



Patrick Moves On

IT'S BEEN A decade. How ironic that government bureaucracy, which couldn't quite manage to shut down Patrick's Cabaret in downtown Minneapolis, wound up delaying its closing for a whole month. The cutting-edge experimental cabaret, which moves this month into the historic fire station at 3010 Minnehaha Ave., was the site of owner Patrick Scully's final solo performance/ritual "I Left the Space Bare" on April 30 — its 10-year-and-one-month anniversary.

On Friday night, Scully set the record straight: on his struggles with outdated city ordinances; on the *Star Tribune* critic who fiercely panned a controversial 1994 Ron Athey performance without even seeing it; and on that persistent rumor (my, but people are nosy!) about sex parties in the basement. (Yes, Virginia, gay men deserve a place besides New York to get rowdy.)

Our host began by asking for a show of hands by all those who were visiting for the first time, which is not unlike asking all the "virgins" at the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* to please stand up; the smart ones won't — those who don't know better are the real virgins. Several hands went up. He smiled and said, "In my personal iconography, that's like just making the last 15 minutes of Woodstock."

Scully then proceeded to invoke the spirits of past Cabaret performers who had recently died. He filled a tub of water with dry ice; eerie, milky fog poured over its sides and engulfed the audience. Most cultures light incense or candles to summon spirits, the performer noted, "but there're almost no fire signs in my [astrological] chart, so I'm going to use air and ice and water."

Fire figured in eventually, though, when candles were lit and passed out to the assembled. Scully invited everyone to feel the presence of those who had performed there, and to commune one last time with the special feel of the space: the huge white walls, the comfortable give of the wooden floor, and the "great, autumnal tin ceiling." Among the uplift, upturned faces of those sitting on the floor, he walked, danced and told his stories.

They were not only memories, but cautionary tales for the creative and the aware, full of wit, and all a variation on one theme: "I've learned that it's easier to say 'I'm sorry' than it is to get permission to do what I want."

Scully related both fond and alarming memories of his neighbor Helyu, an elderly immigrant from Latvia. ("Ah! And what is going on in the house of windows?") Learning about the shows, she began showing up, paying \$50 or \$100 for each performance and accepting no refund. ("Vhat! My money not good enough?") It was only a matter of time before the charming and eccentric Helyu started to ingratiate herself into the cabaret's performances — and into Scully's life.

Guffaws were heard as Scully told of the unexpected display of imagination from government officials who, rather than close him down for violating zoning codes, designated the cabaret as a "lodge," like the Elks or the Masons, which allowed him to continue to run a theater in a residential district. "So this is the final gathering of the members of the Cabaret Lodge!" he announced, to thunderous applause.

Over the course of the entertaining evening, our host let go of ghosts past and confronted those in the present. He screamed in anguish and danced in ecstasy. He pried back a mysterious opening in the floor, out of which he drew a long, black tarpaulin, like a ribbon of earth. He disappeared into that hole and reappeared at the back door, like Orpheus returning from Hades. He ceremoniously shaved his head and body — revealing the double meaning of the performance's title — and talked about abandoning the space as a kind of death. He mourned the loss of the warehouse, and so did everyone present. Finally, he embraced the future and the new location of Patrick's Cabaret with a ceremonial bath.

Scully told this reporter that his final performance was mostly ad-libbed. "I knew I was going to use the dry ice, and I knew I was going to shave my head," he said. "I didn't know exactly what I was going to do in the middle. I just let it happen. And it took care of itself. Everything eventually takes care of itself."

—Kristine Harley

**I Left the Space Bare,
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