

Artists rally 'round Patrick's Cabaret

By Mike Steele
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It's a tiny space, with barely 100 seats in a rough-and-tumble south Minneapolis neighborhood, yet Patrick's Cabaret has done more than its share for the Twin Cities cultural ecology — so much that its recent closing by city officials has rallied scores of local artists who are determined to get it back up and running. Some of them will participate in a benefit this weekend at St. Stephen's School in Minneapolis.

For seven years, Patrick Scully has opened the space at 506 E. 24th St. two weekends a month to performers of all stripes and abilities. Their stuff could be music, dance, theater, comedy or any number of hyphenated styles stretching the bounds of believability.

They have been mostly artists at the margins: beginners looking for a voice, people of color discovering an artistic



Night Crawlers

voice, gay men and lesbians finding a welcoming outlet. Many quickly passed from the scene, but a significant number have used Patrick's as a springboard to mainstream venues: Derek Hughes, Marcus Young, Heidi Arneson, E.E. Balcos, Joe Chvala, Chris Cinque, Moe Flaherty.

Turn to NIGHT CRAWLERS on E4



Star Tribune photo by Rita Reed

Patrick Scully's cabaret at 506 E. 24th St. has been closed by the fire marshal, and he is trying to raise money to bring it up to code.

Patrick's Cabaret has been safe place for cutting-edge artists

Meanwhile, established artists like Leslie Ball, Linda Shapiro, Ben Kreilkamp, Kim Hines and Laurie Van Wieren have tested new material there. Walker Art Center performing-arts curator John Killacky premiered his video art there. Former Minnesota Arts Alliance director Kim Konikow took her first steps into performance art there. Even Star Tribune TV critic Noel Holston sang folk music there.

On occasion, other institutions have rented Patrick's for edgier attractions, most memorable among them the Walker, which presented the HIV-positive performance artist Ron Athey in 1993 in a performance featuring body piercing that would eventually be denounced in Congress and lead to calls for closing the National Endowment for the Arts.

"We chose Patrick's for that performance because it was an audience used to cutting-edge work," said Killacky, "and the tenor of the space was one of safety for a performance that was hard-edged. It's a seminal germinator of new art. There would be a huge gap without it."

Chance to try out

To former New Dance Ensemble artistic director Linda Shapiro, who branched out into solo performance art at Patrick's after New Dance closed, "It was wonderful for me, the chance to try out new things in a receptive, supportive, intimate atmosphere. It's like doing it in someone's living room" — which it was, in fact, until two years ago when Scully moved his digs to an apartment upstairs.

Shapiro said she loved the audience mix: "suburban ladies out for big-city thrills, old people, other artists, lots of hip kids. . . . And the mix of work, well, it's the most fun anywhere. You can have a folksinger followed by a dancer followed by a blind woman monologist followed by a guy who swallows needles and coughs up

Benefit for Patrick's

- **Who:** Dance drama about African-American/Jewish relations; "Out in St. Louis Park"; storytelling and more.
- **Where:** St. Stephen's School, 2123 Clinton Av. S., Minneapolis.
- **When:** 8 p.m. Friday, Saturday.
- **Tickets:** At least \$6 requested. Call 222-2738.

blood. I'd call it cutting edge folksy — sort of like Garrison Keillor on steroids."

But on June 14, the cabaret was closed by Minneapolis fire marshals because of code violations and the lack of a theater license. Scully said it would cost from \$20,000 to \$30,000 to bring the cabaret up to code — mainly because it needs a new electrical system and handicapped access — which he is reluctant to spend on a space he rents. For about \$50,000 he feels he can make a down payment on the three-story building. "If we can't swing that, then I suppose we'd have to relocate the cabaret," Scully said.

Support from the arts community was quick. Community meetings were held and benefits set up, the latest of them at 8 p.m. today and Saturday at St. Stephen's school, where Scully first began the cabaret a decade ago. (He moved it to its present quarters in 1989.)

The benefit will feature the performers scheduled to perform at the cabaret. Typically, admission is "at least \$6 requested." If you can pay more, do so, because performers typically split the gate with Scully, 50-50.

Personality plus

Much of the success of the cabaret has to do with Scully, a tall, phlegmatic but outspoken dancer and performer, an HIV-positive gay activist and a writer.

Scully does it all on an annual budget of about \$60,000, which means he has to keep costs down and the organization lean. He recently got \$15,000 to administer the cabaret; it was his first official salary.

"I've worked hard to create an atmosphere of perception rather than judgment," he said. "I want a place where you can really see the work and relate it to the performer." He also wants the cabaret to be vital to both the arts community and the neighborhood. To that end, he and his friends have raised about \$1,000 so far, and other benefits are coming up Aug. 9 and 10 at Spirit of the Lakes Church, Aug. 11 at the New Riverside and Blue Moon cafes, Aug. 18 and 15 at the Bryant-Lake Bowl, and Sept. 27 and 28 at the Playwrights' Center.

Last call

A beer tasting festival to benefit the National Multiple Sclerosis Society is taking place from 6-9 p.m., today at International Market Square. \$15. 870-1500. For those looking for a spicier happy hour, check out **Tandoor Tuesdays**, starting Tuesday and running through mid-August at Tandoor Restaurant, 8062 Morgan Circle, Bloomington. From 5-6:30 p.m., enjoy Indian bread, Indian beers and mango ice-cream shakes.

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