

Scully leaves Cabaret, story, Star Tribune, 2001

Life is a cabaret, but Minneapolis artist moving on

After 16 years on cutting edge, Patrick Scully headed for exit

By Rohan Preston
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After almost 16 years hosting and performing at his eponymous south Minneapolis cabaret — sometimes in the nude — Patrick Scully is stepping down. The Twin Cities' most colorful performance-art impresario, known as both a presenter of cutting-edge works and for his own edgy shows, said that he will pursue other activities when he leaves the cabaret Oct. 1.

A committee, headed by board chairman Kevin Winge, will find a replacement.

"I'm happiest working with other people to create something new that doesn't exist yet," Scully said. "But once something is up, it's challenging to keep managing it. It's time to move on."

Scully, 47, 6 feet 8 and HIV-positive, said that his health is not a factor. "My T-cell count is 700 and my viral load is undetectable."

The cabaret, just off Lake Street in south Minneapolis, has local and national support as a subterranean testing ground for the arts.

"Patrick's is one of the most important art spaces in the whole country," performer Tim Miller said before an April show there.

Scully founded his namesake cabaret while teaching at St. Stephen's School in Minneapolis. He hosted performances in the school's gym, developing a reputation for unpredictability. For example, performance poet David Lindahl dropped pots of geraniums 20 feet from the edge of the stage to underscore his work.

After three years, Scully quit teaching and moved the cabaret into a south Minneapolis storefront that doubled as his home. He found he could do more.

For the next decade that Patrick's existed in the three-story walk-up on 24th Street in the shadow of Interstate Hwy. 35W, he hosted any number of daring works, including a live version of Isaac Julien's movie, "Look-



File photo

Patrick Scully founded his cabaret while working as a teacher and says, "I'm happiest working with other people to create something new."

ing for Langston."

Scully also hosted a performance piece by Poonie Dodson, a former member of the Arnie Zane/Bill T. Jones dance company. His 1993 show, while he was ravaged by AIDS, was a poignant piece from a black expatriate living in France and learning about the Rodney King episode.

"It was stunning to have an artist of his talent and expressiveness in a room that small being willing to be vulnerable," Scully said.

The cabaret's most famous show was a co-production with the Walker Art Center. It featured the HIV-positive performance artist Ron Athey. The show, which involved bloody skin cuts, ignited a national firestorm around the National Endowment for the Arts and government funding for the arts.

Two years ago, the theater, backed by an anonymous patron, moved into its current 10,000-square-foot space. It has six part-time employees, a budget of \$150,000 to \$200,000 and presents about 70 shows annually in an unjuried, interdisciplinary mix of dance, theater, music, spoken word, film and video.

"Although we've had some big names come through, our primary role has been as a stage for local artists," Scully said. "I'm sure that will continue."

— Staff writer Claude Peck contributed to this report.

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