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# All the world's a stage at Patrick's Cabaret



Patrick Scully is proud of the theatre that bears his name, Patrick's Cabaret at 3010 Minnehaha Ave. (Photo by Terry Faust)

By JAN WILLMS

Patrick Scully is showing off his theatre.

He opens a side door and peers down at his visitors. He leads them on a meandering journey, upstairs and down, through Patrick's Cabaret at 3010 Minnehaha Ave. in Minneapolis.

He points out space that used

to be where horses ate their hay, back in 1895 when the building was first used as a firehouse. He walks by small rooms that used to serve as sleeping areas for the firemen.

He walks by his office, down some stairs, up some stairs, a weaving path. And finally, a door opens to a large, bright room,

with pale yellow walls and red trim, burgundy drapes and a polished floor. This is where the performances are held, with patrons sitting on the floor or on risers in a u-shape surrounding the stage. Off to one side is a room with couches and a piano. This is the theatre lobby.

Scully himself is as colorful as his theatre. He is very tall, and he speaks with a slight, hard-to-pinpoint accent.

He is wearing a greenish-hued shirt and coveralls, colors that accentuate his red hair.

He laughs about the accent. He is from Roseville, after all.

"I speak several languages, and I may sound foreign because I speak with so many people who have English as a second language," he said. "Also, I have lived overseas."

Scully was not born into a performing arts world.

"I came from a family background that embraced the arts almost not at all," he said. "I did try out for some plays in high school, but that is the only artistic direction I took."

Scully attended the University of Minnesota and took his first modern dance class in 1972. He

## Library Board expected to close Roosevelt Library

By IRIC NATHANSON

As the *Messenger* goes to press, we have learned that the Minneapolis Library Board is expected to approve a plan at its October meeting that will close the Roosevelt Library, starting January 1.

The cost-cutting plan will also close the Southeast and Webber Park libraries and reduce service at the new downtown library from six to five days a week.

According to Library Director Kit Hadley, the service cutbacks are the result of a sharp reduction in state financial aid which constitutes a substantial portion of the Library Board's operating budget.

Closing the Roosevelt Library means that a large section of South Minneapolis, east of Chicago Avenue and south of Lake Street, will be left with service at only one branch library, Nokomis, starting January 1. Nokomis will be the only library serving the Nokomis East and Longfellow neighborhoods, until the East Lake Library reopens in mid 2007. Currently the Nokomis Library is open only four days a week for a total of 32 hours.

danced through his college years, graduating in 1976 with a double major in biology and German.

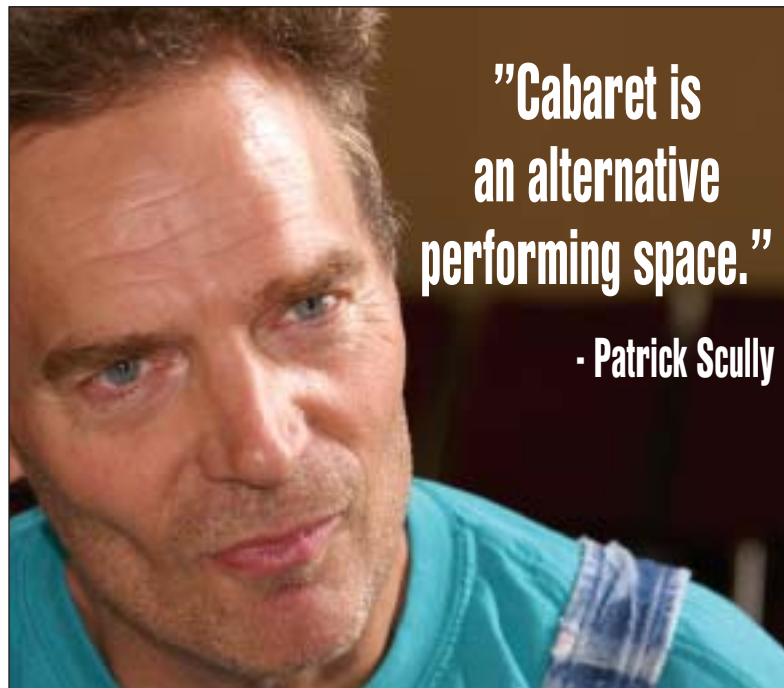
"I decided to keep dancing for awhile after graduation," he said.

In the late 1970s, Scully was part of a collective called "Contactworks." He worked with the group for four years, performing, teaching and doing choreography.

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"Cabaret is  
an alternative  
performing space."

- Patrick Scully



# Patrick's Cabaret

Continued from page 1

His background has been in contact improvisation, a form that comes under the umbrella of modern dance.

"Most modern dance involves standing on your feet and moving through space," Scully said. "Contact improvisation shows how bodies can dance on and with other bodies."

After two years of freelancing, he moved to the East Coast. He lived and danced in Washington, DC, and New York City.

"I studied and performed with Remy Charlip," Scully said. Charlip is a noted dancer and choreographer, as well as a prolific author of children's books. His contemporaries have called him "an artist's artist."

In New York, Scully danced with Charlip at the Brooklyn Academy of Music Next Wave Festival.

Scully moved back to Minnesota, spent some time trying to do his own work.

"In April 1986 the first Patrick's Cabaret happened," Scully said. "We put it on at a gym at St. Stephen's school, and it was there for three years. Then we moved across the freeway to a storefront off Portland, where I was living. We stayed there, but didn't have a theater license and were nomadic for a bit."

Scully said he couldn't buy the building off Portland, and things were difficult for a while. But in 1999 he was able to purchase the building on Minnehaha.

"We went from a good space to a great space," he said. "We have been able to be a not in-

significant part of the transformation of the neighborhood."

The first project he undertook upon obtaining the building was to demolish the interior and build the current dance floor where performances are held.

"Our plan was to work our way up," he said, "and that started to seriously happen a year ago."

Scully said he had been paying close attention to interior spaces.

"Some were functional, but some were inviting and had a sense of character," he said. "It was time for this room to surprise and delight."

A big mask making party was held, and people were invited to come and make masks and help remodel.

They primed and painted, removed plaster from the brick. Scully said some of it was hard to remove, some of it easy.

"We finished the last weekend of September," he said. "Only a few minor details remain."

The recent remodeling was funded in great part by a grant from the McKnight Foundation.

Scully added that Southwest High School in Minneapolis provided the curtains, and the paint was furnished by Valspar, a local company that produces paint.

He said that one-third of the Cabaret budget comes from grants from corporations, foundations or government. "They provide everything from general operating costs to programming that supports emerging artists to funding our high school cabaret program," Scully said.

Patrick's Cabaret shares building space with other writers, a flamenco dance school, arts and cultural organization, martial arts and construction management company.

"It is always good, in a building as old as this, to have a con-

struction company as a tenant," Scully said.

Scully is the founder, artistic director and currently administrative director of Patrick's Cabaret. He generally acts as master of ceremonies for the cabaret acts, as well as performing. He dances, does story telling and the spoken word.

The core programming at Patrick's Cabaret is Friday and Saturday nights, two weekends a month. Each show usually has five



Patrick Scully says Patrick's Cabaret has made a contribution to the transformation of the Longfellow neighborhood. (Photo by Terry Faust)

to seven unrelated acts.

"Anything you might imagine can happen on stage," Scully said. "It can be a film, a comedian, dance, a poet or magician. Anything from burlesque to yodeling."

Scully said he believes cabaret can be defined in three ways.

"For me, cabaret is an alternative performing space, a shared evening that is produced by the artists themselves. This is the Minneapolis, or Twin Cities, or Minnesota definition of cabaret," he said.

"For New York, it's a small club, someone singing a lot of tunes," he said. "And for mainstream culture, it is best represented by the movie Cabaret. All are valid, just different."

Scully said that cabarets started in the 1800s in Europe, with some famous ones such as the Black Cat in Paris.

"Most importantly, it was artists taking production into their own hands, in their own space, rather than performing in an opera house, for example," Scully said.

As well as the cabaret performances, his theatre serves as space for a reading series done

who is highly recommended.

"We don't audition," he said. "I let artists come here and do their most interesting work."

As far as the German and biology double major, Scully said he still uses them to some extent.

"German still definitely has a part in what I do," he said. "I spent a year as an undergraduate in Berlin, about the same time as the movie Cabaret came out. We are doing a show about cabaret artists who performed around the late 1920s. We will do the show here in December, then in Berlin in January, and we will continue to develop it."

He said Patrick's Cabaret is going to hold a fundraiser, with the grand prize a round trip for two to Berlin with Patrick as the guide. Also, an artist from Berlin is being brought here in conjunction with the University of Minnesota.

"The biology connection is less obvious," Scully said. "But it keeps me thinking broadly and looking at the big picture."

As Scully looks around the performing space, he mentions that Patrick's Cabaret is not the first theatre to be housed in this building. In the late 1960s and 70s, it was home to the radical Firehouse Theatre, which later relocated to Chicago.

"Our plan is to continue to grow and evolve," he said. "I dream of having a pergola to cover the parking lot, so it could grow over with vines. We could use that as an outdoor performing space. And we could make the entrance more obvious, and add some bathrooms to the lobby."

Scully's enthusiasm can be heard in his voice. Although he left the Cabaret in 2001 to spend some time pursuing his art in Europe and the United States, he returned in July 2005 as artistic director. While Scully would be the first to admit that all the world's a stage, it's clear that his heart belongs at Patrick's Cabaret.

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