

Scully leaves Cabaret, story, Pulse, 2001

Scully ends 'elegant dance' of emcee

by Sara Dick

Stay calm, everyone. It's not a crisis—at least not according to Patrick Scully. After 15 years of hosting and curating Patrick's Cabaret, Scully, 47, has decided to retire.

"There is a point in midlife where you realize it's more about how much time is left than about what you've accomplished so far," he said.

Scully has a long list of accomplishments to contemplate if he wanted to.

A few years ago Scully attended a workshop on "Founder's Syndrome" at Resources and Counseling for the Arts. That started him thinking about how to leave without traumatizing the Cabaret. Scully says he and the other Cabaret staff members developed a strategic plan, strengthened their board of directors, and wrote job descriptions for everyone—including Scully's position as artistic director.

"It's about replacing a position rather than replacing someone who was the heart and lungs of an organization," Scully said.

"We've been running things for a while, so we think we can keep right on doing it," said Kristine Smith, executive director of Patrick's Cabaret.

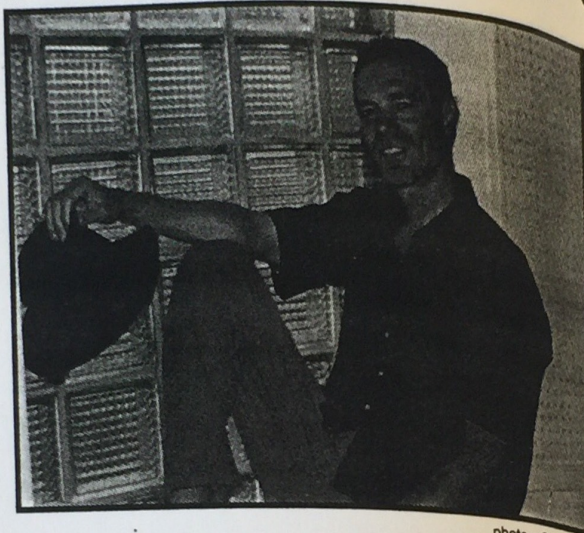
She is one of three behind-the-scenes staff members who are the administrative engine of Patrick's vision.

So it'll be no big deal to find a new artistic director? "Emceeing is one of those things that looks like it would be like walking on a sidewalk, but it's a very intricate dance," Smith said. The board considered closing their doors, but decided that the Cabaret could continue without Scully.

In July the Cabaret staff—minus Scully—hosted a community meeting after Scully announced his retirement. Supporters and 36 artists showed to affirm that the Cabaret matters.

More than generating ideas for something new, Smith said, those attending wanted assurance that the Cabaret would continue on its current path.

"Patrick's [Cabaret] is vital to the artistic food chain in Minneapolis," one attendee said, said Smith.



photo—Sara Dick

Patrick Scully takes a time out from 15 years as artistic director and host of Patrick's Cabaret. Scully leaves the Cabaret in mid-September and a search committee will begin its task of finding a replacement.

Feeding artists is what Scully set out to do. He has paid Cabaret performers from the beginning to demonstrate his commitment to local artistic development. Being a paid artistic director allows him to spend

time in communities where artists might not take the initiative to call and ask for a slot in a show.

He wants artists who are queer, minority or disabled to feel welcome at the Cabaret. He hopes that other

cabarets will follow his lead—now that there are others.

The more the merrier has been Scully's approach to the creation of other cabarets in the Twin Cities.

Eve Blackwell, host of the Wild Yam Cabaret in St. Paul, said Scully has been very generous in offering support and advice to her new cabaret. She describes Scully's as "the granddaddy of cabarets in the Twin Cities—or maybe the archangel." Blackwell shares Scully's desire to lure people away from their televisions and into local cultural works.

At Patrick's Cabaret, local culture still feels like it's happening in Scully's home, as it did for the 10 years artists performed in Scully's storefront apartment.

Smith said, "It's his willingness to be open and vulnerable that creates this warm, living-room environment."

Laurie Van Wieren performed in the first cabaret Scully hosted in 1986, and has performed many times in the intervening years. Participating in Patrick's Cabaret has "helped me develop my work, and it also keeps me part of the community of a variety of artists," Van Wieren said.

Though she thinks it'll be "weird" for someone else to host the Cabaret, she's optimistic that Scully has pointed the way and someone else will be able to do the job.

After the Aug. 31 closing date, a five-member search committee will start evaluating applicants for the position—a daunting task, given Scully's status as founder of the Cabaret.

Scully's last night as emcee will

be Sept. 15. A special farewell performance could happen, he said.

In early fall, the Cabaret will host a more formal farewell event for long-term supporters and funders.

"As a performer, I'm an improviser," said Scully. After leaving the Cabaret on Oct. 1, he plans to give himself plenty of unstructured time to figure out what's next.

"I know that it's going to be a delicious landing, but [I] have no idea how it's going to happen," Scully said. It is as yet unknown what he will add to the Twin Cities performance scene in the leap.