

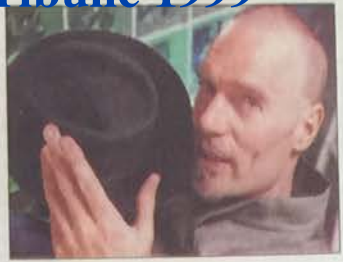
TODAY'S QUOTE

► "The one function that TV news performs very well is that when there is no news we give it to you with the same emphasis as if there were." — *David Brinkley, former newscaster*

StarTribune

## Patrick's Cabaret Review, StarTribune 1999

# Marginally mainstream



After 13 years of providing a safe house for the experimental, the edgy and even the established, Patrick Scully and his alternative cabaret have a big new home.



Patrick Scully has big plans for his cabaret in what was the 1960s' home of the radical Firehouse Theater. The building is at 3010 Minnehaha Av. S.

Star Tribune photos by Ann Heisenfelt

By Mike Steele  
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Patrick's Cabaret is a stealth performance space, swooping under the mainstream radar but leaving a decided impact on the artistic landscape.

The alternative playhouse has just taken off again, this time to spacious new digs opening May 21 at 3010 Minnehaha Av. S. in Minneapolis. Again it skirts art-world fashion: neither downtown nor Uptown but sort of crosstown in the hardscrabble, multicultural, working-class Longfellow neighbor-

hood. Anomalously, the cabaret has become venerable without losing its edge, and founder Patrick Scully intends for it to remain down and dirty.

The cabaret is many things: the Twin Cities' leading alternative-performance space, a breeding ground of over-the-top performance projects, a laboratory for prominent artists to test new directions and a place for the marginalized to give vent to their world views, whether ranting or poetic.

When the cabaret was launched on April 26, 1986, in the St. Stephen's School gym near the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, it was

called simply the Cabaret. It was low-key, down-home, bargain-basement fare. The first revue cost \$8 to produce (going for post cards to Scully's friends, 50 of whom came). The program then consisted of what would become a typical Patrick's lineup: a couple of dancers, a performance poet, a storyteller, a standup comic, a mostly off-key singer, the showing of a Scully film and what he described as "a lesbian Patsy Cline."

**CABARET continues on E2:**

— *New site made possible with funding from a "faerie godmother."*



## Largest contribution bought firehouse where he just moved

What had started as a one-night event for Scully and his friends soon started branching out. Strangers approached him with performance ideas. He never auditioned them; his only requirement, even today, is that performers attend one cabaret show before they do their own, mainly so they can get a grip of its minimal resources.

Scully, 45, presents the cabaret roughly every two weeks, two performances a weekend. Tickets have gone from \$3 to \$8. Expenses have risen, to about \$1,000 for a weekend. Scully used to divide the proceeds between himself and the performers. Today, 100 percent goes to the performers and he supports himself and his cabaret through contributions from individuals and foundations. His largest contribution, an anonymous gift of \$240,000 to buy the old firehouse where he just moved, came from someone he calls "my faerie godmother."

### Home, home on the stage

It is his third headquarters. After three years of one-Saturday-a-month performances at St. Stephens, the cabaret was moved to 506 E. 24th St., a former potato-chip factory and funeral home, where it became even more indelibly associated with Scully, mainly because he lived there.

The cabaret earned national notoriety in 1994, after Walker Art Center booked it to present HIV-positive performance artist Ron Athey, whose routine included making ritual cuts into another man's body. After reports about the event made national news, Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and others used it to condemn the National Endowment for the Arts, less than \$150 of whose money had indirectly supported the performance. The flap left Scully unflappable. "I was happy the Walker knew that Athey — a gay, HIV-positive, radical artist — would be unconditionally supported by me, a gay, HIV-positive, radical artist."

For the most part, however, the cabaret has gone about its business quietly, offering a safe haven for performers ranging from the quirky to the weird to the well-established who wanted to try out new material away from critics and the demands of the box office.

"I don't know how Patrick does it," said choreographer Cathy

Young about that time," he said. "but my attitude was, 'Let's keep on dancing and see what happens.' I needed a place to work, so I talked to the nuns at St. Stephen's and it was decided that I would teach dance to their students in exchange for access to their gym during off-hours."

### Patrick's Cabaret

- **Who:** Grand reopening featuring Martha Boesing, Tara Arlene Immon, Jimmy Jahoda, Lee Orcutt, Carolyn Kolovitz, Sophie Liu and Patrick Scully.
- **Where:** 3010 Minnehaha Av. S., Minneapolis.
- **When:** 8 p.m. May 21 and 22, subject to change.
- **Tickets:** \$6; call 612-721-3595.

Young, "but he has created an atmosphere for exploration, a safe place where the audience is extremely generous yet very sophisticated. Whenever I have a wacky idea, I take it there first to try out."

### Not what he intended

Scully never intended to be an impresario of the wacky. He is a native of Worthington, Minn., who grew up in Roseville, "a product of Catholic schools and conservative Republican parents." His aim was the University of Minnesota and medical school.

Although he admits sheepishly that he was basically a good boy in school, during the Vietnam War era he did write the occasional student-newspaper editorial and organized issue-oriented forums.

At 18, he told his family and friends he was gay. "Back then the biggest issue was to be sexual at all. It didn't seem to make much difference if you were gay or straight. I figured if you're going to jail for stealing a car, you might as well steal the car you want."

He got good grades at the "U," majoring in biology and German, and earned a fellowship to study for a year in Berlin. He changed his mind about being a doctor and ventured into a modern dance class.

"I was late maturing physically," said Scully, who stands 6-foot-8. "I was just starting to catch up. I could be physical but I wasn't competitive or athletic. I enjoyed having a body, but not competing. Dance was great for me."

When he graduated from college in 1976, he decided to continue dancing. He began studying improvisation and worked with other dancers, but also began realizing that he couldn't express certain parts of himself through dance. He began developing a movement-theater hybrid of a kind that came to be known as performance art.

"I found out I was HIV-posi-

### Born of necessity

He had work he wanted to show off, but not enough for a whole concert, so he asked some artist friends if they had work they wanted to show.

Scully's idea of enfranchising artists of color, openly gay artists and anyone else who had been marginalized struck a wider chord. Audiences greeted this new-wave, radicalized vaudeville enthusiastically.

Philip Bither, as Walker Art Center's curator of performing arts, sees Scully's broad effect on the community. "Patrick's was and is absolutely critical," said Bither. "He's been encouraging, nurturing, marginalized voices always need a venue. Patrick's has been an almost subversive force. He's helped change the dialogue."

Audiences were prepared to take what Scully gave them. It could be a jazz vocalist who shrieked like a crow — one of the few acts that still make Scully

wince — or an established artist such as Dorit Cypis, E.E. Balcos, Kim Hines or Linda Shapiro. Singer Leslie Ball performed at Patrick's Cabaret before starting "Balls," her own late-night performance cabaret. Former Walker performance curator John Killacky made his debut both as filmmaker and performance artist at Patrick's.

More than 1,000 artists have performed there over 13 years. "It's a unique place," said Julie Voigt, performing arts program administrator at the Walker, who has been working with Scully since 1989. "It's intimate, non-judgmental, a safe place for often unsafe ideas. You never know what you'll see or who will be there. But you do know it will reflect diverse voices and be worth the time."

### Not up to code

Patrick's was pulling in about 75 people a night until June 1996, when the city discovered that it was unlicensed. The area wasn't zoned for a cabaret but the city told Scully he could operate like an Elk's Lodge, open for members and guests. However, attendance would be limited to 49 people per performance. To get a license for bigger crowds would entail extensive, expensive changes to bring the building up to code.

He tried to raise enough money to buy the building, but soon realized it was beyond him. One night in February 1998, a woman came up to Scully after the show and said she could give him \$150,000 for the purchase. By that time, however, the owners had decided they didn't want to sell.

Then he saw the "for sale" sign on the 1894 firehouse, which in the '60s had been home to the radical Firehouse Theater — about \$100,000 more expensive than the other building. He went to his anonymous donor, "and she said, 'Do you know what happened to the stock market today? There's a huge dip in the Asian economy. Things are terrible. But let's go look at the building.' She loved it, bought it and I signed a 20-year lease with her at \$1 a month," Scully said. "She takes care of the exterior, I'm responsible for inte-

rior renovations. I won the lottery."

Those interior renovations will not make the place push. "I want to keep the intimacy and lack of pretense," said Scully. "I don't want it to become like a formal theater."

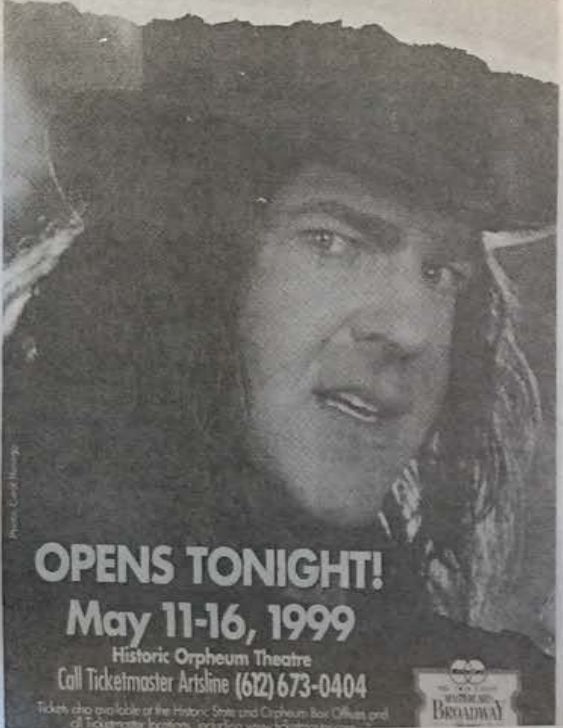
As the avant garde keeps changing and new media emerge, Patrick intends to stay on top of what's happening.

"We were doing performance art before anyone knew what performance art was," Scully said. "We loosened things up. Categories just aren't the same anymore. ... The one thing that hasn't changed is that audiences still have no clue as to what will happen next. You can still see a naked performance artist followed by a classical cellist."

"We're alive and thriving after 13 years," he said, "nurturing a community of artists."


# Jekyll & HYDE

The Broadway Tour



**OPENS TONIGHT!**  
**May 11-16, 1999**  
 Historic Orpheum Theatre  
 Call Ticketmaster Artsline (612) 673-0404


Tickets also available at the Historic State and Orpheum Box Offices and  
 at Ticketmaster locations. [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com)



## "I lost 23 Lbs. and Quit Smoking!"

*"I quit with no withdrawals.  
 My weight loss was automatic.  
 Hypnosis worked where all else failed!"*

**612-832-5001**  
**Southlake Hypnosis**  
 7300 France Ave S., Suite 220, Edina  
*Satisfying Clients Since 1981*



Deborah Crews  
Housewife

## Custom Table Pads

Save 40%-50%  
Off Department Store Prices

**May Special**

**Guaranteed quality and service from America's oldest and largest table pad company.** Free measuring service within the metro area. Guaranteed customer satisfaction. You pay absolutely nothing until you receive your table pads and you are completely satisfied. Unconditional return privilege. 30-year limited warranty.

**651/714-5720 - Ext. 181**  
 OUTSIDE METRO  
**1-800/328-7237 - Ext. 181**



**Sentry TABLE PAD CO.**  
© SENTRY, 1999 SINCE 1911