



42nd National Conference and Theatre Tour

July 15-18, 2018 ✦ Austin, TX

TOOLS & TECHNIQUES: 2nd Segment

Monday, July 16, 2018

2:00 - 3:15 PM

(All sessions will only be offered once.)

Last Updated: 6/11/18

At the Sheraton Austin Hotel at the Capitol

See presenter biographies following session descriptions

A Former Oil Boomtown Goes MAD for the Arts

This session will discuss how, through the renovation and adaptive reuse of six historic structures, including the historic Rialto Theatre, a rural hub town of 18,500 is getting its groove back. The once thriving oil boomtown of El Dorado, Arkansas, has a rich history, unique architecture, and a well-established arts and entertainment community. The town is a major urban center for the surrounding eight counties and is the home to several corporate headquarters, yet community leaders noticed residents leaving town to find quality culture and entertainment. In an effort to attract employees to the business district, revitalize the economy, and slow population decline, the city worked with the El Dorado Festival and Events and other local arts organizations to connect and leverage several existing cultural assets through new construction and historic renovation. The new Murphy Arts District (MAD) provides a multi-venue, multi-purpose anchor and regional draw to satisfy the local community's needs and desires for culture and entertainment. This session will discuss how, through adaptive re-use, the unique identity of El Dorado is preserved while creating a regional draw and anchor to stimulate economic revitalization. In creating the Murphy Arts District, the city maintains the historic streetscape and restores pedestrian connections. The project will attract new residents and retain the existing population, all while creating an inviting environment for new attractions, retail, lodging, and restaurants to move in. Most importantly, MAD boosts community morale and makes people proud of their city and the history it has endured.

Presenters: **Terry Stewart**, Chairman and CEO, El Dorado Festivals & Events, El Dorado, AR; and **Brant Miller, RA, LEED AP**, Senior Associate, DLR Group | Westlake Reed Leskosky, Cleveland, OH

Recreating and Replacing Historical Textiles Found in Theatrical Venues

The most prominent visual element of any theatre is the main curtain and proscenium decoration. The renovation of older venues often requires the replacement of such textiles that were constructed decades earlier, using materials and techniques no longer available. Tom Sullivan, Director of Special Projects at Rose Brand, will share his expertise and experience solving this vexing restoration challenge: how to replace historical textiles without sacrificing the original design intention. From case studies of relevant projects, Sullivan will illustrate the solutions available to architects, theatre owners and restoration managers seeking to replace these gorgeous yet rotting drapery and fabric



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constructions. Special emphasis will be placed on recreating traditional textile designs and decorative elements using materials that meet modern fire codes and rigging requirements.

Presenter: Tom Sullivan, Director of Special Projects, Rose Brand, Secaucus, NJ

Will Work for Boos: Monetizing & Marketing Your Theatre Ghosts

In 2017, Americans spent a record \$9.1 billion (with a B) on Halloween. Market share for horror movies more than doubled. Season 2 of Stranger Things drew 15 million viewers in three days, and a slew of new paranormal shows – from Haunted Towns to Kindred Spirits – debuted on cable. But the tradition of telling stories of the spirit world dates back nearly as far as the spoken word itself, and those stories almost inevitably highlight the history of the place from which they originate. As historic theatre operators, we are masters at the art of balancing engaging, relevant entertainment within the context of institution and antiquity. And nothing equals trending + tradition quite like a ghost tour! In this session, attendees will learn how Tampa Theatre earned its reputation as “one of the most haunted buildings in Tampa”. Learn from their “Ghost Host” how the 1926 movie palace partnered with local paranormal investigators to package its ghost stories into sellout tours, late night paranormal experiences, and plenty of press. No ghosts? No problem! EVERY historic venue has stories, and sometimes all it takes is some smoke and mirrors to bring them to life. Learn from one of the haunted attraction industry’s top creative minds how you can use theatrical elements to create an experience that draws from the building’s history to fictionalize a spooktacular backstory. Learn how to collect and corroborate your theatre’s spirited stories, who the best storyteller will be your organization, and why partnering with the right experts will make your (after)life so much easier.

Presenters: Jill Witecki, Director of Marketing and Community Relations, Tampa Theatre, Tampa, FL, and Scott Swenson, Founder, Scott Swenson Creative Development, LLC, Tampa, FL

Zero to Two Million in 15 years: You Can Survive a Capital Campaign

We previously presented "Zero to a Million" during the LHAT conference in New York. The Palace Theatre in Georgetown, TX has currently grown to a budget of over \$2 million and we are in the final stages of a capital campaign to build a \$4 million dollar education center in Georgetown. This presentation will address the development of community financial support of a local historic theatre, including: how to develop community support through a solid stewardship program and production excellence; when and how to determine if your organization is ready for a capital campaign; and how to handle the loss of operational donations as they are given to the capital campaign instead. Attendees will leave with a better understanding of the relevant issues historic theatres face while growing a base of patron support; how to set realistic goals to bring positive cash flow to your theatre; the various indicators that inform a theatre’s management staff and board what is necessary to support a successful capital campaign; fiduciary pitfalls organization might encounter; and how to measure for success.

Presenters: Mary Ellen Butler, Artistic Director, and Arturo Rodriguez, Board President, Georgetown Palace Theatre, Georgetown, TX



Using Data-Driven Decision Making for Improved Customer Experience

When developing a strategy to improve the customer experience, managers often only have their own perceptions and anecdotal information to guide them. But what happens when you have real data to guide decision making affecting the customer experience? There is clarity in customer perception, expectation, and priority, and these insights are a paradigm for influencing real change in the customer experience. The customer experience plays a critical role in the overall success of a theatre - from ticket sales, to social media chatter, to donations. This presentation will demonstrate how using data can help to form strategies that are effective and prioritized for a maximum use of resources. The information will be presented through a case study presentation of the Tennessee Theatre's use of patron surveys for data collection and the ways in which we have utilized this information to address issues or form strategies to improve our customer experience. The expected outcomes of this session are: an understanding of how to mine data for customer experience issues, an understanding of how prioritizing feedback can maximize resources, an understanding of how customer experience affects overall success of the theatre, and why paying attention is important.

Presenter: **Lila Honaker**, Director of Marketing & Outreach, Historic Tennessee Theatre, Knoxville, TN

Presenter Biographies

Mary Ellen Butler became the artistic director of the Georgetown Palace Theatre 15 years ago. She has been involved with theater management for over 40 years, both in Europe and various locations in the United States. Through her management and team building skills she spearheaded the development of the historic theater from a position of eminent bankruptcy to its current financial and critical success. She was elected Georgetown's "Woman of the Year" in 2015.

Lila Honaker has been working in the entertainment industry for nearly 15 years in the music, performing arts, and television sectors. In her current role at the Tennessee Theatre, she is responsible for overseeing the Tennessee Theatre brand, creating awareness for the non-profit organization, fundraising through donations, grants and sponsorships, and developing special events, educational programming, and community outreach and partnerships. Lila has a background as a performer, is a member of Tennesseans for the Arts and Americans for the Arts, and volunteers with Knoxville organizations to present marketing solutions sessions to emerging nonprofits and small businesses.

Brant Miller, RA, LEED AP was born and raised in Akron, Ohio. He earned his Masters of Architecture and MBA from Kent State University. He currently works as a designer and an architect at DLR Group | Westlake Reed Leskosky in Cleveland. He served as the project architect for the Murphy Arts District and refers to it as one of his most fulfilling projects.



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Arturo Rodriguez has started his third year as the Palace Theatre board president. He had spent the previous 15 years as a board member and the board lawyer. His leadership has positively impacted board and staff development, patron stewardship, and the capitol campaign. His law firm represents the civil needs of the Georgetown government and he is a valued community leader. He and his family are active members of the community at large.

Terry Stewart was born and raised in Daphne, Alabama. He earned 4 degrees from Rutgers and Cornell and currently is the Chairman/CEO of El Dorado Festivals & Events in El Dorado, Arkansas. Previously, he was the President/CEO of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio, as well as the President/COO of Marvel Entertainment in New York City, where he was recognized as the CNBC Marketing Executive of the year.

Tom Sullivan has worked for more than 30 years in theatre production and stage craft. Before joining Rose Brand 8 years ago, Tom spent a decade at The Metropolitan Opera designing and building scenery. Later at Hudson Scenic in New York City he managed the engineering department, designing solutions for hundreds of Broadway productions, commercials and industrials. Tom is an adjunct Professor of Stage Craft at SUNY Purchase and holds an MFA from Yale School of Drama.

Scott Swenson for more than 30 years, Scott has been bringing stories to life as a Writer, Director, Producer and Performer for theme parks, consumer events, live theater and television. His 21-year career with SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment included being part of the original development team for the “Howl-O-Scream” event at Busch Gardens Tampa. In 2014, Scott formed Scott Swenson Creative Development LLC, working as a creative consultant to write live shows, create and implement themed festivals, and develop communication-based training classes. He is the Writer and Creative Director for “The Vault of Souls,” an historically based atmospheric theatre piece in Tampa’s 1923 Exchange National Bank building; a regular contributor to *The Haunt Journal* magazine; and host of the haunt how-to podcast, “A Scott in the Dark.” In 2017, he was recognized by The Haunted Attraction Association for his “...unprecedented investment and support for the haunted attraction industry.” Scott and his co-presenter, Jill Witecki, have presented together countless times since 2004, and have performed together as part of Tampa’s WIT Improv troupe for the past 12 years.

Jill Witecki blame it on too much *Scooby-Doo* as a kid, but Jill has been fascinated with ghosts, ghoulies and goblins ever since she can remember. While cutting her teeth as a cub reporter at *The Tampa Tribune* in 2003, she was cast as a scare-actor at Busch Gardens Tampa’s “Howl-O-Scream” event, where she met and began working with co-presenter Scott Swenson. Soon after, she joined the theme park’s Media Relations team full-time and became the Howl-O-Scream Marketing Manager. In 2012, Jill came to Tampa Theatre as the historic movie palace’s Director of Marketing & Community Relations, where she immediately set about creating the “A Nightmare on Franklin Street” Halloween classic movie series and building the 91-year-old landmark’s haunted reputation into a profitable series of programs. She is widely regarded as the keeper of Tampa Theatre’s paranormal past, and her late-night ghost tours have become a popular item at fellow non-profit’s fundraising auctions.