



LUMBERYARD

Technical Rehearsals as a Common Good

From Stopgap to Solution,
a Case for Collective Action
in Contemporary
Performing Arts

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LUMBERYARD

Center for Film and Performing Arts

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ABSTRACT

The New York City performing arts presenting ecosystem is at a critical impasse. While technology has transformed artistic creation models and presenter capabilities, far too many artists are being left behind without the means to make work that matches the demand for artistic innovation. In response to this critical problem, LUMBERYARD (“LY”), a 501(c)3 non-profit, has studied this issue extensively and, in response, has created a program and facility designed to fill the critical gap facing American artists developing new work.

Over the past eight years, LY has served as a technical rehearsal stopgap for over 60 productions bound for NYC. Our evidence-based recommendation for the entire performing arts ecosystem – artists, presenters and funders – is to redesign the current, outdated model with a new focus on streamlining and improving the artistic process to benefit the field as a whole. This shift requires an immediate, drastic influx and redistribution of investment, focusing primarily on how today’s artists make new work.

The New York City performing arts field operates in 3 silos: presenters, philanthropy, and artists. Presenters operate stand-alone venues with independent missions that define their engagement within their artistic communities. Most foundations and philanthropic organizations have specific funding bylaws and interests that many presenters and artists must “back into.” Artists inhabit the least lucrative silo and are traditionally thought of as beneficiaries of opportunities rather than as essential drivers of cultural innovation.

For the performing arts ecosystem to thrive, the field needs to work collaboratively to address common problems. If presenters build impressive, state-of-the-art facilities but lack a thriving community of American contemporary performing artists, then the mission of presenters will not be fulfilled. Philanthropy can rely on artists to work arm-in-arm on dire and urgent social causes, but artists cannot move social agendas without first developing within their own fields.

Technology has dramatically increased the cost of artistic creation. Every artist creating today needs time to experiment with design and technology before they premiere their work. Rehearsing with technology is vital to the future of the field; however, it is prohibitively expensive for most artists. For American contemporary art to flourish, artists desperately need a creative solution that recognizes access to technical rehearsals as a common good. This situation demands industry-wide buy-in to create an effective solution.

Three major shifts happened within the first five years of operating LY’s program that created an urgent need to reevaluate how best to serve the field:

01. Design and technology have become integral parts of the conception, development, and rehearsal of new works. Both are necessary early in the creative process.
02. Since 2010, the demand for LY’s technical rehearsal program has increased ten-fold.
03. For numerous artists, a commitment from LY was vital to ensuring presenter commitment.

INTRODUCTION

LY built its technical rehearsal program in 2011 in response to a Mellon Foundation funded report, “Mind the Gap: Artist Residencies and Dance,” conducted by the Alliance of Artists Communities. The report found that while there are hundreds of residency opportunities available in the U.S., there is a scarcity of late-stage residencies where artists can work with design and technology pre-premiere.¹

“The good news is there is an abundance of residency opportunities around the world open to dance in general. The bad news is two-fold: many of these opportunities are underutilized due to a lack of information, misperceptions about the support available, and limited funds to take advantage of what is offered; and there is a scarcity of residency programs with the capacity to fully support the specific needs of dance, particularly in the mid- and late stages of developing new work.”

“Mind the Gap: Artist Residencies and Dance,” p. 4.

LY was built in Catskill, NY, situated 101 miles from New York City, so that public performances are not considered a NYC premiere and to create a tech process at a much lower price point. Over the past eight years, LY’s 60 technical rehearsal residencies have bridged the period between studio and stage. In the process, LY has garnered a unique, hands-on perspective on the challenges facing American contemporary artists.

We have worked with early-career artists building toward NYC debuts, celebrated artists possessing significant bodies of work, and artists at every stage in between. These artists have gone on to almost every presenting institution in NYC—from small venues such as the Invisible Dog, the Chocolate Factory, and New York Live Arts, to larger venues such as the Park Avenue Armory and BAM Howard Gilman Opera House. We have discovered that every artist – regardless of their premiere location or career stage – is in desperate need of dedicated support to integrate design and technology.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Technology's speed and momentum have created a chasm between presenters of artistic products and the artists responsible for creation.

American Artists Lagging

Recent design and technological advances have significantly impacted how artists make work. Increasingly, work is genre-defying, multidisciplinary, and non-script-based. Artists consider technology and design before rehearsals start because these elements are vital to their vision. This widespread shift in the creative process has been the foundation for artistic innovation; however, artists making this type of work do not have the traditional financial support of large producing institutions that support new works from start to finish. In addition, these artists lack a dedicated organizing body to voice their collective challenges.

Excluding theaters that produce new works, artists creating performances must support their own development process. Once an artist receives a commitment from a presenter, they need to conform to the presenter's timeline to ensure they are ready for premiere. Presenting fees from presenters rarely cover the costs associated with the development of new work. Fewer and fewer artists have dedicated rehearsal spaces and full-time companies. Without a dedicated space, the most common creation model is to work in simple "lights-on/lights-off" studio spaces in NYC and then secure several week-long residencies that offer space and dedicated time outside NYC. With no official pipeline or set model, residency time and availability have become very competitive. Even artists with their own dedicated spaces do not have technically-equipped space to incorporate design and technology into their works, which limits their artistic visions. As a result, they too compete for technical rehearsal residency access.

NYC Velocity

Presenting institutions have collectively spent billions of dollars to build or renovate venues that realize and showcase design and technology, allowing NYC to continue to be an internationally-recognized home for artistic innovation.

The cost of operating presenting institutions has risen dramatically over the past decade. NYC real estate prices alone require multi-use and creative business models. Also, for many non-profit presenters, ticket sales do not cover the costs of productions; these institutions are relying heavily on philanthropy to fund their presentations of new work. Asking presenters with union crews and full-time front-of-house staff to close their doors for extended technical rehearsals is unrealistic.

A NYC premiere is coveted by artists across the globe – particularly at the seminal institutions. International artists who arrive in NYC for their premieres have significantly more time and financial support than their American counterparts. In Europe, for example, there are more government funded residency opportunities as well as a pervasive, strong belief in the power of cultural diplomacy.

Challenge

The rapid investment in bricks and mortar and the rising costs of making and presenting work in NYC have outpaced the funding and technical rehearsal space available to contemporary American artists. Presenting institutions have a tall order as leaders of American artistic innovation. They have created incredible canvases for artists but, without access to technical rehearsals, the pool of American artists and works available to them is shrinking rapidly. This has reduced the field primarily to established or well-known artists with access to considerable funding.

04

STOPGAP SOLUTION

To immediately meet this challenge, LY built a 12,000 square foot, flexible, state-of-the-art, technically equipped theater in Catskill, NY. Catskill is close enough to be accessible to NYC artists, but far enough to escape NYC's compounding costs.

LUMBERYARD has spent approximately \$5.5M on technical rehearsals for artists over the past eight years. This includes all design, crew and residency costs. For the first few years of our program, we retained the services of an independent consultant to embed with the visiting companies to better design our range of services and to identify gaps in support.

Today, artists securing a technical rehearsal residency at LY receive 1-2 weeks of dedicated, full-access theater time with a full technical crew, on-site housing for up to 24 people, meals, and a \$10K development fee. Early on in the program's development, LY added dramaturgical support that begins up to a year before a company's arrival. LY also provides photo and video documentation, which has become vital to informing process and creating early marketing materials.

LY's Director of Production works with companies well in advance of residencies to ensure that LY has the right team in place for their arrival and, in many cases, LY consults with early-career artists on technical requirements and the characteristics of their eventual premiere location.

LY also helps artists consider touring capabilities and logistics early in the creative process. Even the largest sets can be built with crating and travel in mind. In the scramble towards a NYC premiere, many artists do not consider touring until post-premiere and have to rebuild a scaled set from scratch.

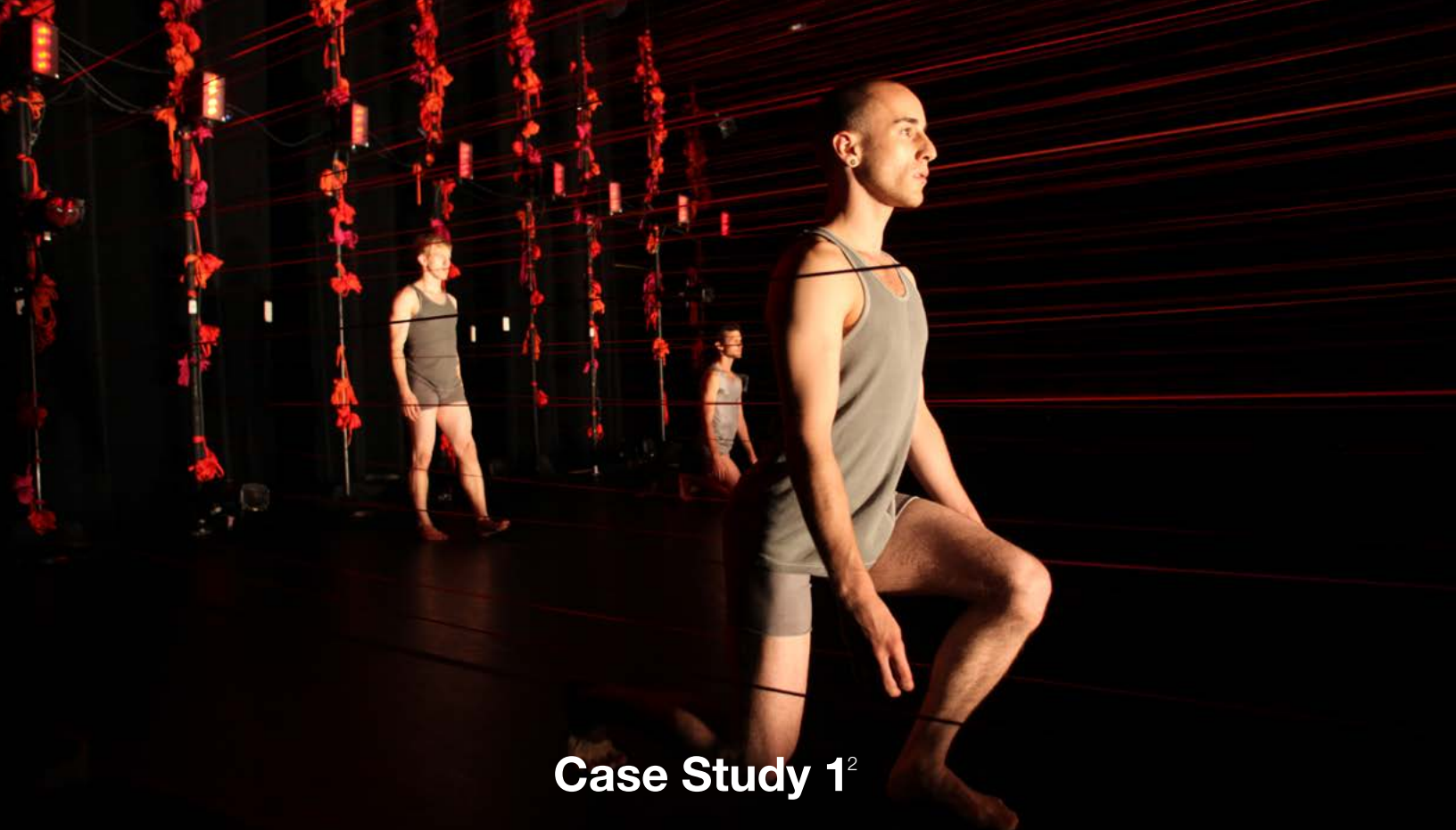
LY's technical team is led by industry experts and designed to be a training environment for graduate-level design students. Being outside NYC and having a non-union teaching crew keeps the cost of each technical period as low as possible, without sacrificing space, technical capabilities, or full-access. While there are a handful of residency sites across the country that provide access to sound or design studios and large rehearsal spaces, LY is singular in offering space that is fully equipped and full-access (i.e. artists need not clear out for classes or other joint uses).

FINDINGS

While each artist's process is unique, our investment to date has identified 4 gaps in support that are sufficiently common to have emerged as trends, and which require multifaceted solutions:

I. Flexible Space

While technical rehearsal space is a key to new work development, artists – particularly choreographers – benefit most when the technical rehearsal space can replicate the premiere location. For each of our 60 technical rehearsal residencies, LY was able to closely replicate the premiere location. This allowed installations and design to be built to spec prior to premiere, which makes for easier NYC presenter load-ins and facilitates the limited technical rehearsal time in NYC to be used efficiently, thereby greatly strengthening the final presentation.



Case Study 1²

Brian Brooks

Production: Run Don't Run

Residency Dates: September 2013

Company/Artists: Brian Brooks Moving Company/Brian Brooks - Choreographer

Design team:

Brian Brooks and Phillip Trevino - Co-Scenic Designers

Joe Levasseur - Lighting Design | Christopher Lancaster - Score

Premiere Location: BAM Fisher Fishman Space

Premiere Date: 2013

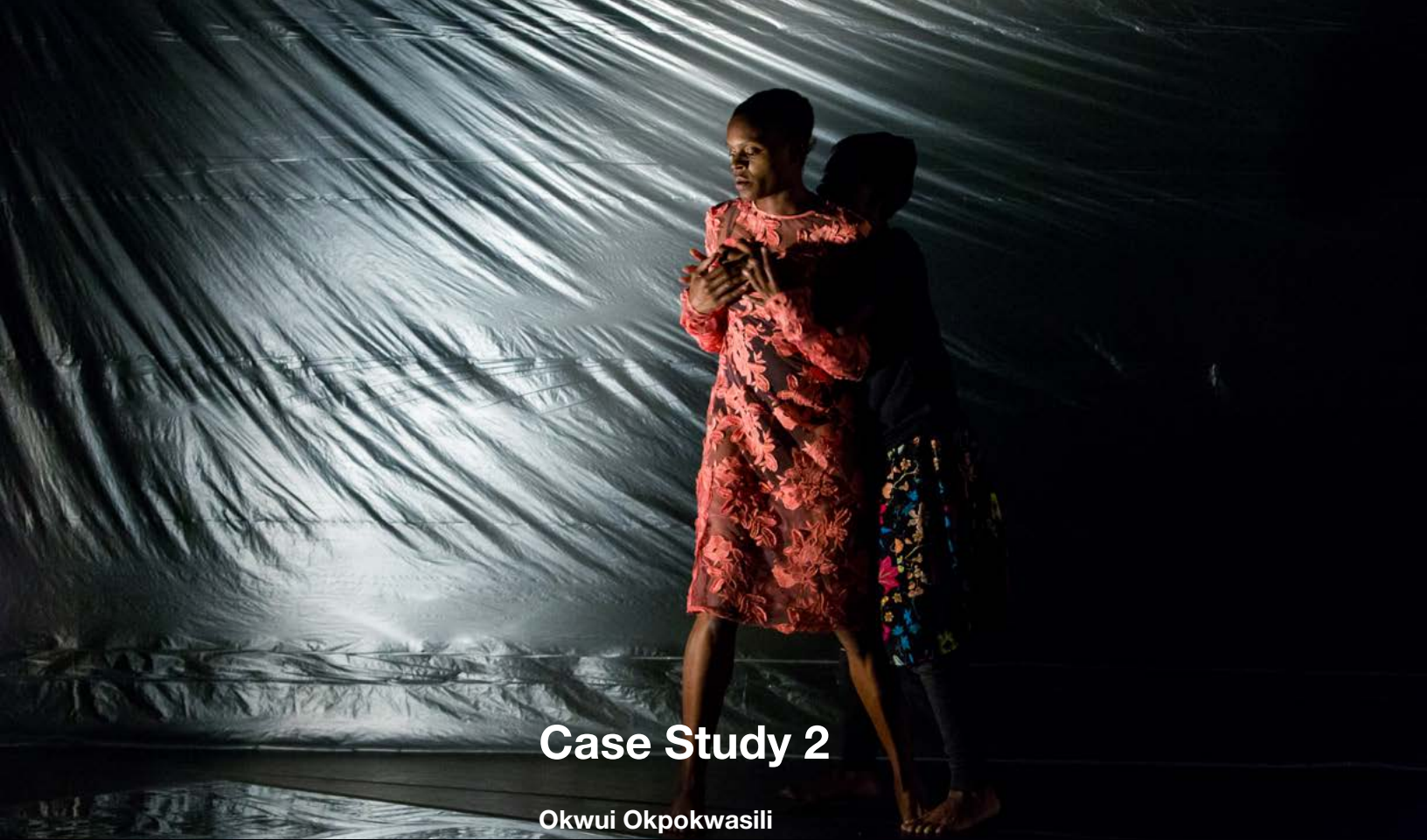
"This has been an amazing opportunity to get all the elements and all collaborators into one space. This residency is incredibly crucial in the development of this particular work. We're using hundreds of cables that get stretched across the stage. We're building this multi-dimensional sculpture that the dancers inhabit and get intertwined in and run against. It's impossible to set up in my studio in New York. What we've taken advantage of here during this residency is to be able to build this enormous sculpture. It fills the theatre. A residency like this allows me to build the set, build the music, and build the scale. This is crucial. I made my piece this week."

- **Brian Brooks**

Tech/Design Description:

Brooks required 175 yards of fabric cut into strips. Strips were tied to 9 booms on either side of the stage - up to 17' high. LY added 4 booms on either side to replicate BAM.

Brian and Phillip, the co-set designers, were only available to be onsite for 1 day. To be able to facilitate the scenic load-in and for the performers to be able to have enough time for their rehearsal, LY crew had to cut all strips prior to their arrival. This took multiple days to accommodate. For the production to get the most from this residency, we further realized that we needed to be sure the design would fit at BAM. To do this, we had to pull together all of the space we had available to replicate the BAM Fisher Fishman Space. Due to the size of our theater and its adjoining studios, we were able to lay the fabric out and cut to scale. Without LY, the company would have needed to rent a space that was 40' wide to accomplish this because there was not enough time at BAM to both cut the fabric and load-in.



Case Study 2

Okwui Okpokwasili

Production: Poor People's TV Room

Residency Dates: 11/14/16-11/19/16

Company/Artists: Okwui Okpokwasili - Choreographer | Peter Born - Director

Design team:

Peter Born - Visual designer (Scenic, LX, Video/Projections)

Premiere Location: New York Live Arts

Premiere Date: May 2017

"Coming here, we had the piece but we had not been able to implement any of the technical things. We'd sketched them out, but this is the first time we're really combining all the technical elements of the piece. It's been really interesting and a little heartbreaking because when it's in the realm of imagination, it's very interesting, but when it takes shape in reality you have to deal with what's really there and whether it works or not."

-Peter Born, Visual Designer

Tech/Design Description:

This work was designed with plastic sheeting dividing the stage. In addition, the audience was integral to the work. For Live Arts, the work required 60' of 12' tall plastic. LY researched and sourced flame-retardant plastics, a requirement of all NYC venues. Working with the plastic integral to the vision of the piece at LY, the company had time to experiment with placement/texture/layers/lighting necessary for Live Arts.

This piece also required a 12' x 8' x 2' platform that LY designed and built for touring that could be loaded into a cargo van. A 16' tall tree with LED light bulbs and covered in white material was first used at LY and the company experimented with placement options so the tree could be seen on the deep Live Arts stage.

Having space to replicate Live Arts was key to design the work's video system, which comprised three cameras, two projection surfaces, and a monitor. The company spent considerable time determining the best placement, and this shaved a significant amount of time off the Live Arts load-in. The period spent conducting design testing during the LY residency allowed the company to devote their time at Live Arts to a true tech/final dress rehearsal.

II. Multidisciplinary Work Process Support

Artists collaborating with peers from differing art forms or genres have, in all cases, required almost twice as much time in technical rehearsals throughout the creative process than conventional contemporary artists. Having the time for artists to explore each others' media and processes in real-time is an essential early stage of collaboration. It is particularly important in allowing ideas to formulate, evolve, and be refined. It is not possible for multidisciplinary collaboration to push the boundaries of convention in the abstract. The process requires time for experimentation.

Case Study 1

Susan Marshall

Production: Chromatic

Residency Dates: 1/18/15-1/24/15 & 1/23/16-1/27/16

Company/Artists:

Susan Marshall - Choreographer

Jason Treuting - Composer

Suzanne Bocanegra - Visual designer

Design team:

Eric Southern - Lighting Designer

Jeff Larson - Projection Designer

Jay Eigenmann - Sound Designer

Premiere Location: The Kitchen

Premiere Date: June 2016

"This incubator series is giving us a chance to play in the theatre and to bring our elements together. We haven't had the opportunity to unpack all the materials...the opportunity to play with lighting, to play with sound, and with movement all at the same time." - **Susan Marshall**

"I'm fascinated by this whole collaborative world of theater and dance and how everyone pitches in, not only technically, but ideas-wise."

- **Suzanne Bocanegra**

"We've decided in a really fundamental way that the three of us are truly collaborating in a way where we're equal partners".

- **Jason Treuting**

Set/Design Description:

This collaboration required two residencies. The technical elements of the first residency were quite simple: repertory light and sound plot, a few tables and chairs, reams of colored paper, and two projectors with a single live feed camera. The LY residency was the first time that the three artists had worked with the material, and the design team used the residency as a canvas. The artists experimented with many ideas, including new costume pieces, turning a leaf blower into a confetti cannon, rigging a paper shredder to operate on an endless loop, etc. The first residency was an opportunity for the artists to create a common working language coming from three very different genre/art forms. The second residency was closer to their premiere date and the production had more concrete design needs.



Case Study 2

Lucinda Childs, Maya Besier, and Wendy Whelan

Production: The Day

Residency Dates: 11/26/18-12/8/18

Company/Artists:

David Lang - Composer

Lucinda Childs - Choreography

Maya Besier/Wendy Whelan - Performers

Design team:

Sara Brown - Scenic Designer

Natasha Katz - Lighting Designer

Josh Higgason - Projection Designer

Karen Young - Costume Designer

Premiere: Jacob's Pillow/The Joyce Theater

Premiere Date: 2019

"The residency at LUMBERYARD has been really invaluable to us because you can't imagine in a studio what a piece like this will be like when all the elements come together and the team comes together, which we've had the chance to do – the lighting, the costumes, the video, the set design and the sound."

-Lucinda Childs, Choreographer

"Being here at LUMBERYARD was really instrumental for us. We came here, and we didn't have a piece. We had the music, and we had Lucinda's choreography, but that was it. We really built the piece here."

- Maya Beiser, Cellist

LUMBERYARD has afforded us the ability to open ourselves up, and calmly feel safe exploring. When you're in that kind of environment, your leaves get a little greener, you feel a little more fluidity, and I think the product becomes greater.

-Wendy Whelan, Dancer

Set/Design Description:

The two-week residency at LY was an opportunity for the artists to work together in the same space as their collaborators and to experiment with crossing genres and artistic mediums. Having a space that replicated the stage at Jacob's Pillow and the Joyce Theater was vital for spacing and design. The production team wanted to rent a high-gloss marley floor that was cost prohibitive. After much research, LY found an alternative and used a glossy overlay that gave the designers a sense of whether or not it was absolutely needed. After the residency, the company received a grant for the glossed marley. Only by testing the idea could the production determine that it was necessary to purchase this marley.



III. Design and Technology in the Beginning

Design and technology are no longer simple additions to illuminate or emphasize a completed rehearsal process. Most contemporary artists consider design and technology long before rehearsals start. For artists bound for the large NYC presenting institutions that have incredible technical capabilities, the limits of imagination are only set by the amount of time artists and their companies have access to technical rehearsals. Innovation requires incubation and the application of ideas.

Case Study 1

Bill T Jones/Arnie Zane Company

Production: On The Water
Residency Dates: 8/19/19-9/1/19
Company/Artists:
Bill T Jones - Choreography
Design team:
Embargoed - Scenic Designer
Robert Wierzel - Lighting Designer
Peter Nigrini - Projection Designer
Liz Prince - Costume Designer

Premiere: Major preeminent NYC presenter (embargoed subject to announcement)
Premiere Date: 2020

"It astounds me that we could ever have thought that we could do a piece of such ambition – with all of the technical needs – that we could do it without such a residency – that would have been naïve on our part. LUMBERYARD made this piece possible."

-Bill T. Jones

"LUMBERYARD plays a very important role in our field right now. This is the first time all of the elements have come together: video, lighting, sound... And we have learned a lot. When we go back to the studio with no bells and whistles – we can actually now imagine what the effects are."

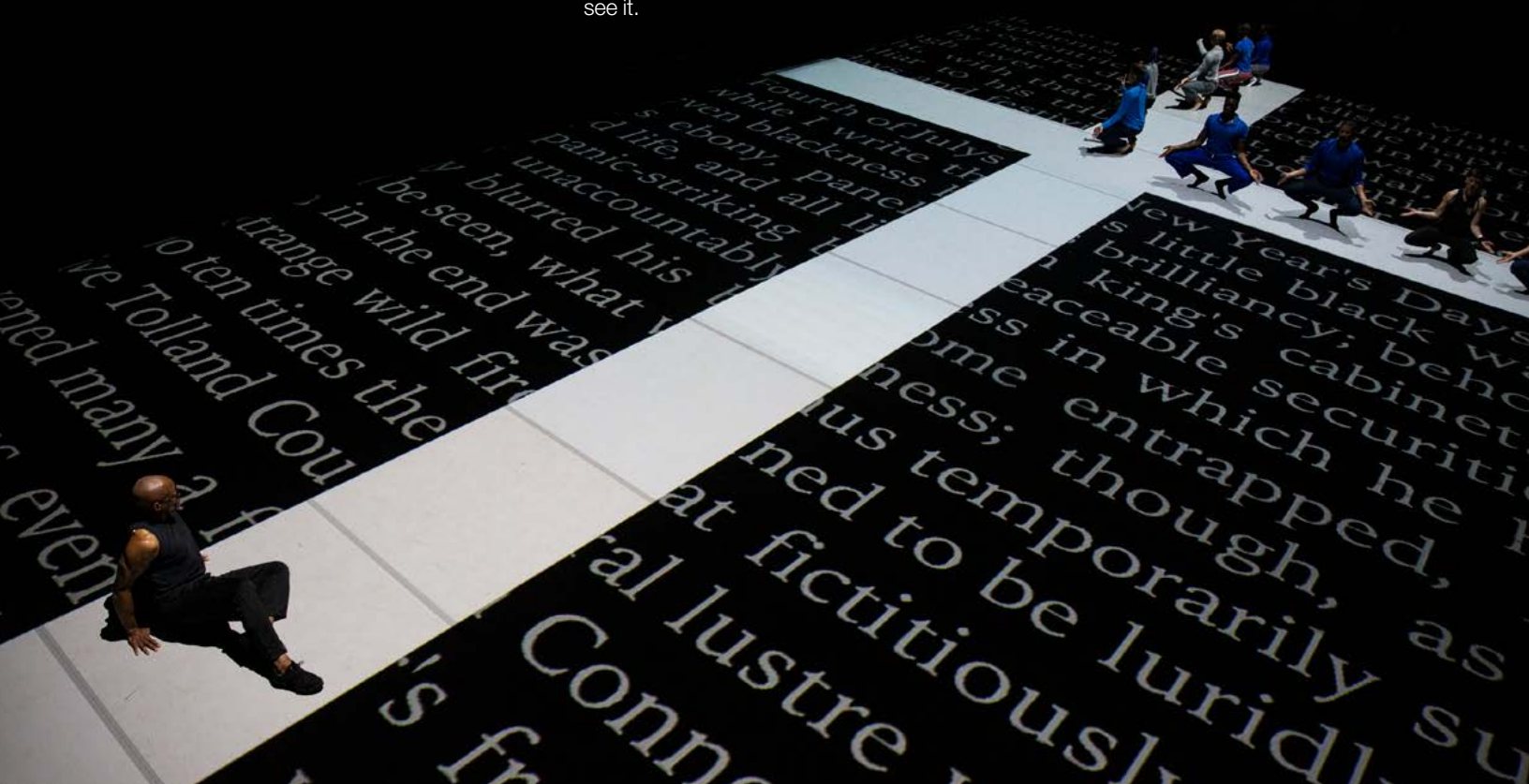
**-Janet Wong, Associate Artistic Director,
Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company**

Set/Design Description:

BlackTrax is a tracking system that automates live entertainment equipment including lighting, projections, and sound. Cameras are hung around the theater and performers wear beacons tracked by the cameras. For this production, Blacktrax was used to control three 21K projectors and twenty moving light fixtures. Often the projections and the lighting "react" to the dancers' movements. That is, the dancers are in a line and the projectors create a box of light around them; as they move, so does the box. Teching this kind of show "dry" is basically impossible (unlike shows where cues can be written and then adjusted to the movement of the performers). As the dancers' movements are so crucial to the design and the design is so crucial to the dancers' movements, rehearsing this piece without BlackTrax would have been extremely difficult. Before LY, the company had never rehearsed on stage while wearing their beacons/using Blacktrax.

The scale of this production was massive. The stage at the premiere location will be over 130' long and 60' wide, and while LY's own residency facility could not provide those exact dimensions, we were able to outfit our facility with 60'x40' of sprung floor.

Another integral part of the design was for the audience to be sitting nearly 11 feet above the stage. We were able to build an 8'x8' section of 10'8" high platforming so that all the collaborators could view their work from where the premiere audience will sit. This was a critical part of the design as it clearly showed the writing on the floor, as well as the lighting design on the floor, which is how the audience would see it.





Case Study 2

"We're just wrapping our first residency up here at LUMBERYARD, specifically to work on a new piece that we are very early-mid-stage development on. Part of coming up here was a chance to build an early working draft of our set. The TEAM as an ensemble writes everything collaboratively. It's spaces like LUMBERYARD that give opportunities to work not just on the script or at our computers writing, but actually writing on our feet; writing in some form of what the final production will look like that just opens up whole worlds of development and will inspire future writing. It's been a remarkable time up here."

-Rachel Chavkin

Rachel Chavkin and The TEAM

Production: Reconstruction

Residency Dates: 8/19/19-9/1/19

Company/Artists:

The TEAM

Rachel Chavkin - Director

Design team:

Nick Vaughn - Scenic Designer | Marika Kent - Lighting Designer | Kate Freer - Projection Designer | Matt Hubbs - Sound Designer

Premiere Location: Major preeminent NYC Presenter (embargoed subject to announcement)

Premiere Date: TBD

Set/Design Description:

It was essential for the performers to work early in the process on the set since both the collaborative script and the design of the piece are integral. The company moved the scenic pieces as part of the stage choreography. The set was composed of two scenic wagons (12'x14'x17' each) and both were interiors of house on one side and exterior on the other. In addition, one wagon was two stories high. The house had practical doors, windows, wirelessly dimming light fixtures. Installation required eight crew members, a half ton chain motor rigged over the stage, and two genie lifts.

IV. Early Support/Early Commitment

Artists benefit most when the technical rehearsal residency is utilized early in the creative process, especially for emerging artists. Early commitment helps artists fundraise and assuages presenters' fears of unrealized work. Knowing that a technical rehearsal residency is confirmed within the creation process creates the opportunity for emerging artists to work with design and technology as a new medium in ways that would not be possible without it. This allows for design and technology to be incorporated fully into the vision of the work and for designers to be early collaborators. Also, an early commitment from LY means that our production team can work with artists from the beginning of the process as production advisors, helping to support both the technical and design process.

Case Study 1

Steven Reker

Production: Rememberer

Residency Dates: 9/19/16-10/1/16

Open House - Band

Company/Artists: Steven Reker, Director

Design team:

Ryan Seaton & Dan Foley - Sound design

Vincent Vigilante - Lighting design

Premiere Location: BAM

Premiere Date: October 2016

"I'm in this really unique world; I'm deep in a creative process. It's been so incredible to work with the LY staff. Their generosity and fearlessness to say 'yes' constantly is something I will never forget, and will always be appreciative of."

- Steven Reker

Set/Design Description:

LY started working with the company in January for a residency in September. In this work, the performers built the scenery with 8'x18"x1.5" pieces of styrofoam. This included abstract shapes as well as large stacks that were climbed and performed on. LY did many tests on the styrofoam to determine how to flame treat it so that it would pass flame tests without dramatically changing how they sounded while played. LY was able to treat all of the boards onsite while the company rehearsed in the theater. It was also necessary for LY to rent the exact sound gear that the company would use at BAM, making the transition from LY to BAM easier.

In initial conversations with the company, there were multiple other scenic elements being considered. As the LY team worked through the details of how to accomplish all of these elements, the company decided to focus on how to best use the styrofoam physically and sonically. LY also helped the company create the technical rider required for their BAM premiere.



Case Study 2

Raja Feather Kelly

Production: Another Fucking Warhol Production

Residency Dates: 6/12/17-6/17/17

Company/Artists:

The Feath3r Theory: Raja Feather Kelly - Director

Design team:

Tuce Yasak - Lighting Designer

Laura Snow - Video Designer

Emily Auciello - Sound Designer

Premiere Location: The Kitchen

Premiere Date: June 2017

"LUMBERYARD wraps their arms around a production. There's always someone around with their eye on things making sure that as an artist I have everything I need. And that has been something that we haven't had before. LUMBERYARD is a step up for us in so many ways. There's someone for everything. It's brought us to a new level."

-Raja Feather Kelly

Set/Design Description:

The production required striking the risers at The Kitchen and flipping the theater's orientation as well as creating a "video wall" with words being spelled out by the lighting fixtures. A system of lights were hung that were used to create a color test pattern onto the stage.

The performers wore morph suits (a type of suit worn when doing motion capture). There was a concern that dialogue would be difficult with the morph suits, so LY rented wireless microphones, which the company also used in their residencies at The Yard and Gibney.

The projection system also included playback and live feed elements and LY's production team worked with the designers to best accomplish each of the different design ideas within the week.



SUMMARY/ CHALLENGE

It has never been more difficult for American artists to make work and to keep up with the pace of international artistic innovation. While this white paper focuses especially on the challenges facing the New York City contemporary performing arts ecosystem, this is a national problem.

For the past several years, LUMBERYARD has performed a vital function for the industry by bridging the studio-based creative process and presenters. LY's audiences have also played a critical role in the creation of new performance work by serving as first eyes and feedback for artists. LY was built outside NYC so that public performances are not considered NYC premieres and to create a tech process at a much lower price point.

Acting as a Band-Aid to an otherwise broken and disjointed ecosystem has not created meaningful systemic change nor has it built awareness of the new creative process vis-à-vis technology. LY has merely stepped into the void in order to keep artists making work.

Artists know that they desperately need access to technology and design pre-premiere. After decades struggling for basic art-making support, it is too often considered a luxury rather than a necessity for the future of the artform.

Presenters need bricks and mortar support, but they also need support for the American artists they are presenting to ensure that NYC's large institutions remain homes for American work. The solution to better support American work cannot fall solely on NYC presenting institutions. Their role as curators of contemporary culture only works if there is robust infrastructure to nurture and finance artistic development.

PROBLEM RECOGNITION

Philanthropy exists to improve the well-being of humankind by preventing and solving problems. The first step is to understand problems and their consequences. Artistic process and its relationship to presenters is nuanced, and this nuance makes solutions challenging.

As a field, we should be able to accept the following facts as a departure point for solutions:

01. New York City-based technical rehearsals are prohibitively expensive for most artists.
02. New American work will not be produced without access to technical rehearsals.
03. The New York City performing arts presenting field is financially strained.
04. Technical rehearsals need to be low-cost/high-impact and mutually beneficial to all stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LUMBERYARD built a program and a facility that is now tried and tested, and that can act as a meaningful solution to this problem. The business model for the program, however, cannot be created without buy-in from the entire field. Only together can we find ways to improve presenters' bottom lines, artists' processes, and develop a high-impact/low-cost solution for the philanthropic community.

The performing arts field has limited resources and the solutions to widespread problems can no longer be solved with siloed approaches that benefit a small number. Structural functionalism has not been explored as a solution for the performing arts beyond government programs. The NYC performing arts ecosystem is complex and varied in mission; however, it must work as a whole to solve this problem in the immediate future.

We offer 4 key recommendations to bolster the contemporary performing arts field:

01. Ensure that a diverse and inclusive cross section of American artists can benefit from the billions invested in New York City presenting institutions by increasing access to affordable technical rehearsal spaces.
02. Ensure that emerging artists with limited presenter resources beyond premiere are able to work with design and technology while developing new work.
03. Develop and identify sustainable high-impact/low-cost solutions that can benefit a greater number of artists, given the rising costs associated with presenting.
04. Facilitate formal partnerships between presenters, funders, and organizations that support technical rehearsals, so this critical piece is committed from the onset of an artistic process.

If we do not find ways to catch up and support artistic innovations, American artists will fall even further behind their international counterparts and the privilege of being showcased at seminal institutions will only be available to a select few, creating a divide between the haves and the have-nots that will detrimentally affect the entire field.

CALL TO ACTION

With LUMBERYARD's experience in mind – using the commitment and drive of the contemporary performing arts community – we make one essential call to action:

The contemporary performing arts community must come together to catalogue the needs of the field, assess persistent structural challenges facing art-making, and collectively demand changes that will ensure our field continues to grow and innovate for years to come.

“One of the country’s most robust residency programs... The residency, which lasts one or two weeks, is designed to offset the tight schedules of many New York theaters, where companies frequently have just one or two days to work with lighting and sets before presenting a brand-new piece.”

-Siobhan Burke, New York Times, 2016

What New York City needs is real, significant investment in artistic development, over years and years.

-Zachary Woolfe, New York Times, 2019