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Three Thespians Walk in to a Barn

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In

THEATER ARTS

By

Sarai Gallegos

June 2015

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Abstract- Three Thespians Walk Into a Barn

By Sarai Gallegos

This research explores how a theater company can be used for entertainment purposes, but more importantly as a catalyst for community and skill building. I am pulling from my experience as managing director of BarnStorm, a completely student run theater company on the UC Santa Cruz campus, to explore the limitations and opportunities presented in poor theater.
Three Thespians Walk Into a Barn

An Introduction

For the past eight months, I had the opportunity of being the managing director of BarnStorm, a graduate student run theater company at the University of California, Santa Cruz campus. BarnStorm is usually run by an artistic director and managing director, like a professional theater company. This year, however, we also have a production manager. BarnStorm runs its seasons along with the quarter system, taking directing and show proposals every ten weeks. The company of designers, directors, and actors change with the quarter system; under the university and faculty supervision, participation in BarnStorm productions counts as a class. As managing director, I am in charge of scheduling, planning, and ensuring everyone in the company is on task. As managing director of a student based theater company, I constantly try to stay in touch with what the students need from me as a teaching assistant. I want to properly transition the new members into our university’s theater community. This year I have explored ways we as a theater company can ensure our students a space where they can experiment with the type of theater they want to direct, but also the type of theater BarnStorm wants to produce.

With my colleagues, artistic director Jen Schuler and production manager Paul Rossi, the BarnStorm theater company and The Barn Theater as a space are
analyzed under the theoretical lens of poor theater practitioners such as Jerzy Grotowski and Teatro Campesino. BarnStorm as a theater company often considers Polish theater director Grotowski’s ideology to strip theater down to the bare minimum because the budget requires some shows to do so. Our company often transforms Grotowski’s ideal of minimalism into a Rasquachismo style similar to Teatro Campesino. We employ the underdog perspective with a survivalist attitude. Throughout the process, the company keeps Grotowski’s enthusiasm for minimalism while making poverty an ideal.

The productions put on as much as possible with the limited amount of resources. The Barn Theater space, often neglected in the past, is now explored and restructured with the importance Marvin Carlson placed on theater as an architecture of experience. The entire theater from the dirt floor parking lot to the wooden pillars coming out from the center of the stage sends out a certain message. The theater may look quaint compared to the Guthrie Theater, but our company has the work ethic and dedication of our poverty theater predecessors such as Teatro Campesino who performed their political theater to field workers in the back of pick-up trucks. I experienced the strengths and weaknesses of a minimalist theater: having the same backdrop for every show (the wooden walls), outdated technical equipment, the gusto of students willing to make up for a lack of budget, and the inspirational hard-work people are willing to put into a new works festival. BarnStorm directors get one year running the company and I hope to create starting
points for the company to thrive and grow in the years to come. Theater played a
dire part in my development as a child, as an undergraduate, and now as an
emerging artist.

I grew up in and around South El Monte, CA which according to the 2010
United States Census, had a population consisting of 84.9% of Hispanic or Latinos.
From my personal experience, most of that population is either first generation
American or immigrants to the United States. My high school consisted of students
who frequently involved themselves in gang affiliated activities and acts of violence.
I did not fit in with this crowd and sought solace in theater.

This path eventually led me to the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC)
where I studied theater with an emphasis in acting. During this time, I dabbled in
several management positions. I quickly became a house manager for UCSC’s Arts
Division and then started working for professional companies like Shakespeare Santa
Cruz. I am currently an intern for The Jewel Theater Company where I work various
Front of House positions. I was accepted into UCSC’s Masters program and stayed to
enhance and expand the knowledge I gained as an undergraduate. What drew me to
the program was not offered to undergraduates. BarnStorm gives graduate students
the privilege to run an actual theater company with a budget and an eager pool of
student theater practitioners to work with.
The university offered ample chances to explore various aspects of theater. I worked in the costume and prop departments for a couple of quarters but I found acting and management to be my calling. I wanted to engage the theater management experience I gained as an undergraduate on a larger scale. I decided to apply to be one of the BarnStorm directors. BarnStorm holds a special place in my heart because it was my first introduction to theater at the university, as it continues to be for many. I wanted to help mold the future of our department.

Other than my own sentimental reasons for wanting to run the Barn, I saw the company struggle. It gained a sort of stigma over the years and I felt I had the qualities and drive to change that. The quality of the productions and space itself is unlike any theater I have experienced before. BarnStorm dances on the brink of being a poor theater with a found space and I wished to explore what possibilities (and hindrances) that entailed.

What Is BarnStorm?

“BarnStorm creates opportunities for the developing artist to reclaim theatre and the theatrical process. Our aim is to integrate our perspectives into the political, social, cultural and academic climate of the UCSC campus and community. We are devoted to fostering new works of art and giving artists and audiences alike opportunities for exchange through a theatrical setting.” This is the current
BarnStorm written at the top of paperwork and is the motto that has been passed down for years. As we say at the beginning of every BarnStorm show, we are a student run, student directed, student acted, student everything theater company on campus (the only one as far as we know). The theater company gets funding from the university via having our productions count as a class. Our current mission statement for the class is:

“The purpose of this class is to provide a space for students to gain practical, intensive experience working in a theatre company. We welcome artists of all kinds, at all levels of experience: performers, directors, writers, designers, technicians, and all who desire to learn, grow, and to build a strong community through working in the theatre. We strive to produce stimulating and fulfilling professional-level work in a supportive yet challenging academic environment. Our hope is that here, students will be supported with the resources to create art about which they are passionate, and thus will be motivated and armed with the tools to continue their craft beyond The Barn.”

Jen, Paul, and I run BarnStorm as a theater company with a mixture of academic assignments. After auditions and casting, the students become company members by enrolling in the class. It is an excellent learning experience because company members are forced to work in different departments of theater. In addition to being just an actor in one of the productions, BarnStorm gives students the opportunity to try out costume design, light design, stage management and any
other part of theater students may be curious about. We require each company member to have their main job (where most of their time and effort for the company will be going to) in addition to two or three secondary jobs. This is the only class outline we experienced as undergraduates. We kept this model because working on other shows is an excellent way to build community. The theater department at our university is very much its own community and being a new comer to this tightly knit group (as many BarnStormers tend to be) can be overwhelming. In her final reflection paper, one of our students who experienced BarnStorm for the first time winter quarter stated “I was told it was a good place to get experience… I was extremely nervous because I had no idea what I was getting myself into. However, I quickly caught on and realized how great the people are and how fantastic the program is.”

Our goal is not only to introduce students to other people in the department, but also to develop an appreciation to other art forms in the theater department. Maybe after working as a costume designer or a run crew member, our students will respect those in that field when they work on other shows.

Our introduction to the theater department is an interesting experience because the space students work in is extremely unique and unlike what they will experience on “The Hill”. The Hill is where the university department shows are held, often directed and mentored by professors. The theater spaces on The Hill are more like the Guthrie type of theater space compared to the Barn.
The performance space for BarnStorm is a barn that was once owned by the Cowell family, who owned the UCSC property. It was converted into a theater from a working barn in 1968. According to UCSC website, it was the first theater on campus. What makes the space so magical is that the theater is built around the barn structure, not the other way around. This means the audience is seated in an “L” structure around the stage. The theater’s quirks include pillars erupting from the middle of the stage and audience because they hold the building up. This requires specific type of blocking because the sight lines are so testy. Because the space is so strange, it brings an element of found space to each performance. Found space is a performance in a space that was not intended for performance purposes. The rustic feel adds a very unique quality to the shows, particularly because they are produced on such a low budget.

Our theater company receives a budget for the entire year, usually based on the years prior to ours. The budget for this year was $5250. We had to split this between concessions, designers, and supplies needed for the various support calls. Jen, Paul, and I wanted to split these as fairly as possible, especially considering that we did not know the shows we would be performing the entire year, and the fact that spring quarter is a festival of multiple new works. The budgets we give designers range around $200. This brings us to the brink of the poor theater spectrum, often stripping down to basic necessities for a show. BarnStorm tries to take a Grotowskian approach and make “poverty an ideal, his actors have given up
everything except their own bodies; they have the human instrument” (Brook 60).

BarnStorm embraces the poor theater ideal out of necessity. The company has outdated equipment but we incorporate limited scenic elements and a complicated (due to the way the space layout) light plot in order to provide designers with an outlet. We try to present our position of poverty as an opportunity to challenge our designers and directors as opposed to limiting them. Our company gives them a chance to experiment with limited resources that they won’t encounter in any of the other theater spaces on campus. What better place to experiment and challenge yourself than a poor theater in a barn?

The Barn as a Space.

Marvin Carlson often speaks of the importance of the theater as a space. I feel the Barn Theater has not been tended to with care which Jen, Paul and I wanted to change because “the way an audience experiences and interprets a play, we now recognize is by no means governed solely by what happens on the stage. The entire theater, its audience arrangements, its other public spaces, its physical appearance, even its location within a city are all important elements of the process by which an audience makes meaning of its experience.” (Carlson 2). Running The Barn (the theater space) this year, we decided to make the appearance of the space one of our priorities.
In the past the backstage area has been sloppy, making actors and others backstage treat it with less respect. The same applied to the lobby and audience seating areas. We made our ushers clean after every show and decided to add some pizazz to the areas that our audiences could theoretically hang out. We could not reconstruct the design of the Barn itself, or the sewage smell that constantly occurs right outside, so we decided to bring something that would help create community. If audiences felt they were part of a community, they would enjoy their experience and in return, these audiences would come back and support the rest of our productions. Consequently, we added our “BarnChow” food stand at our front entrance lobby and so far it has been fairly successful, we are excited to see how the warm weather in spring effects our sales during Chautauqua, our student new works festival.

The Barn has a very distinct feel to it and we wanted to continue this aesthetic with our new food stand. My colleagues brilliantly decided to use two barrels taking up space downstairs (people enjoy giving our theater company “presents”) with a board connecting the two wooden barrels to create a stand. It worked perfectly with the ambiance. The new additions paired with the production posters of past BarnStorm performances gave the space pop and more attention. I noticed more bus drivers in our audience this past year than at other BarnStorm shows and had more non-student audience members ask me questions about upcoming productions when I was working the box office.
Marvin Carlson discusses in his book *Places of Performance* how “often a particularly favored locale was the market place, which like the encompassing city could be seen as a symbol of the stage upon which Everyman played his earthly role” which fit our performance space perfectly because a barn is the modern day equivalent to the “average joe” but also can relate to those in poverty. Teatro Campesino, a theatrical troupe founded by Cesar Chavez and Luis Valdez to help unionize farmworkers is now a theater company that performs in a rustic feeling building. El Teatro Campesino would go out into the fields and perform for the pickers in the agricultural field. With BarnStorm, we are attempting something similar by bringing the poor theater to our poor patrons (the students). We see the theater as a place “well served by a space redolent of those vernacular and contemporary concerns” (Carlson 19).

**The Barn as Poor Theater.**

BarnStorm is essentially a poor black box theater (though more barn wood than actually black) where students can spend free time between classes, jobs, and homework to create art within large limitations (ie: no sets can be built, most costumes will have to be pulled from stock, etc). “Most experimental products cannot do what they want because outside conditions are too heavily loaded against them. They have scratch casts, rehearsal time eaten into by the need to earn their living, inadequate sets, costumes, lights, etc.” but most importantly, “Poverty is their
complaint and their excuse” (Brook 60). Our students are excellent at working with the little money BarnStorm has to offer, though sometimes with a struggle. It is this struggle of poverty that brings the BarnStorm community together to work feverously. We are not the first company to do so either.

Peter Brook in The Empty Space mentions theater companies who live and work together. In addition to creating art, they make love, produce children, act, invent plays, do physical and spiritual exercises, share and discuss everything that comes their way. Above all, they are a community (Brook 62). This perfectly describes the type of environment the theater department lives in. It is because of this closeness that the students are able to produce the level of work they do. For many of them, the introduction to this community is BarnStorm.

Though the budget for BarnStorm is small, the quality of the shows are not. There is a power behind the rawness of the production. Because the costumes are often something the actor owns and is contributing to the design, an audience member is given the opportunity to relate more immediately to the characters because the actor’s appearance is more relatable. The theater is small enough, fitting about 140, that intimacy is created between the stage and its actors with the audience. It is this relationship that contributes to performances being so powerful. It is this intimacy that makes theater so exciting and different from film.

When Teatro Campesino first started, it had “an awareness within...of being an underdog’s or poor person’s theatrical form” which is something our theater
company shares (Broyles-Gonzalez 165). Similar to Teatro Campesino when they were first starting out, we are “motivated primarily by a desire to better the lives of [our] audiences, the ensemble typically perform[s] without giving much thought to material gain” (Broyles-Gonzalez 166). BarnStorm takes this a step further because we desire to change the lives of company members. We let them pick what shows are going to be a part of the season, give improv and sketch comedy teams a space to perform in and although these shows are free and we do not normally receive any monetary gain, we allow them a tiny budget.

In her book El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement, Yolanda Broyles-Gonzalez “look[s] at the broader sociocultural and political context articulated through a living relationship with audiences” which The Barn has started to do in the sense that the shows proposed for the space tend to focus on sociocultural and political content for our modern day audience. However, the current audience of the shows tend to be other UCSC students, so a bit of preaching to the choir is done (Broyles-Gonzalez 168).

One of my goals for BarnStorm is to expand its community. These powers of poor theater should be utilized to create great theater for everyone, not just students. Theater is often referred to as a dying art form and I believe it wouldn’t be if it were exposed to more communities. Growing up in South El Monte I never saw a theatrical production. The city and its occupants are very poor and the high school I attended barely had a stage. Theater was not a priority because it wouldn’t thrive in
our poor community. Ticket prices are usually too high. Poor people can afford to see a movie but they would not be able to afford a Broadway production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*. Even a ticket here in the Bay Area can range around $40 each. For a family on a budget, this doesn’t seem like a reasonable expense. For a current student on a budget this sometimes cannot be argued as a reasonable expense. It is not that these people of poverty cannot appreciate good theater or good acting. In my community, people constantly attend the movie theater: the cinema is more accessible because the ticket prices are more affordable.

If theater often wasn’t so expensive it could branch out into more diverse communities and the type of people portrayed on stage might change. Theater is repeatedly viewed as a dying art form and I believe one of the reasons that is because youth is not exposed to it as much as they should be. Unfortunately, my hometown does not have a theatre which is a shame because benefits of having a theater in a community like mine would be immense. I know a lot of students who gained presentational skills, developed attention to detail, and learned an excellent work ethic because they participated in theater. Not only would personal attributes be gained but it is an excellent way to keep youth in a typically violent community “off the streets”.

As an undergraduate at UCSC I participated in a program called Arts Bridge where I went to an elementary school and taught theater to students in the 8th
grade a couple of days a week through-out the quarter. In the span of a little over 10 weeks I viewed students who’d never performed gain the self-confidence to perform in front a large group of parents at their Open House at school. Theater gave most of these children the discipline to learn lines, take on a character, and do exercises with me that often made them feel silly. In addition to skill building, I witnessed the making of expressional art.

I teach small workshops at my old high school whenever I visit during school breaks. During these workshops I lead the drama class through devised piece building. They create the script themselves during these workshops and perform them to open audiences at the end of the quarter. The topics students cover in their devised pieces are incredibly powerful. I set out to teach students from a predominantly poor community that theater can flourish without a lavish budget. This form of theater allows an outlet to express and conquer the struggles this age group feel are important; they are able to communicate these issues with their parents through the performance, and most seem to appreciate the process and end result.

Theater is an opportunity to put magic onstage. I feel it is dire to share this magic with people who have not yet experienced it. This year BarnStorm produced Peter Pan, familiar for many people and a play people of all ages enjoy. I decided to use this opportunity to invite the community of Santa Cruz to our barn. My
internship at The Jewel Theatre Company exposed me to a whole community of non-student theater guests.

I want BarnStorm to embody Teatro Campesino’s attitude of “theater [as] the voice of the barrios, of the community, of the downtrodden, the humble, the rasquachi.” (Broyles-Gonzalez 166). It felt that we only embodied a specific voice of our barrio. As great as the department community is, I wanted to expand the theater bubble of UC Santa Cruz and felt Peter Pan could help us do that. I made flyers and created a ticket special for the matinees where children were admitted for free, and adults gained admission at discounted prices. They also met the cast afterwards to take pictures and sign programs. I researched elementary schools in the city of Santa Cruz and targeted those located in or near areas that felt similar to South El Monte. With vigor and enthusiasm I sent emails to all the elementary schools and asked if I could distribute the flyers to the classrooms. I needed to know how many to print out and offered to separate the flyers by classroom. I was never sent a reply. I decided to print out the flyers and take them to the schools myself. I learned from one of the secretaries that there is a process that we would need to follow through the district. There had never been any mention of community distribution in the BarnStorm handbook or paperwork, so I asked the secretaries of the schools if I could leave flyers in the front office so that parents would hopefully notice them and spread the word. I received a sparse amount of RSVPs and decided to pass out flyers myself downtown. It created excellent conversations; many
parents said they would spread the word, children seemed enthused, and I introduced many community members to BarnStorm.

As a result of the outreach, *Peter Pan* had the most non-student audience members I have witnessed in my five years here. Our Facebook page gained more views, more likes, and we received countless amounts of e-mails and Facebook messages asking about the information on our outdated and locked website. They wondered if they could see a calendar of upcoming events. Though the show did not bring in as many community members as I would have liked, the production pushed our raw income $500 over our previous quarter and I started an outreach process I hope the graduate students who inherit BarnStorm will continue.

**Issues Not In the Handbook.**

BarnStorm is an incredibly rewarding experience because there are not very many opportunities to run a theater company with an actual performance space, rehearsal spaces, and a budget right after you graduate from college. It is a year of stress and craziness but a year that goes by quickly and is filled with learning. Because the program is only a year-long, many details and recommendations on how to run the theater are not documented or passed down. We had a few surprise restrictions given by superiors that could have saved time if the BarnStorm handbook had been updated at all.
When we hit the ground running at the start of the school year, it put us in a scramble for information. No records existed of information we needed to know (i.e., having to be approved by the district to do community outreach to schools). We are attempting to solve this dilemma. Our production manager Paul Rossi is attempting to update the handbook and we plan to advise the new directors to become familiar with it during the summer before their run. There is no written record of the “can’s and cannot’s” of our stages. Directors, especially those who utilized BarnStorm to begin their directing experience, surprised us during tech rehearsals by having un-fight called stage combat or non-water liquids on stage. These things are obvious to us who have been working on the UCSC stages for years, that we forget we have to learn them. I think creating this list would be beneficial to have for not only BarnStorm, but for the entire department.

The biggest obstacle we faced has grown and gained power over time. There is an incredibly disappointing stigma against BarnStorm productions. Students have created the idea that the company is not up to par with “Hill Shows” because the company is often comprised of green actors. On the other side of the audition and casting process, I noticed a lack of spreading the “talent” or seasoned actors. BarnStorm directors lost their voices in the casting meeting a few years back. Rumor has it is because a BarnStorm director fought hard and won a sought after actor who was wanted by a faculty director. When I reflect back on this show, it makes me realize that that show has been the best show I have seen in the Barn Theater. Not
only because an actual set had been built, but because the cast was well rounded. Currently, the casting in the department works by having The Hill shows pick their actors and BarnStorm picks from whoever is left over. Occasionally, but very rarely, a director might be able to finagle their way into getting a well-wanted actor. A compromise in casting should be mandatory in order to balance a show. It would benefit the talent in the department over time. By working with seasoned directors and faculty, green actors will learn faster than if they were working with brand new directors. Seasoned actors will benefit new directors by being able to communicate what works and what does not. Seasoned actors would also be able to teach green actors by working with them, showing through experience rather than waiting for them to go through the studio series. The department and BarnStorm could both benefit from a required compromise in casting.

The attitude toward the class has been difficult to remedy. The appalling view on the class is possibly a result from a lack of authority in the class in years past or it is the attitudes the students have developed because they have taken the class for so long. I think it is a mixture of both. Many students in BarnStorm have been a member of the company since their freshman year and have learned what they are able to get away with. Whatever the cause, the result from the students’ frames of mind have led to dropped support calls, handwritten midterm papers, and unfulfilled requirements of the class, and still arguing they deserve an A. I received an email this year from a student after grades went out that stated “Is there any way
I can increase my grade retroactively. I guess I really just wasn't expecting the lowest grade I could get. I'm feeling tons of pressure on my GPA this quarter and managed to get an A in my optoelectronics and chemistry classes so it would really suck for theater to be the thing that drags me down. Thanks”. The attitude stunned me. It dawned on me that many of the students (particularly those who majored in subjects beyond theater) saw BarnStorm purely as a creative outlet and not a class.

Our advisor David Cuthbert stated at the beginning of the school year that he did not want too many A’s. This made sense to me because it would put students who put in all of their time and effort into BarnStorm, despite how busy we all are and what hardships they may be going through, on the same plane as those who fulfill all the requirements half-heartedly. We tried to solve this by standing by the B’s we gave when upset emails were sent. We made announcements at meetings that we would be grading this like any other class and we expected them to treat BarnStorm with the respect that they would give any class. A’s would be given where deserved.

Our biggest project this year with BarnStorm has been reconstructing the image the company has developed over the years. We make sure that the facility stays in top shape so that it does not close down because of mites as it did a few years ago. We treat the company as a professional theater company and not just a student run class in hopes that the students will rise to our expectations. The last
stigma we are tackling is Chautauqua. It has gained an awful reputation, my theory is because many of the participants are inexperienced. The designs are new, the directors are new, a lot of the actors are new, the playwrights are new, and the festival is run by BarnStorm directors who are running the festival for the first time.

Chautauqua is different from what we do the two quarters before. The department asked us why it is viewed that way and we felt the answer was too difficult to pinpoint. It might be constructive for everyone if the department takes it over in the same way a faculty production might run. This change might make students excited about the festival in the same way they get excited about a faculty production; it would appeal to the actors who have developed an entitlement (it exists in the department, partially due to hierarchy in casting). The faculty would then gain a better idea of what the process of Chautauqua has been in the past and use their experience gained in the professional field to help improve it. Hopefully with professional help, the quality of Chautauqua and the reputation of the new works festival will escalate.

I believe the qualities of our shows will rise if we refrain from using The Barn as a blank space, as a platform setting for other stories, but for what it is in all of its rustic glory. We need to stop asking in our directing proposals “Why The Barn” and start asking “Why and how does this play compliment the use of The Barn as a space and as a community”. We need to make the space a partner in the production
instead of just a backdrop. The Barn is full of Rough Theatre and “Rough Theatre is close to the people” (Brook 66). Our year with BarnStorm is gathering the information and setting up the stepping stones to create a thriving theater company. We observed over the past year the types of shows were successful and the types of shows we believe can utilize the theater’s potential. We persevere on BarnStorm’s image so that in the near future, seasoned actors will be ecstatic that they were cast in a BarnStorm show. We want everyone to be on board with the company from the start, and not fight for their loyalty throughout the quarter. If not for us, for the audience. After all, “we cannot assume that the audience will assemble devoutly and attentively. It is up to us to capture its attention and compel its belief” (Brook 97). Just as the actor compels the audience, BarnStorm compels its company. My only regret is that we are only given a year.

**Why This Matters:**

Theater is important to our society. It allows us to pass down stories, cultures, and traditions but also allows us to explore the other side of these stories with counter myth stories like *Rosencranz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Wicked*. Theater allows us to make statements by humanizing our enemies in order to better understand them. Theater allows us to show that issues are not two dimensional in a society that yearns to understand why people do the things they do. Some would argue that the more popular form of storytelling, film, fulfills these functions as well, but what theater holds over film is an incredible personal connection with an
audience. Each viewing of a performance is different from the next based on what personal experience the audience brings and how the actors react to the audience that particular night.

Theater is beneficial for the audience because of the entertainment and educational aspects. Theater is a powerful experience for the actors, too. Theater “cannot be an end in itself; like dancing or music in certain dervish orders, the theater is a vehicle, a means for self-study, self-exploration; a possibility of salvation” (Brook 59). BarnStorm is in this wonderful position of being a catalyst for students. It is on the outskirts of the university, both physically and metaphorically, and therefore gives the theater an opportunity to experiment with performance for a unique audience of students and Santa Cruz community members.

It is our goal to pass on enough information to next year’s BarnStorm directors so they will be able to avoid the “learning period” and go straight into development and set their own goals for the company. I feel this year has been a learning experience that has finally set me up with the skills needed to run a student theater company and gain an eye for the community, only to have the year finish so fast. However, I have begun to develop an eye for the type of management I want to do.

BarnStorm constantly teaches me about the type of theater I want to be involved with in the future. This year has taught me that community outreach is important and that I want performance spaces utilized for what they are.
Punchdrunk, a British theatre company is a pioneer in the world of immersive theater often in site-specific spaces. Their immersive theater provides a unique experience by allowing the audience to roam and decide what to watch and where to go. This sensory theatrical world awakens the passive voyeuristic audience. This idea would not only be great for the Barn to experiment with, but as a soon to be poor, fresh-out of graduate school theater practitioner, might be the best kind of Rough Theater I can begin to experiment with. I enjoy the idea of ensemble theater that BarnStorm has but in a more manageable size. Eventually, I want to run a theater company that does not only focus on the story-telling aspect of the theatrical experience. I want to focus on the audience and the performance space as much as we focus on the performers. I have worked on devised pieces in the past that our ensemble wrote and the outcome was incredibly emotional. I think a theater company can take powerfully devised theater and adapt stories that audiences would be interested in seeing (both familiar and non-familiar). These stories can transform them with the same kind of rediscovery that Punchdrunk does. I think this would be an excellent way to bring more of the community together because it would give the theater company an opportunity to merge the detail focus that film has and audiences enjoy, with the enriching connection that live theater performance provides.

I hope BarnStorm continues to expand to the community. Not only to vary our audience pool, but hopefully to inspire those who are growing up in a
community or upbringing where theater and art are not as easily as accessible. Theater inspired, pushed, nurtured, and engaged me and I am hoping that if BarnStorm can inspire at least one audience member with poverty, with our unique space, with the time and energy our wonderful company put into its productions every quarter then our tolerance for dead art form jokes will not be for naught.
Bibliography


