROD

+ **Sunday** (all participants required to attend) - Orientation Day. The day will require five hours for “auditions,” group devising time, orientation, and rehearsal schedule set and other logistical negotiations. Refreshments and breaks provided.

+ **Monday** (writers) - Concepting shows, writing. Write a 20-25-minute-long piece with minimal prop and costume requirements, following the parameters and challenges set before you on Orientation Day. Parameters will include—but may not be limited to—prompts, specific news headlines, the performers assigned to you, any other prompts or constraints that encourages you to respond in the moment and/or think outside the box.

+ **Tuesday** (writers) - Rehearsal begins. Writers must submit pieces in whatever state they are in and agree to make no further amendments, edits, or unsolicited remarks.

+ **Tuesday and/or Wednesday** (performers & directors) - Rehearsal requirement is a minimum of three hours, with optional extra time if your team is willing and able.

+ **Thursday** (performers & directors) - Tech rehearsal in the evening.

+ **Friday and Saturday** (performers) - Performances. Writers and directors, attend the performance of your new work to enjoy the results! We would also be delighted for you to participate in talkbacks, Q&As and pre-show rituals if you are able.

SAMPLE TIMELINE

Here is the timeline we used for the first Lightning Rod in 2017, which can be updated with dates for your organization and adjusted as needed.

DATE	ACTION	PROMOTION	NOTES
Wednesday 2/8	Artistic Statement, Director's & Writer's invitation drafted		
Friday 2/10	Artistic Statement, Director's & Writer's invitation reviewed, revised Director's & Actor's invitation drafted		
Monday 2/13	Writer's invitation sent	Show copy due - hard deadline (bio, save the date, etc)	Individual invitation only
Friday 2/17	Director's invitation sent		All call + some individual invitations
Tuesday 2/28	Finalize actor recruitment plan – ways to ensure diversity, full recruitment, etc.		
Friday 3/3	Have at least 20 applications/prospects submitted for directors and writers Send actor invitation <i>GOAL: have 6-8 writers and 6-8 directors recruited</i>	Artist announcements	Bump application if not enough ppl have applied
Friday 3/10	Deadline for writer & director applications Orientation Day Schedule drafted, ready for review Bump individual notes to prospective performers for recruitment drive	Postcards, advance tickets, artist packets	Include blast all call for performers
Monday 3/13	Review applications and recruitment, make recruitment push and any decisions necessary Have 6-8 writers and 6-8 directors recruited Notify writers & directors that they have been selected Have first draft of orientation day packet for review	Heavy email promotion	Notify anyone who applied as writer or director but we would invite to perform
Tuesday 3/14	Start talkback recruitment		
Monday 3/20	Performer application deadline Check in with all directors: confirmations and any new information	Press release	

Friday 3/31	Have 18-25 actors recruited Each writer received prep packet and at least one phone conversation or 1 to 1 meeting with Kat	Check in with writers & directors re: promotions	
Saturday 4/1	Have final draft of rehearsal/tech schedule drafted, to be finalized on orientation day Have orientation day schedule finalized, reviewed and sent to all participants Any materials that Intermedia Arts requires submitted Send confirmation notes to all performers		
Sunday 4/9	Orientation Day: auditions, group devising time, rehearsal schedule set	Encourage all artists to promote	
Monday 4/10	Concepting shows, writing		
Tuesday 4/11	Rehearsal		
Wednesday 4/12	Rehearsal		
Thursday 4/13	Technical rehearsal		
Friday 4/14	Performance		
Saturday 4/15	Performance		



Lightning Rod 2017 performance. credit: Ari Newman

SAMPLE ARTIST PACKET

The following Artist Packet includes some details specific to the Patrick's Cabaret productions of Lightning Rod, but can be adapted for your purposes.

Lightning Rod Artist Packet

Learn About:

- **Preparation and Tech Support**
- **How to Promote Your Show**
- **Ticket Sales and Box Office**
- **What to Expect on the Day of a Show**
- **About Patrick's Cabaret**

Welcome!

Dear Artist,

Welcome to Lightning Rod! We're so excited to work with you to make our event memorable and rewarding. Working together, we hope to provide a great experience for you and your audience.

This Artist Packet has been created to help you prepare for your show, inspire your process, promote your participation, sell tickets, and answer basic questions about the program.

Please feel free to contact us any time you have a question, concern, or a new idea to share.

The performance agreement contains important information that will help you have a great experience with us. It outlines what you can expect from us and what we can expect from you.

Contacts

Your producer & coordinator is your primary contact for any questions or issues related to your performance. Please copy them on any communications you have with other staff so they can stay in the loop.

For this event, your curator is:

Email:

Phone:

Content — Crafting Your Work

We are committed to providing a supportive environment for artists and audiences to navigate the risks and rewards of live performance. We reinforce aesthetics of informality, shared experience, and process over product. Developing art and artists is a never-ending work-in-progress, and

we're open to whatever feedback you have on how we can be an ideal place to experiment, forge new language, and build connections around the act of creation.

As an organization made up of an array of cultures, we are strengthened by a diversity of perspectives, but are aware that bringing people together across differences may include exposing participants to provocative and challenging content. To be constantly working at the edge of culture means to be steeped in complex and sometimes conflicting worlds. That's exciting. And terrifying. That's exactly why Patrick's Cabaret is here—to be a site where we live out that tension.

While we do not censor work for content or style, we reserve the right to halt activities that we believe pose a threat to the safety and well-being of the space and its occupants. We value work that treats human beings with intelligence and respect, and rise to the challenge of supporting provocative work that affirms this value. If you have content that you worry may be challenging or misinterpreted, let's talk about how to frame it appropriately ahead of time. Above all, please take risks, explore what's exciting and interesting to you, and be ready to grow as an artist at every step.

Principles of Lightning Rod

Since the November 2016 election, we've witnessed thousands of artists, audiences, and other folk become galvanized—either for the first time or renewing their commitment—to make some serious change. With this “electricity in the air,” we hope to see artists work with their whole emotional bodies and with the guidance of liberatory themes—liberation of body, time, labor, mind from systems and individuals that would rather we remain silent, isolated and invisible. We hope to see artists taking the lead in helping audiences to witness themselves and their world, and believe that Twin Cities artists, via a strong tradition of puppet, mask, variety, and community stagecraft have developed the tools for this kind of work.

With that in mind, consider how you will work with your team. You will encounter artists of different abilities, race, gender, and backgrounds in your work—possibly artists who disagree with your political and social views! Remember, the goal is to stir the pot. Don't pass up the opportunity to challenge your own proclivities and opinions.

Payment

Writers & Directors will be paid a fee of \$50 for their participation, and will be provided with a comped admission to the performance to which you contributed. Artist payments are made via check, and will be mailed to the address you provided as part of the application process within about a week of the performance, after we have processed box office receipts. Performers will be given five pre-sale tickets worth a total of \$50. See details below.

Schedule of Lightning Rod Week

- **Sunday** – Community Gathering (All Call). Between 1:00 PM and 5:00 PM for auditions, group devising time, orientation, and rehearsal schedule set and other logistical negotiations. Refreshments and breaks provided.
- **Monday** – (Writers) leave their teams to compose 20-30 minutes pieces based on the prompt

and team assigned to them

- **Tuesday and Wednesday** – Rehearsal (Actors & Directors). Writers will submit pieces in whatever state they are in and agree to make no further amendments, edits, or unsolicited remarks. Directors will lead their small team of performers in staging the work, following the parameters and challenges set before you on Orientation Day. Parameters will include—but may not be limited to— prompts, specific news headlines, the performers assigned to you, and any other prompt or constraint that encourages you to respond in the moment and/or think outside the box. Approximately three hour commitment on only one of these days. Time slots TBD based on your team’s schedule and need.
- **Thursday** – Evening Tech Rehearsal from 5pm-10pm (Actors & Directors). One to two hour commitment. Time slots TBD based on your team’s schedule and need.
- **Friday and Saturday** – Performances (Actors & Directors). Please attend to enjoy the results and support your team! We would also be delighted for you to participate in talk backs, Q&As and pre-show rituals if you are able.

Technical Rehearsal & Technical Support

Patrick’s Cabaret handles all event logistics related to tech. The technical capabilities of our performances vary based on where we perform, and those variations are considerable. For Lightning Rod, we will be presenting at Intermedia’s mainstage space. Technical rehearsals will take place on the evening of Thursday, April 14th. Because we will be coordinating the technical needs of six pieces in one evening, each team will have approximately 45 minutes to tech their pieces, including running any lighting or sound cues where necessary. We will gather as much information ahead of time to facilitate this happening smoothly. Tech rehearsal is mandatory for all Lightning Rod teams, as we may have to coordinate changes between pieces.

Keep technical needs simple. Plan ahead, and come to technical rehearsal with a clear, strong vision. Ideally, your work would stand on its own without lights and sound. Plan technical aspects that enhance, rather than buttress your work.

Props & Costumes

We have a *very* small budget for props and costumes and can offer some support acquiring and constructing items. Try to utilize objects that are already in your possession (or your team’s) and be creative in transforming one item to represent another. We can offer some basic furniture like simple chairs, acting blocks, music stands, etc. We hope that, in the spirit of Lightning Rod, this restriction can challenge you all as artists and creative thinkers to make bold and interesting choices.

Attendance

Supporting and respecting the other artists in the event means staying to enjoy the work of everyone sharing the stage that evening. To that end, all artists are expected to attend the entire performance, from beginning to end, and leaving early without approval ahead of time will mean forfeiting your artist stipend. Please speak with your curator if you need to make other arrangements.

Promotion

As a grassroots organization, we depend on everyone's participation in attracting an audience to enjoy the show. Please do whatever you can to ensure we have a nice crowd by being an active ambassador and enthusiastic promoter of the event. Patrick's Cabaret will create and give you advance tickets to sell, postcards, and make a Facebook invite to help you promote the event. We also promote the show through our own channels, including a press release, online and social media messaging, relationships with local businesses, and signage. An invitation by performers, however, are by far the biggest reason people attend—so invite early and often!

Ticket Sales & Box Office

Tickets are available through advance sales through the artists, online, or at the box office on the day of the performance.

Please treat your advance tickets like they are cash, because we are likely unable to give you more if yours are lost. Artists are strongly discouraged to discount or give away the tickets we provide to you for free—your work is valuable and worthy of a paid audience supporting you. If a potential audience member is unable or unwilling to buy a ticket, please encourage them to volunteer with us (see below).

Recruit Volunteers

Volunteering to help with the box office or concessions area is a great opportunity for people who want to see the show but can't afford a ticket. If you know someone interested in volunteering, have them contact us.

How to Promote Your Show

Performing to a full house is a great experience. While Patrick's Cabaret helps with promotions, it's up to you to tell your family, friends, co-workers about the show, invite them to attend, and sell them tickets. Nearly all of the audience comes to the show because they know one of the artists.

To create a good experience for both performers and audience members, we ask each artist to set a goal of getting at least 20 people to the show.

Create a Simple Marketing Plan

How to begin:

1. Start early to give people time to get it on their calendars, and for you to build excitement.
2. Mark the date of your show on your calendar and work backward to create a schedule of when you will meet/call/text/email people about your show.
2. Create a master list of everyone you will invite: friends, family, fellow artists, coworkers, neighbors, acquaintances, etc.—the more, the merrier!
3. Decide how you will contact them: face-to-face, phone call, text, social media, etc.

Personal invitations are best! Face-to-face invitations are the most effective, especially when you have postcards to share and tickets to sell. Next best is a personal phone call, followed by text or personalized email. Mass emails and announcements through social media are less effective, but

are important for follow-up reminders. If you have a personal connection to someone in the media—a local reporter, radio show host, blogger, etc.—ask for their help in promoting your show.

To support your marketing efforts, Patrick's Cabaret will:

- Email our audience list of 3,500+
- Send a press release to about 200 media contacts
- Send an announcement to print and online community event calendars
- Post the show on our web calendar and social media platforms
- Staff and Board members will promote the show in a variety of settings

General tips:

- Write to one reader—"I'm inviting you to come." vs. "I'm inviting all of my friends to come."
- Encourage people to bring other friends and family to the show.
- If you use Facebook, Twitter, or other social media, consider creating an event, posts, tweets that are easy to share, repost, retweet.
- Don't be shy—invite as many people as you can!

What to Expect Day of Show

Arrival - Unless your curator tells you otherwise, all artists must arrive by an hour before curtain. For example, for a 7:30pm show, artists must arrive by 6:30pm. At that time, we will all check in together. Keep in mind that parking on a weekend during a performance might be more difficult than for tech rehearsal. Again, plan for plenty of extra travel time.

After the show - We encourage you to be available to audience members after the show, to thank them for attending, answer questions, promote upcoming shows, or sell merchandise. We are making plans for possible talkbacks after each performance.

Expectations of attendance - Please plan to be here for the whole show. This includes any cast members who are part of your show. Each of you deserves a full audience, and leaving early is rude to your fellow performers. If you leave early without permission, you will forfeit your artist payment. That said, please speak with your curator well in advance if you need to make other arrangements.

Additional pieces to include in Artist Packet:

- Information about producing organization and venue
- Artist statements from producers
- Frequently Asked Questions

BUDGET & RESOURCES

SAMPLE BUDGET

These example worksheets are based on a program budget of \$5,000 or less.

Expense worksheet

CATEGORY	ITEM	AMOUNT	NOTES
Artistic staff	Writers	\$360	\$60/ea * 6 writers (plus comp to their show)
	Directors	\$360	\$60/ea * 6 directors (plus comp to their show)
	Performers	\$1,440	\$60/ea * 24 performers
	Subtotal	\$2,160	
Production staff	Producing Director	\$500	
	Co-Producers	\$800	\$400/ea for 2
	Production Intern	\$100	
	Production Technician	\$200	
	Subtotal	\$1,600	
Supplies	Props/costumes	\$100	
	Hospitality for Community Gathering	\$150	
	Subtotal	\$250	
	TOTAL EXPENSE	\$4,010	

Income worksheet

CATEGORY	ITEM	AMOUNT	NOTES
Earned	Tickets	\$960	Assuming 80 sold each night at \$12 avg ticket, pretty conservative, actuals from average more like \$740/night (\$1480 total)
	Concessions	\$100	Light concessions available at post-show party
	Subtotal	\$1,060	
Donations	Show donations	\$240	Avg \$120/night, pretty conservative estimate, actuals from average more like \$250/night
	Individual donor(s)	\$1,750	GoFundMe or related campaign
	Grant from Patrick's Cabaret	\$1,000	
	Subtotal	\$2,990	
	TOTAL INCOME	\$4,050	
	NET	\$40	

IF BUDGET IS SCALED UP

- Resource constraints should remain for production materials and production design
- Pay participating artists more, so that they can fully engage in the program
- Include additional personnel for supporting artists, such as production assistants, production management, stage management, dramaturgs, caretakers, or vibes watchers
- Design workshops and seminars which prepare artists for the task of generating bold work in a compressed environment. This could include practical concerns such as tips on how to prepare for a technical rehearsal, as well as so-called “soft skills” such as consent and empathy in the rehearsal process
- Other provisions for artists, such as hospitality, transportation, childcare
- If applicable, resources that assist in the professional development and/or networking of participating artists

EVALUATION

Our approach to gathering feedback on Lightning Rod includes talkbacks with audiences after the show, a post-show evaluation survey for artists, and a demographic survey about participants.

SAMPLE EVALUATION SURVEY FOR ARTISTS

The following questions are shared with all participating artists as a post-show survey:

- How many hours would you estimate you worked?
- Were the prompts surprising? Helpful? Prohibitive? Just the right amount of challenging? Topical? Relevant?
- What was the vibe in your group, and was that helpful or challenging?
- Do you feel as if your boundaries were respected?
- Did you have disagreements? Were they fruitful or were they disruptive?
- How was tech for you? What can we provide to improve?
- Was the formation of random groups exciting/scary/problematic?
- Sunday Community Gathering: please give one example of what worked well and one example of what could be improved.
- Sunday Community Gathering: were the games/exercises helpful? Do you have any suggestions for next time?
- Any feedback on the venue as a site for this event?
- Did the audience seem prepared for this show or do you think they were lost? How did you feel about the makeup of the audience?
- Did the artists seem prepared for this show or do you think they were lost? How did you feel about the makeup of the artists?
- Would you prefer to keep the compression of only three hours for rehearsal? We are working to expand Lightning Rod, and wonder if it makes sense to give a couple more hours to each team.
- Is there anything that we could have provided that would make your work/life balance with this intensive week more accessible?
- Was the mix up and diversity of genres, formats, and style in your group helpful? Prohibitive? Inspiring?
- Was the work politically or socially challenging? Fruitful? In what way?
- Philosophy of Lightning Rod: Are you behind it? Want it to focus more, or remain general for more diversity? What do you think the thesis of Lightning Rod is?

- Would you recommend Lightning Rod to artists and audiences alike?
- Do you feel as if you learned and grew? What were your takeaways?
- How do you feel Lightning Rod is placed in the community of Twin Cities? Artists? Wider audiences? Nationally??
- Are there other folks (artistic or otherwise)

- that you think we should reach out to invite to participate in Lightning Rod?
- What other elements than performance can we incorporate into Lightning Rod? Food? Visual Arts? Journalism?
- Was the talkback helpful? Fruitful?

SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

This information helps Patrick's Cabaret to secure grant funding for further projects, as well as self-evaluate how well we are living up to the mission of centering artists of color, with disabilities, and with queer and trans identities. While we understand that numbers are only one way to represent the diversity of artists that Patrick's Cabaret serves, it is a compelling set of information that funders respond to well. All definitions ("queer," "emerging," etc.) are up to you to determine.

Please check all boxes that apply:

- Queer Artist
- Female Artist
- Transgender Artist
- Artist of Color/Indigenous Artist
- Youth Artist (under 20)
- Artists with Disabilities
- Emerging Artist
- Immigrant/Refugee

SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHIC TRACKING SURVEY

Role	# Queer	# Women	# Trans/ GNC	# BIPOC	# Youth (under 20)	# with Disabili- ties	# Emerg- ing	# Immi- grant / Refugee
Overall %								
Overall #								
Director %								
Director #								
Writer %								
Writer #								
Perform- er %								
Perform- er #								
Curator %								
Curator #								

APPENDIX

This appendix contains the following materials we have created and used in producing Lightning Rod:

- Call for artists / invitation to apply
- Application form
- Outreach/recruitment tracking sheet
- Checklist for one-to-one meetings with writers and directors
- Headline tracking sheet
- Orientation Day schedule
- Orientation Day sign-in sheet
- Technical questionnaire for tech rehearsal
- Template cue sheet for tech rehearsal

SAMPLE CALL FOR ARTISTS/INVITATION TO APPLY

As a reference for reaching out to artists, here are our invitations from Lightning Rod 2018:

Writer's Invitation

Patrick's Cabaret is seeking writers of various backgrounds to participate in a new Twin Cities flash theater tradition called Lightning Rod. The production will assemble a diverse team of artists to collaborate with only a few days to create works that respond to the current week's events. We're mixing the pot; both as a generative practice and a community involvement exercise. Come play a theater game, with serious consequences.

Commitment

- Sunday, April 9th – Orientation Day. The day will require three to five hours for auditions, group devising time, orientation, and rehearsal schedule set and other logistical negotiations. Refreshments and breaks provided.
- Monday, April 10th – Concepting shows, writing. Write a 15-20 minute long piece with minimal prop and costume requirements, following the parameters and challenges set before you on Orientation Day. Parameters will include—but may not be limited to— prompts, specific news

headlines, the performers assigned to you, any other prompt or constraint that encourages you to respond in the moment and/or think outside the box.

- Tuesday, April 11th – Rehearsal begins. Writers must submit pieces in whatever state they are in and agree to make no further amendments, edits, or unsolicited remarks.
- Friday, April 14th and Saturday, April 15th – Performances. Please attend at least one performance to enjoy the results! We would also be delighted for you to participate in talkbacks, Q&As and pre-show rituals if you are able.

Requirements

- Support Patrick's Cabaret Mission. Patrick's Cabaret is a queer-led performance art incubator supporting the growth and development of artists on the edge of culture. The organization produces work by hundreds of artists each year, with a particular focus on making space for artists of color, with disabilities, and on the LGBT/Queer spectrum to tell their stories in a welcoming, supportive, and transformative environment. (You do not have to live with or inhabit any of these identities to participate.)
- Attitude: Have a vested interest in or curiosity for collaborative work, particularly in new contexts with fresh faces. Passion for taking creative and professional risks for the sake of powerful work.
- Have the ability to submit work on time, legibly formatted, and within the parameters set by this curated event.

Director's Invitation

Patrick's Cabaret is seeking directors of various backgrounds to participate in a new Twin Cities flash theater tradition called Lightning Rod. The production will assemble a diverse team of artists to collaborate with only a few days to create works that respond to the current week's events. We're mixing the pot; both as a generative practice and a community involvement exercise. Come play a theater game, with serious consequences.

Commitment

- Sunday April 9th – Orientation Day. The day will require three to five hours for auditions, group devising time, orientation, and rehearsal schedule set and other logistical negotiations. Refreshments and breaks provided.
- Tuesday, April 11th and Wednesday, April 12th – Rehearsal begins. Writers will submit pieces in whatever state they are in and agree to make no further amendments, edits or unsolicited remarks.
- Directors will lead their small team of performers in staging the work, following the parameters and challenges set before you on orientation day. Parameters will include—but may not be limited to— prompts, specific news headlines, the performers assigned to you, any other prompt or constraint that encourages you to respond in the moment and/or think outside the box. Approximately five to six hour commitment. Time slots TBD based on your team's schedule and need.
- Thursday, April 13th – Tech Rehearsal. One to two hour commitment. Time slots TBD based on your team's schedule and need.

- Friday, April 14th – First evening of performance. Please attend to guide and encourage your team.
- Saturday, April 15th – Second evening of performance. Please attend to enjoy the results! We would also be delighted for you to participate in talk backs, Q & A's and pre-show rituals if you are able.

Requirements

- Support Patrick's Cabaret Mission. Patrick's Cabaret is a queer-led performance art incubator supporting the growth and development of artists on the edge of culture. The organization produces work by hundreds of artists each year, with a particular focus on making space for artists of color, with disabilities, and on the LGBT/Queer spectrum to tell their stories in a welcoming, supportive, and transformative environment. (You do not have to live with or inhabit any of these identities to participate.)
- Attitude: Have a vested interest in or curiosity for collaborative work, particularly in new contexts with fresh faces. Passion for taking creative and professional risks for the sake of powerful work. Respect for the needs and creative proclivities of the team assigned to you.
- Ability to manage rehearsal time use, approach the work with strong vision and bold choices, and communicate effectively any needs that you may have to the production team. We will be there to offer support!
- Ability to work within the parameters set by this curated event.

Performer's All-Call

Patrick's Cabaret is seeking performers of various backgrounds to participate in a new Twin Cities flash theater tradition called Lightning Rod. We are seeking actors, dancers, poets, musicians.. all performers welcome! The production will assemble a diverse team of artists to collaborate with only a few days to create works that respond to the current week's events. We're mixing the pot; both as a generative practice and a community involvement exercise. Come play a theater game, with serious consequences.

Commitment

- Sunday, April 9th – Orientation Day. The day will require three to five hours for auditions, group devising time, orientation, and rehearsal schedule set and other logistical negotiations. Refreshments and breaks provided.
- Tuesday, April 11th and Wednesday, April 12th – Rehearsal begins. Writers will submit pieces in whatever state they are in and agree to make no further amendments, edits, or unsolicited remarks. Directors will lead their small team of performers in staging the work, following the parameters and challenges set before you on Orientation Day. Parameters will include—but may not be limited to— prompts, specific news headlines, the teams assigned, any other prompt or constraint that encourages you to respond in the moment and/or think outside the box. Approximately five to six hour commitment. Time slots TBD based on your team's schedule and need.
- Thursday, April 13th – Tech Rehearsal. One to two hour commitment. Time slots TBD based on your team's schedule and need.

- Friday, April 14th – First evening of performance. Call to arrive at the venue will be approximately one hour before curtain.
- Saturday, April 15th – Second evening of performance. Call to arrive at the venue will be approximately one hour before curtain. We would also be delighted for you to participate in talkbacks, Q&As and pre-show rituals if you are able.

Requirements

- Support Patrick's Cabaret Mission. Patrick's Cabaret is a queer-led performance art incubator supporting the growth and development of artists on the edge of culture. The organization produces work by hundreds of artists each year, with a particular focus on making space for artists of color, with disabilities, and on the LGBT/Queer spectrum to tell their stories in a welcoming, supportive, and transformative environment. (You do not have to live with or inhabit any of these identities to participate.)
- Attitude: Have a vested interest in or curiosity for collaborative work, particularly in new contexts with fresh faces. Passion for taking creative and professional risks for the sake of powerful work.
- Ability to manage (the very limited) rehearsal time use, approach the work with bold choices and a "yes and..." technique. Respect for the needs and creative proclivities of the team assigned to you.

SAMPLE APPLICATION FORM

Our 2018 application form, hosted on Google Forms used the following language:

Basic information form for those applying to participate in Patrick's Cabaret program "Lightning Rod". Estimated time to complete application: 15-20 minutes

This year Lightning Rod commits to pushing the envelope further yet, by highlighting stories of cultural significance and nurturing the potential for revolutionary culture-making that resides within us all.

Patrick's Cabaret is seeking risk-taking artists and creators of various backgrounds to participate in Lightning Rod 2018. The production will assemble a diverse team of artists to collaborate with only a few days and limited resources to create unique works that respond to the current week's events. We're mixing the pot; both as a generative practice and a community involvement exercise. Come play a theater game, with serious consequences.

As you answer the application questions below, please take time to consider what it might mean to you to have the opportunity to collaborate with other artists in a compressed, fast-paced process. Where do your values lie? In the togetherness? Mindfulness? Community? Experimentation? Respect? The issues? Action? Potential? Consider and let us know what it is that YOU would like to get out of an experience like Lightning Rod.

[insert event location, schedule, compensation, and contact information]

*asterisk indicates required response

Name *

--Short Answer Text Box

Stage Name (if different)

Description: "This is the name we will use in promotions if you go by anything other than the name listed above."

--Short Answer Text Box

Personal Pronouns (she/her, he/him, they/them, zi/hir, etc.)

--Short Answer Text Box

Email *

--Short Answer Text Box

Phone number *

--Short Answer Text Box

Best time to call

--Short Answer Text Box

Are you able to commit to the dates and times listed above in the program description? *

--Multiple Choice Yes/No/Maybe

If no/maybe, please elaborate any concerns or schedule conflicts:

Description: "No more than 150 words"

--Long Answer Text Box

How do you want to be contacted? *

--Multiple Choice email/ phone/ either phone or email works for me

Would you like to be added to Patrick's Cabaret's email list? *

Description: Stay in the loop about upcoming shows and Calls for Performers.

--Multiple Choice Yes please!/ I'm already on it/ Not now maybe later

How did you hear about Lightning Rod?

Description: "No more than 150 words"

--Long Answer Text Box

Mailing Address (so we can send you an artist packet if selected) *

--Short Answer Text Box

We are interested in presenting artists working on the edge of culture. In 1-2 sentences (approximately 100 words), please explain how you are working on the edge of culture. *

Description: Patrick's Cabaret supports artists working on the edge of culture: those who are doing challenging, experimental, subversive, and community-driven work that might not otherwise find a home. We have a special focus on making space for artists of color, with disabilities, and/or with queer and trans identities.

Description: "No more than 150 words"

--Long Answer Text Box

Why do you want to participate in Lightning Rod 2018? *

Description: "No more than 150 words"

--Long Answer Text Box

In which role would you like to participate? *

--Multiple Choice Writer/ Director/ Performer

If we were unable to accommodate your first choice, would you be interested in participating in other roles for this event?

Description: Check all that apply

--Check Box Writer/ Director/ Performer

What are the top three current events that you would like to see covered more by creative professionals? *

Description: "No more than 150 words"

--Long Answer Text Box

Briefly list or describe the performance style(s) or genre(s) you are most interested in. *

Description: "No more than 150 words"

--Long Answer Text Box

Any other notes or questions related to this proposal? Any comments on the application itself?

Description: "No more than 150 words"

--Long Answer Text Box

OUTREACH/RECRUITMENT TRACKING SHEET

Here are the spreadsheets we've used to track outreach and recruitment.

For artists

NAME	CONTACT	INVITED? (DATE)	ROLE?	NOTES	RESPONSE	WHO REACHES OUT?

For volunteers/staff

NAME	ROLE	CONTACT IN- FORMATION	DATES	CONFIRMED?	NOTES
	Tech (lights, sound)				
	Production Assistant				
	Stage Manager				
	Help Outreach/Spread the word				
	Box Office/Usher				
	Intern				
	Marketing/Social Media				

SAMPLE CHECKLIST FOR WRITER AND DIRECTOR ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS

Before the week of Lightning Rod, producers schedule one-to-one meetings with writers and directors. Here is our checklist for these conversations.

Some of the below will only be relevant to writers and some only to directors, but it's great for everyone to get a holistic picture of the program.

LOGISTICS

- Community Gathering Schedule
- Accessibility of the building; accessibility of the piece you create
- Greenroom, mingling with audience, etc.
- Tech specs of building
- Prompt and Team assignments
- Writer's Deadline
- Rehearsal Schedule
- Tech Rehearsal
 - Production Questionnaire
 - Template Cue Sheet
- Performances & talkback

AESTHETICS & ETHICS

- Consent
- Intersectionality
- Mission/messaging of Lightning Rod, history of Lightning Rod and where we hope it will go

QUESTIONS FOR THE ARTIST

- Needs
- Accessibility
- What excites them? What do they hope to accomplish?
- Get to know the artist a little more
- Make space for participant to ask questions/voice comments

PROGRAM DETAILS & EXPECTATIONS

Artist Prep

- We all have different abilities and needs in the team
- Space, clothing, schedule cleared,

hydrated & well rested, supplied with foods, favorite tea, etc.

Writers Prep

- Script printing delivery, etc.
- Script formatting and length

Lightning Rod Principles

Promotions & Tickets

Names and Pronouns of All Participants

How Team Assignments Work

Prompts

Props & Costumes

Lights, Sound and Projections

Orientation Day Schedule

Rehearsal Slots

Technical Rehearsals

Performances

Tools for Getting to Know Your Team

- What have you always wanted to perform or create?
- What are the skills, tools, or proclivities that you bring to the table?
- What are you passionate about?
- Present "something wonderful"
- Boundaries and triggers: present your team with options -
 1. Tell the group in person
 2. Write it on a piece of paper and give it to the writer
 3. Email or speak to producer, who can let the Writer & Director know anonymously

SAMPLE HEADLINE TRACKING SHEET

We use this format to collect media headlines for the week as inspiration for Lightning Rod pieces. This document can get pretty expansive! It is important to capture links in order to connect back to the content of the stories.

PUBLICATION	LOCATION	HEADLINE	LINK	AUTHOR	DATE

SAMPLE ORIENTATION DAY SCHEDULE

Here is a sample schedule for Orientation Day, also known as the Community Gathering:

12:45pm-1:00pm: Check in at the front lobby

1:00pm-1:30pm: Introductions & announcements

1:30pm-2:30pm: Games & “auditions”

Suggested warm up and devising games:

- *Zip zap zop or energy ball*
- *Wink murder*
- *Percussive build*
- *View points*
- *Three or more group improv/audition*
- *Build a machine*
- *Storytelling improv game like exquisite corpse*
- *Three Sticks or Slideshow*
- *Pairs improv/audition*
- *Statue/Sculptor pairs*
- *Slideshow: Assign a performer a color/animal/element prompt. Introduce a second performer who must narrate the action (without knowing the prompt). Maybe someone in this scenario (like audience or writers panel) should guess...*
- *Individuals improv/audition*
- *Some kind of game where a single performer is on stage taking “audience” prompts*
- *Option to prepare something to share?*

2:30pm-3:00pm: Break (refreshments provided, please alert us of dietary restrictions)

3:00pm-3:15pm: Teams announced

3:15pm-4:45pm: Teams have time to sit together, devise and interact however they choose! Producing team will be available to answer questions and provide assistance where appropriate.

4:45pm-5:00pm: Closing remarks

SAMPLE ORIENTATION DAY SIGN-IN SHEET

WELCOME TO LIGHTNING ROD!

- Please check that your name and contact information are correct.*
- Please check that the availability that you listed for rehearsal is still correct!

NAME	PRO- NOUNS	EMAIL	PHONE	TUESDAY REHEARSAL	WEDNESDAY REHEARSAL	THURSDAY REHEARSAL	INI- TIAL
Celestial Bean (per- former)	she/her	example@ gmail.com	612-xxx- xxxx	after 6pm	open avail- ability	open avail- ability	CB
Belial Smithers (writer)	they/ them	example@ hotmail. com	651-xxx- xxxx	n/a	n/a	n/a	BS
Lezlie Powers (director)	ze/hir	example@ aol.com	347-xxx- xxxx	noon to 5pm	open avail- ability	5pm to 7pm	LP

*If you would like to provide a name different from the above for your paycheck, please see a producer

SAMPLE TECHNICAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TECH REHEARSAL

In order to prepare for the technical rehearsal, and eschew assumptions about the experience level each of our participants, we ask the director of each team to fill out a form outlining their technical needs after their initial rehearsal and before technical rehearsal. As a producer, you could ask for the teams to show up for tech rehearsal with this filled out, or you could sit with them to fill it out.

Artist Name:

Name of piece:

Approximate length of piece:

Lights

- Which area(s) of the stage will you be using? Do you need any special areas isolated? Any spot lights?
- What colors are you looking for?
- What rhythm are you looking for? Do lights change quickly/sharply? Are they slow fades?
- How many different light cues are in your piece? Can you list them, and when they happened (at the top, on entrances, at timestamps in your music, etc.).

Sound

Name of sound cue:

Approximate length of sound cue:

Type of sound file:

- When does the sound begin? In the dark? When you enter? At a particular move?
- Does the sound fade in or cut in?
- Does the sound fade out or cut out?
- When does the sound end?

Projections

Name of video cue:

Approximate length of video cue:

Type of video file:

- When does the projection begin? In the dark? When you enter? At a particular move?
- Does the video fade in or cut in?
- Does the video fade out or cut out?
- When does the projection end?

Other

Anything else that we should know about the technical aspects of your piece?

SAMPLE TEMPLATE CUE SHEET FOR TECH REHEARSAL

NAME OF PIECE:					
WRITER:					
DIRECTOR:					
EVENING OF PERFORMANCE:					
PAGE #	LX / SOUND / VIDEO?	DESCRIPTION OF TECH	WHAT IS THE CUE FOR THIS TECH?	SIMULTANEOUS?	NOTES

CREATIVE EXCHANGE PROFILE

LIGHTNING ROD IS PERFORMANCE FOR THE PRESENT MOMENT
AUGUST 17, 2018
IN SPECIAL FEATURES
BY COLLEEN POWERS



Kat Purcell and Marcela at Lightning Rod 2018. **credit: Ari Newman**

Imagine a group of artists gathering: writers, directors, and performers; many of whom have never met before; some who don't even call themselves "artists." They're handed news headlines from the week, anything from the Atlantic to Cosmo, and invited to group them into constellations, synthesizing and finding connections. In the span of just a few days, their challenge is to create pieces of theater—complete with lighting, sound, costumes, and props—that interpret and respond to the stories of the moment.

The flash theater event Lightning Rod was born in 2017 as a collaboration between Minneapolis-based theater company Patrick's Cabaret and theater artist Kat Purcell. Artist Marcela, who participated as a director the first time around, came on as co-producer for the second installment in 2018.

Now, as part of Springboard for the Arts' Toolkit Cohort, a Lightning Rod toolkit will be released for other artists and organizations to replicate. The format is ripe for sharing because it allows artists to respond immediately

to what's happening in the world or in their communities without extensive funding or planning.

"In theater, folks think that you need a big budget to do stuff, and/or that you need to have everything really well thought out," says Purcell, whose pronouns are they/them. "Here, participants were able to create work in the span of four to five days that they felt really proud of, and they felt empowered by that."



Lightning Rod 2017 performance. credit: Ari Newman

READY TO TRY SOMETHING NEW

Participating artists for Lightning Rod are invited in through an open call and application. The program follows Patrick's Cabaret's commitment to working with "artists on the edge of culture," including artists of color, queer and trans artists, and artists with disabilities.

That mission, combined with Lightning Rod's collaborative nature, gives people without formal theater training the chance to share ideas and be on equal footing with more experienced artists.

"You'll see people in roles that you don't usually see them in," says Marcela, "whether that means literally the character that they're playing on stage, or the role they're playing in

the production."

She remembers participants' resumes listing big professional venues in town, and others where an actor's only theater credit might be their eighth grade play. "And those people are putting on a show together.

RESPONDING CREATIVELY IN THE MOMENT

Despite the dark realities of many news headlines, the pieces produced at Lightning Rod have been funnier and less grim than might be expected.

"It speaks to the fact that artists on the edge of culture are constantly having to find resilience in ourselves, to carve out space, to be able to have humor, to be able to keep breathing, keep living," Artley says. "And so seeing what these artists did with really heavy topics was one of the coolest surprises that actually ended up being not much of a surprise."

For instance, a piece about nuclear warfare used characters to personify bombs from different countries. "That's tragic and terrible, and also, we were laughing, and also, we knew that our laughter was undoing the power of fear that bombs can inspire," he says.

And even a comedic take on an issue can inspire serious conversation. During the discussion after that show, Purcell remembers, audience members challenged the fact that all of the bombs were depicted as having equal power, unlike the countries they represent.

"That was a wonderful moment of this very silly, abstract play about four bombs," Purcell says, "but it becomes a much deeper conversation about geopolitics and race in particular,

in the context and in the moment, and why that racialized country would be considered to be on equal footing even though they're totally not."

Those talkbacks after each performance give audiences a chance to engage with and discuss current issues along with the artists.

"Someone said that they appreciated the opportunity to absorb and process the news and current events with other people, as opposed to in isolation," Purcell recalls. "The heaviness of everything that's going on in the world felt more manageable, and easier to process and to hold."



Lightning Rod 2018 performance. credit: Ari Newman

The fact that headlines are synthesized to create something new also keeps it from feeling too tied to the daily news cycle churn. Ideally, the pieces can stand on their own, even be revived and expanded beyond Lightning Rod—the prerogative of the writers, as they retain ownership of their scripts.

And Lightning Rod's focus doesn't have to be global; the format can address specific issues within an organization or community.

"The most exciting feedback I've received about Lightning Rod was that people felt em-

powered that if they had an issue or a political or social event, and they felt like they needed to respond, that they now had the tools to do that creatively and artistically," says Purcell.

GETTING THE PROCESS RIGHT

Lightning Rod may be designed to work on little or no budget, but still requires intention in recruiting participants, choosing a venue, and planning the week's activities.

Supporting the participants is key, says Purcell. Organizations trying Lightning Rod should prepare to pay artists, offer help with childcare and transportation, and provide emotional support as well.

"Participants come to Lightning Rod with a lot of vulnerability, and a lot of passion and ideas," they explain. "Some of those ideas aren't going to work, and they're going to need the space and the time and the energy and the clear head to be able to process everything that's going on."

The program's mission to center artists who have traditionally been marginalized also requires producers to be aware of power dynamics, and to proactively avoid excluding people.

Marcela recalls working with the other producers to group actors, writers, and directors for the shows—a process that's partly random, partly based on people's availability to rehearse.

"I was raising concerns about, oh, we have a show written by a black person with a black cast and a white director, and that will not happen," she says. "And those things weren't intentional things...but you have to watch out

for power structures.”

Issues of power and access show up in other ways, too, as when a venue was chosen that was not accessible to people with disabilities, despite the program’s stated goal of including them.

“Accessibility means that they have access to everything that everyone else has access to, that they have access to the green room, the dressing room, not just the stage, and then you have to set up some segregated changing room or bathroom for all of the actors in chairs,” Marcela says. “That’s not accessibility.”

The producers can share what they’ve learned from experience through the Lightning Rod toolkit, reinforcing these principles of genuine inclusion and intention.

Says Marcela, “The limitations of randomness and expediency should never come at the expense of equity.”

SEEDING A LEGACY

Sharing Lightning Rod as a toolkit has particular meaning because Patrick’s Cabaret is sunsetting after 32 years as a performance art incubator. After making that decision early this year, the organization’s leaders have worked to ensure that its programs and knowledge are preserved and handed off thoughtfully.

Lightning Rod will continue in Minneapolis with a planned 2019 installment to be hosted at Pillsbury House Theatre.

Patrick’s Cabaret is one of a few spaces in Minneapolis-St. Paul that have closed in recent years after featuring and/or being led

by artists from marginalized communities. The chance to leave a legacy is important for these artists.

“Specifically as queer community, I’m a queer man who has been fortunate to have advisors and mentors to a certain degree, and also I’m very conscious of there being this enormous hole in my ancestry because of AIDS,” Scott Artley says. “I don’t have this community of elders to help guide me, and so it’s felt really critical, as I become an elder, to become a resource, to get things down on paper, to leave a mark in a way that my ancestors couldn’t.”

The name Lightning Rod itself pays tribute to Patrick’s Cabaret—it was chosen after a board member described the organization as being “a lightning rod for the electricity in the air.”

As other artists pick up the toolkit and try Lightning Rod for themselves, Marcela hopes to see it used—and funded—in places like schools, after-school programs, prisons, and shelters.

Purcell hopes that it will continue to be used as a political tool alongside other tools. “It’s more like a way forward and a way of visioning than it is a direct action,” they say. “I really hope that it evolves, and I hope that it evolves differently in different places and for different people.”



Lightning Rod 2018 performance. credit: Ari Newman

CREAT IVE EX CHANGE

SPRINGBOARD FOR THE ARTS

WWW.SPRINGBOARDEXCHANGE.ORG