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HELLO EVERYBODY, AND WELCOME TO BARNSTORM:
A LOOK INTO THEATRICAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND PROBLEM
SOLVING

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

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THEATER ARTS

by

Marissa Putnick

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The Thesis of Marissa Putnick is approved:

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Hello Everybody, and Welcome to BarnStorm!
A Look into Theatrical Crisis Management and Problem Solving

The Loma Prieta Earthquake

“We just keep on keeping on.” – Curtis Mayfield, *Keep on Keeping On*

On Tuesday, October 17, 1989 at 5:04 pm, the Loma Prieta earthquake shook California’s central coast for fifteen seconds, leaving upwards of 28 million dollars worth of damage in its wake. The epicenter of this magnitude 7.1 earthquake was in the Santa Cruz mountains 60 miles south/southeast from San Francisco, merely ten



Fig 1. The Geary, following the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake

miles north of central Santa Cruz. The earthquake occurred two hours before the public would be admitted into the Geary Theater to see American Conservatory Theater’s (ACT’s) *Right Mind*, their season opener. The entire theater was in ruins, including the proscenium arch

which “collapsed, ripping a two-thousand-square-foot hole in the ceiling and crushing the front-of-house lighting bridge and the first six rows of orchestra seats beneath tons of fallen plaster” (*A.C.T.’s Historic Home*), leaving the theater in ruins. Luckily the cast and crew were all out on dinner break, so no one was hurt in the theater by the falling debris. In an interview with Kate Edmunds,¹ she discussed the process of regaining the Geary Theater.

Homeless, ACT searched the Bay Area for a temporary theater while they raised money to rebuild the Geary. They produced plays for the next seven years in

¹ Kate Edmunds is both my professor and Set Designer/ACT Associate Artist from 1998 to 2000.

multiple theaters, including The Stage Door Theater (now the Ruby Skye Nightclub), the Marines Memorial Theatre, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA). Of course, there were downsides to all of the theaters in which they worked. The Stage Door Theater was significantly smaller than the Geary and it lacked a fly system. The Marines Memorial Theatre had a small fly system, but the theater itself was also smaller than the Geary, and comparatively not as well equipped. As these theaters were both relatively small, unlike the Geary, artistic teams were forced to scale down the designs of their shows to meet the different venues' needs. The ultimate challenge, however, was making sure that these scaled down shows still brought in money. A Catch-22 kicked in: to keep up ticket revenue the theater had to keep the quality of the productions high, but to keep the quality high, more revenue was required.

Unsurprisingly, during the seven years in which ACT was using outside theaters, they lost a significant amount of money. Their previous box office was attached to the theater, so in addition to paying for rent in other theaters, they also needed to find (and rent) new box office facilities. In the earthquake, their lighting and sound inventories were destroyed entirely, and though Yerba Buena had *some* lighting and sound equipment, ACT still had to essentially build an entire new inventory from scratch, which cost a lot of money. On top of that, now that the company was taking residence in multiple theaters, they needed more crew and multiple teams of ushers. As the company was being stripped down to the bare essentials, some non-essential personnel not directly related to the running of a show lost their jobs. Another consequence of the loss of their theater is often forgotten;

most of the shops and hotels near the theater thrive on the money spent by theatergoers, so with one of the largest theaters in their vicinity gone, those businesses lost a significant amount of income until ACT resumed productions in their new space.

While presenting in the foreign (to them) theaters and raising money for a complete renovation of the Geary, ACT managed to produce many successful works with the help of donors and outside sources. In order to bring in a larger audience, ACT produced *Hecuba* in 1995 at the YCBA, featuring Olympia Dukakis. Capitalizing on the comparatively large house in the YBCA, ACT's use of such a famous actor in the titular role enabled them to bring in larger audiences and revenues. Unfortunately, this show could not be extended due to scheduling conflicts, so ACT needed to continue finding shows that would make money. For this reason, they produced *Angels in America, Parts One and Two*², at Marines Memorial, which ended up being extended five times. In 1996, having finally accumulated the twenty eight million dollars needed, Artistic Director Carey Perloff and Managing Director John re-opened the Geary. They opened their first season in their completely renovated theater with *The Tempest*, directed by Perloff herself.

In retrospect, this story reads like a clichéd Hollywood movie plotline: There is a protagonist, there is a disaster, and then magically, from the script comes a solution. However, this storyline is not specific to fiction. In real life disasters occur and the people involved are left to pick up the pieces, sometimes having to start again completely from scratch. After the Loma Prieta earthquake struck, everyone connected to ACT helped out in any way they could: donors invested in the new

² *Angels in America* was originally produced by (and at) the Eureka Theater in San Francisco

Geary, other theaters rented out their spaces, and most importantly, patrons kept seeing shows. Though ACT's situation was not ideal in any way, this disastrous event brought the theater community closer together, and everyone was better off for it. Based upon my own experiences, destructive events that bring a community together aren't just reserved for the professional theater world – they can happen anywhere and at any time. What's important to remember, however, is that just like in the professional world, the students at UCSC who dealt with the destructive events (and the faculty advising them) found creative ways to work together to create art.

The First Thoughts

“BarnStorm has been a resource, an experiment, a teacher, and a home for so many UCSC students since its founding.”–Barnifesto

For four years, I watched graduate students run BarnStorm. They seemed to have complete control over a theater company that they could call their own. It was their job to both influence and guide undergraduates to produce the most inspirational and thought provoking work they could, while still maintaining a safe and educational theatrical environment. Though I would have liked it to be otherwise, there were very few times throughout my collegiate career during which I was an active participant in BarnStorm. The first time I participated in BarnStorm was Winter Quarter of my freshman year, and the next time I was actively involved in BarnStorm (apart from carrying out a few favors throughout my undergrad) was when I was its Managing Director. In the three years between those two occurrences, watching three management teams work to keep their heads above water, it became clear to me that it was not an easy task, and at the time I wanted nothing to do with it.

As I began my senior year, I started to become jaded with stage management, as I'm sure most students do with their concentration after three years of constant work. Deciding I needed a break, I resolved to stay involved with theater, but in a different capacity. While mulling this over, it became clear to me that it was important for me that I do something that would not only be a learning experience, but also utilize the skills I acquired through stage managing. Most importantly, I wanted to improve upon those skills, even though I would not be a stage manager. Keeping these self-imposed requirements in mind, I really began to look at the BarnStorm model, which led me to talking with the then-current BarnStorm directors. I learned that there were wonderful things about running BarnStorm, but there were definitely things that could change. I wanted to see if it was possible to run BarnStorm differently from the standard model. I began by talking with fellow students Chris Waters and Kathryn Wahlberg. The three of us decided that we would apply to direct the Barn as a team of three rather than the standard team of two, and see if we could not make BarnStorm a project that left more opportunities (both personal and educational) open to us.

The three of us knew that the two-person model needed some re-vamping, and were convinced that we were the ones to do it. We proposed to downsize the amount of productions while upsizing their quality, as we believed that past seasons attempted to do too many productions. We proposed to utilize our assistants more so than the years before, as in the past assistants were always severely underutilized. We also proposed to attempt to bring the back the academic aspect of BarnStorm, and not just allow students to take BarnStorm as an "easy A" which was the general view of

students in BarnStorm. One of the most exciting things for us in regard to our proposal was that we wanted to put on Chautauqua, UCSC's Spring Quarter new works festival, under BarnStorm's jurisdiction. The closing paragraph of our "Barnifesto" summed up our hopes and dreams for the company:

Ultimately our goal is to "create opportunities" - to create a cohesive, productive, and positive theatrical environment. With the help of the faculty and the continued eagerness and commitment of the students, we can continue to bring joy to The Barn, through the BarnStorm tradition of challenging community-conscious theater, while holding the students to a high standard of quality and professionalism... We want to give students a place to express, create, explore, experiment, succeed and fail with equal zeal and humility. We agree with the mission statement: we, as a trio, "are devoted to fostering new forms of art, and giving students, faculty, and others the opportunity to present their work." With our diverse theatrical backgrounds, our openness to new forms, our willingness to learn alongside our students, and with [the faculty's] guidance, we can help this theater company thrive.

Going into this project, I assumed all of the bumps in the road that we would hit would be issues involving enrollment, or dealing with students who were less than easy to work with; such simple issues are, although annoying, very easily fixed. I was wrong in so many ways. The seemingly insurmountable issues began rolling in on the first day. Three hours before our very first company meeting as directors, we were informed that we did not get the rights to one of our main shows, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* The task then came to telling the director and the day-old cast this unfortunate news, and waiting with bated breath as she decided to find a new play, or simply drop out altogether from the season. She eventually decided to stay with a new production performed by the same cast. This was a great relief to us all, as we did not want to have to drop a show, and subsequently jobs for students, from the season.

Roughly halfway through my first quarter of being BarnStorm's Managing Director, I was informed that our theater (a barn converted into a playing space at the base of campus) needed to be shut down – preexisting safety issues had quickly become a high priority when it was discovered that the Barn's resident rats and the mites that were dependent on them had made the Barn their home. Luckily, the Theater Arts Department stepped in and helped us in ways that we could never imagine. We put up all of our shows as planned, but in vastly different theaters with many different (and some, significantly less) capabilities. Because of this, I became more than a Managing Director: I became a mentor. Whether it was teaching someone how to use QLab, or teaching myself how to use a light board so I could guide a budding lighting designer, I had to tap into every single skill that I acquired as a stage manager during my undergraduate to help bring our season out of the chaos. Even if all a student needed from me was to reassure them that despite the unfortunate circumstances, their show would still be fantastic, I was there. It is because of these crises and my ability to generally handle them with grace and professionalism, that I knew that I would be all right in the real world.

Most students forget at some point in time during their collegiate career that the real world can affect them too. I certainly forgot. When the Barn was shut down, all I could think was, "This is college, this shouldn't be happening to me!" Then someone pointed out the obvious – disasters can happen in the real world, and there is not a protective bubble surrounding UCSC. ACT, a professional theater, had to deal with almost the exact same issue. Both the Geary and the Barn recovered in very similar ways. Where ACT had its donors, its patrons and all of its wonderful support,

the Barn had UCSC's Theater Arts Department, the Department's facilitators, and wonderful, devoted students who were not afraid to try something different.

The Selection Process

"Life is theatre. Theatre is life. If we're showing what life is, can be, we must do theatre." Fefu and Her Friends, Maria Irene Fornes

Choosing a season which was both manageable and impressive was our top priority. We agreed with many of the previous directors' decisions when it came to play selection, but we wanted to change one thing: we truly believed that the quality of work was more important than the size of a season, so we proposed accepting fewer submissions. To put it into a popular saying, we were striving for "quality, not quantity," and we felt that in previous seasons, this was not a noticeable goal. With this in mind, Kathryn led a play proposal workshop in which she walked perspective directors through the application process, and told them for what qualities we would be looking. We wanted proposals from directors that did not just want to do a show, but wanted to do a show in the *Barn*. We loved that theater, and wanted directors and creators who shared that passion, not wanting just want to make art, but to explore the unique possibilities that the Barn had to offer.

We were not sure how many proposals we would receive, and it turned out that we got many more than expected. We already decided that each improvisation group that applied would get three shows. One of our first scuffles of the season revolved around the fact that the two improvisation groups generally get together once a quarter and perform together, a collaboration irreverently named "ButtProv." When

we informed the two improvisation teams that they had certain shows on certain dates, they asked, “Where’s ButtProv?” We made it very clear from the beginning that we were not going to play favorites, and everyone who applied for a show would be treated the same. They did not even propose for ButtProv (it was usually just handed to them on a platter). With no proposal submitted, Chris, Kathryn and I agreed that they would not be able to do a shared performance in the Barn as they had in the past. This spurred a two-quarter long, very tense relationship with the two improvisation teams. As friends, we loved them dearly, but as supervisors, we would not give them preferential treatment.

We selected a few “one-nighters,” some of which were very successful, some of which were not. “One-nighters” were performed on one night without financial support from BarnStorm, but we granted them crew and tech time. We brought back *24-Hour Theater*, allowing students to go into the theater at seven in the evening one night, and have a performance ready for an audience at eight the next night. It ended up being one of the most fulfilling things I have done to date but also, inadvertently, opened our eyes to the temporary end of our theater. Apart from *24-Hour Theater*, we did a few other one-nighters, some more successful than others. We also brought back *Dance Collision* (which ended up having its name changed to *Dance Collisions*, for reasons unknown to us), which is the only dance-based performance that Theater Arts produces in Fall Quarter. *Dance Collision* is a very popular event, and always has a full house.

Selecting our two full productions proved to be the hardest of our tasks as producers. Though we received many proposals, we received only two that seemed

plausible. One proposal, proposed by a Junior Theater Arts student, was for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (WAVW), which seemed inappropriate for an undergraduate program. Apart from being very long, WAVW follows the relationship of a middle-aged couple. Personally, I do not think college students should be playing middle-aged characters, as the acting generally lacks a certain feeling of maturity and



Fig 2. A screenshot from Murakami's proposal video.

experience. Our other proposal was from Senior Film Major David Murakami. He proposed to take three one-act plays by Ray Bradbury (the culmination of which would be called *A Forgotten Future*), and instead of using traditional scenery, he would project

the plays' surroundings onto an all white unit set. This process is called "3D projection mapping." According to Murakami's proposal, "projection mapping is the process of using an array of projectors to display planar or orthographic two-dimensional media upon a three-dimensional surface to create a perspective illusion." He put it in laymen's terms for us, explaining that the Barn would be turned into a "holodeck."

In his proposal, he showed us to a smaller scale how this would work. Chris, Kathryn and I realized that this project, though fascinating, would be difficult. After speaking with this student regarding how he would acquire all of the equipment necessary for a production of this scale, we decided that we wanted to give this show a shot. If it worked, it would be a brilliant work, and if it failed, it would fail brilliantly. We decided that though WAVW was not our first choice, it would be the

best possible way to balance out the season against *AFF*; we would have one shorter, but significantly more technologically advanced show, and one longer show, with a much smaller cast, that would focus more on the intimate personal aspect of theater.

The First Hiccup

“Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat.” — F. Scott Fitzgerald

We were all set – we had a season, we had all of the appropriate paperwork, we had been thinking of every possible thing that could go wrong. Despite our extensive preparations and preventative measures, our first road bump occurred a mere three hours before our first company meeting on Monday, October 1st. We had just cast our two main shows that previous weekend, we had copies of all of the scripts, and now all we needed was to assign designers and crew to all of our shows at that first meeting. At 3pm before we were scheduled to say, "Hello everybody, and welcome to BarnStorm!" for the first time, I received an email from Joe Weiss. Apart from helping us fix all of our technical problems and advising us on low budget and build solutions for shows, Weiss also helped us acquire the rights for all of our shows. We could not have survived this last year without him. In an email, Weiss informed us that we had not acquired rights for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* I was blown away. My first thought was, "What do we do?" followed very quickly by, "How did this happen?" followed once again by, "So... What do we do?"

Unbeknownst to us at the time, two theaters are not allowed to perform the same show within a certain mile radius. For a while we believed that to be the reason we were denied the rights, but we then later learned that the reason was slightly different than we would have expected. Steppenwolf, a theater in Chicago, Illinois,

was doing a revival of *WAVW* that ended up moving to Broadway. Normally, this would not have been an issue, as New York was certainly far enough away that the chances were that we, a student run theater company in a barn, would not lure patrons away from a Broadway show. This show however, had the chance of touring, which kept Albee from granting us the rights. At UCSC we have wonderful faculty, many of whom made some calls to connections of theirs in Albee's world to see if anything can be done to change his decision. Despite many hours of the department being on the phone with Albee's staff, he would not change his mind. We unfortunately had to tell the director and cast (and the rest of the company) that *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* would not be performed this season.

Our plan of attack was to pull the director aside before the meeting and let her know the news. We would then give her the choice of staying for the meeting or leaving to think about her options. At this point, the options presented to her were either finding a new show to stage with her current four-person cast, or pulling from the season entirely. We also gave her the option to tell her cast personally, or do so on her behalf, since we feared that she would not be able to keep her composure, and it was important that whoever informed the cast held it together in. As expected, she did not take this news too well. One thing I have learned during this process is that everyone reacts to bad news differently. Some people cry, some people get very quiet, and some people spring into action to fix the issue. In this case, I learned how to work with someone who deals with emotions by crying. I felt horrible, because looking at her I could see her heart breaking in front of us as we told her the news in the greenroom of the Barn. The director decided to leave to try to think of alternatives, of

which we presented many with help from the faculty. We told the actors one-by-one as they arrived. We felt that they should not be informed of this news with the rest of the company, but similarly to their director, alone. We told the company that there would most likely be a show, but it will not be *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* We also urged them to sign up to work on it anyway, in any capacity, and we would work something out if the director decided to pull.

Despite the possibility of not having a show, almost all of the support call and technical support spots were filled for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* so all we needed to know was what action the director decided to take. We gave her a couple of days to decide, at which point she had almost committed to pull her project. We encouraged her to think on it more, and gave her a few more days. A week after we told her that she could not do her intended show, she decided to do *Curse of the Starving Class (CotSC)*, by Sam Shepard. Luckily, we acquired the rights to this play, and we thought we were home free.

The Mite-y Big Problem

We are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided. –JK Rowling

We were wrong. We were so unbelievably wrong that we probably could not be more wrong if we tried. The first signs of an issue appeared during *24-Hour Theater*. This annual event in the BarnStorm season allows students to lock themselves in the Barn at seven in the evening one night, create a performance completely from scratch, and perform it for an audience the next night at eight in the evening. Chris, Kathryn and I wanted to make sure this event happened, as the three of us had never actually participated in it, as it had not happened since our sophomore year. We followed all

of the protocols that allowed students to remain overnight in a university owned building, which proved to be much more difficult than we had expected. The first requirement was that the police department had to know it was happening, so we alerted them. The second requirement was that we had to clear our event with Transportation and Parking Services (TAPS), as the participants' cars would be remaining in the parking lot for over twenty-four hours.

The participants arrived, and we went over the rules. While waiting for the students, we decided that we would give them a choice of two ways which we could approach *24-Hour Theater*. The first idea was that they could stay for the entire twenty-four hours, and get the real experience. The second idea was that they would work in the Barn for a while, go home and write a script, and come back at a very early hour in the morning and “tech” it from there. As expected, the students chose the latter, but I was secretly relieved – to be honest, I really wanted to sleep in my bed that night, not on a couch in the Barn. In retrospect, this was the best thing I could have done for myself all quarter. After the first couple hours of brainstorming and bonding, we all went home. Lying in my bed, I found a couple of bug bites that I did not have a few hours prior. I did not think much of it since mosquitoes and other pests are common in Santa Cruz. I returned to the Barn the next morning, and over twelve hours later, we premiered our season.

A week later, I was trying to make the Barn's televisions work for *The Michael Becker Experience*, which involved spending some time in the booth. I took the cover off of the board that controlled what is seen on the screens and walked away to turn all of the televisions on. Feeling a strange itch on my hand, I took a closer

look. All over my left hand I saw tiny bugs and I finally made the obvious connection; bugs in the Barn would lead to the bug bites that I received (and still had) a week prior. I quickly washed them off and alerted the Work Order Desk and Pest Control, in hopes that they could come out and take a look. Needless to say, we did not use the televisions that day.

While conversing with Pest Control, we asked them to also look into all of the rat droppings and the few dead rat carcasses that were scattered throughout the building; as we were not sure that the current state of the Barn was healthy we figured that it was worth covering all of the issues at once. During one of the rehearsals for *A Forgotten Future*, the cast informed me that they saw a ferret run through the Barn. Clearly, there were many issues that needed to be addressed, so we sent many emails to the Work Order Desk. After multiple conversations, we were told that no bugs were found, and that regarding the rats and the would-be ferret,³ the Barn was essentially a “dump.” Several important officials who knew safety protocols and the buildings in which they are working would have a meeting in the Barn about its future. Other than that, we remained in the dark as to the future of the building, and the season. The three of us thought that if there was an issue with the integrity of the building, it might have to get fumigated, or someone would come in and catch all of the rats. We never thought of what actually happened as a possibility.

On October 30th, three days after the 23rd anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake, we were informed that the Barn was an unsafe work environment and that

³ Personally, I believe that the ferret was actually a fox – I saw one when I was driving up to campus a few months later, and it matched the description given to me. Wild ferrets also do not generally reside in this part of California.

it would be closed for the rest of the quarter, and possibly for the rest of the season. My memories today of that time are at times vivid, and at times completely absent. All we could do at the time was crisis management, and I did not have much time to think about what I was doing, I just had to do it. As I had to prepare to proctor a midterm for Kate Edmunds' Introduction to Design Class on that Tuesday (a perfect example of the fact that the Barn wasn't my job – it was just my life), I arrived on campus earlier than I usually did. Right as I parked my car, I got a text from Weiss that simply said, "See me now!" In the past, whenever I have received bad news from Joe, it was generally via email. I have learned throughout the years that if he texts or calls, the news is *really* bad. Before going to see him, I immediately called Chris asking, "What did we do wrong? Am I getting yelled at? Do you know?" He did not, but he offered to come to talk to Weiss with me. I don't know how I foresaw that I would need him there next to me, but I asked him to come with me. We found Weiss on the scene shop dock, and he did not look mad. He very delicately and calmly told us that after the safety meeting in the Barn that previous Wednesday, the Powers-That-Be deemed the building unsafe for work – we would be allowed in one last time to take the necessary items for the continuation of BarnStorm and the current shows, but we would not be performing in that space. The official reason for the Barn's closure was presence of the bugs. The bugs that were tormenting us were rat mites, which are not dangerous to humans, but they certainly are annoying. The mites plus all of the rats, plumbing and foundation issues (which were new revelations to us, though not surprising) all together created an unsafe environment for humans in which to work.

Now is when it is necessary to discuss my feelings for a moment. It may seem melodramatic, but at the time, it felt like the world was crumbling down around me. Chris, Kathryn and I worked so hard to create a season and already overcame one crisis, but now the rug was being pulled out from under us again. In the short month during which the bugs attacked us, we lost our theater. Though we had only been in there a month, it felt like we lost our home. Granted, when the Geary was destroyed by the Loma Prieta earthquake, it came crumbling down in fifteen seconds, significantly faster and more violently than a month of gradual infestation, but the destruction that it left was the same. We, like the Geary Theater, were not at a convenient time in our season to move when we lost our theater. We had crew, designers, and actors that counted on their show going up as scheduled. To both BarnStorm and ACT, the most important thing was picking up the season as quickly as possible. To them, that meant leaning on their donors and the theaters nearby, but for us, that meant leaning on the Theater Arts Department, which stepped out of its role as a safety net and into the role of our prince in shining armor.

The Recovery Process

“When you’re going through hell, keep going.” Winston Churchill

Our first priority was to get all of our vitally necessary equipment out of the Barn, and leave everything else. If this had been a normal BarnStorm production, taking everything out of the Barn would not have been an issue. All we would have done was taken costumes and props. Due to the sizeable media nature of *AFF* however, we also needed to remove all of the projectors and programming computers (Murakami brought his own media server, and we were borrowing projectors from UCSC’s



Fig 3. The Barn, painted white, as we left it.

Learning Technologies). This was not the easiest task, but we recovered all of the equipment that we needed, along with BarnStorm essentials (the donation bucket, for instance). Granted, things like the donation bucket weren't BarnStorm

“essentials,” but they did have sentimental value – for the last five years, this bucket has been the bucket in which patrons put their spare change. The one essential thing that we could not take with us was the completely white set that we had painted two weekends prior.

At this point in time, we began to talk options. The Department granted us the use of E100 and the Second Stage. E100 would be ours as soon as there was time to put a few lights in it, but it already had sound equipment and stadium seating, so next quarter it became the favorite spot of the Improv teams, as it suited their needs perfectly. Once the show that was currently up and running in the Second Stage ended, it would be ours as well. The issue was that neither of these two spaces catered to the needs of *A Forgotten Future*. Tuesday, October 30th was the day that *AFF* was supposed to begin the dress rehearsal process – they had already gone through two days of technical rehearsals. We needed a space that could be entirely white with roughly the same measurements as the Barn, so that Murakami did not have to change his entire design (which was the point of the media in *AFF* – it was the scenic design) based on new measurements.

This is where, once again, this story begins to follow a clichéd Hollywood

plotline. The Dean of Arts and The Department of Digital and New Media (DANM) offered to help, which makes them relate to the role of “donor,” as we are comparing this event to ACT’s plight. We were offered an art studio by the Dean, which we were on the verge of graciously taking when DANM offered us the use of the Digital Arts Research Center (the DARC Lab). As BarnStorm is a student run company, an offer such as this was unheard of. We were incredibly grateful, and it probably would

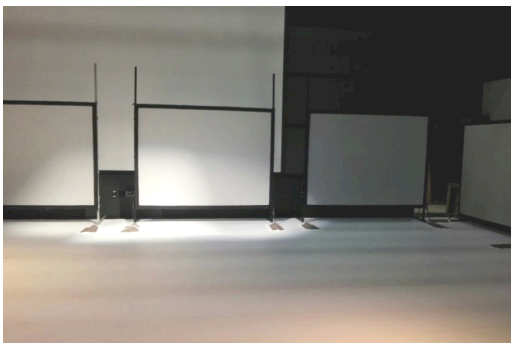


Fig 4. The DARC Lab before the addition of white curtains

never happen again. In order to make DARC as similar to the white Barn stage as possible, we were able to lay down white dance marley the size of the original stage, and use standing projection screens as the back wall. This created a slight problem that the screens, in order to be the correct length across the stage, needed to be about two feet apart from each other. There was also about two feet of space between the bottom of the standing screen and the floor, which needed to be hidden as well. Luckily, when saving things from the Barn, we saved a very large piece of white scrim. With the help of the scrim, gaff tape (our entire white supply), and some butcher paper, we were able to turn the DARC Lab into the Barn away from the Barn.

While Chris, Kathryn and I had our sights set on getting *AFF* up and running, we had to keep our radar on the rest of the shows as well. Hailey McAfee, who was workshopping a self-written piece, produced a wonderful show in E100 called *I Love You Madly*. McAfee was one of the few directors that really embraced the room

swaps. She took the structure of E100 and made it work for her, without any complaints, and she did so brilliantly. She, like ACT, took what we could give her and made it work. We had a little bit more trouble with our other full production, *Curse of the Starving Class*. The director, when we informed her of the future of the Barn, did not take the news as well as the team of *AFF*. The team of *AFF* essentially said, “Okay, what can we do?” The director seemed to yet again lose hope, until we convinced her that this was actually a blessing in disguise. At that point in the quarter, she and her scenic



Fig 5. *CotSC* in Second Stage (with some scenic elements from the show prior)

designer were still trying to figure out a design for the show. By moving them to Second Stage, we gave them so much more freedom. Once they embraced this idea, they created a very poignant minimal set, with a beautiful floor treatment.

For both *AFF* and *CotSC*, we had to make certain adjustments that, though not ideal, were necessary. We had hoped that this year’s full productions would have a show on Friday, a double show day on Saturday, and strike following the final show. We believed that no one should have to strike on a Sunday evening. Both *AFF* and *CotSC* were pushed farther back in their respective weeks, and each only had shows on Saturday and Sunday of their performance weekend. *AFF* was pushed back because they lost their first dress, and *CotSC* because we had to wait for the

department show in Second Stage⁴ to fully strike. That quarter we did not get to implement our Friday and Saturday show days, but again, in circumstances like these, concessions had to be made when working in theaters that were not our own.

The Winter Quarter

“Try to turn every disaster into an opportunity.” - John D. Rockefeller

Though the worst was behind us, we needed to approach Winter Quarter differently than how we approached Fall Quarter, as it was confirmed that we would not have the Barn for the rest of the year. In the Fall, we chose shows based on what we wanted to see on the Barn’s stage. The changes in venue forced us to sit down before we even read the proposals and see what kind of show we could put in which department space when in the quarter. We ended up being able to use E100, C100 (for rehearsals only), B100 (which ended up being unused), Second Stage, and Mainstage. We only had the use of Mainstage for two weekends of the quarter, so we made the decision to only put on one larger show that quarter, while being able to grant a little more monetary freedom to the other smaller shows.

We chose *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, by Steve Martin, to be our Mainstage show. The three of us believed that the single set on the thrust of Mainstage would be simple, yet elegant. The show itself was upbeat enough that BarnStorm could work through the trouble of the previous quarter, and just have fun. Of all of the proposals, this one was definitely the most appropriate for the space. From there, we chose one-nighters. We invited the two sketch comedy teams (SheBAM and Michael Becker

⁴ Before CotSC took residence, Second Stage was home to *Dead Dog’s Bone*, written by fellow graduate student Veronica Tjioe, and directed by fellow graduate student Todd Pivetti.

Experience) to join us again that season, but Michael Becker Experience opted to pull their performance from the calendar. We had them scheduled to go up in E100 mid-quarter, and though we knew at the time that E100 was not the best space for them, it was all we had to offer. This was a moment of maturity for both the team and us as the split was very amicable, and they ended up producing a great show in Kresge later that quarter.

Winter quarter we also chose a proposal that was very unusual for BarnStorm – a feature film. We wanted to continue to create work that promoted a sense of community throughout the company even though we were in multiple venues, and a feature film seemed the way to do it. This film entitled *Before the Thunder*, was written and directed by David Murakami. Each weekend for the entirety of Winter Quarter, students would gather in places all over campus and the city of Santa Cruz. Among other locations, *Before the Thunder* shot in the Earth and Marine Sciences Building, multiple rooms in the Theater Arts Complex (they built a time machine in C100), 99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall (a popular bar in Downtown Santa Cruz), and Camp Campbell, a YMCA camp facility in Boulder Creek. It took a cast and crew of an upwards of thirty people, and after seven weeks of work we screened *Before the Thunder* in Second Stage to an almost full house. It was ideal for us to co-produce a film; Murakami wanted to use only theater practitioners, and we wanted to give our students a project that would not be affected by our loss of the Barn.

Sutton Arabe proposed a full production of *Dog Sees God*, by Burt V. Royal, and we wanted to find a place for it in our season. We could not offer it the space for a full production, but we told Arabe that he could have Second Stage for a day, and

we would turn it into a one-nighter that we could financially support. Arabe also wanted to travel the show to different venues within UCSC, which meant that he would not need as much support from us; though he used BarnStorm props, once his performance left for Porter, he accepted that he would not be able to take them with him. All quarter, Arabe was very independent: In addition to finding his own props and costumes, he cast freshman from his Intro to Acting section and he created a very powerful piece essentially without our help. I would consider his story a prime example of what BarnStorm accomplished that quarter – he created a beautiful piece on a low budget that could happen in any theater. During his performance he had an almost full house (in Second Stage, a theater with a much larger house than the Barn) and by the end of the show there wasn't a dry eye in the theater. To me, his show was BarnStorm.

The Ending

“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.” — Maya Angelou

Though there are many similarities between the destruction of the Geary and the Barn, there is one significant difference: we, as a company, were not responsible for replacing our theater. As we were based under the general UCSC Theater Arts' umbrella, we understood that it was that umbrella that would ultimately repair the Barn. Kathryn, Chris and I only worked on BarnStorm for a season, which meant though we cared about the future of the building and the company, it was out of our hands. This was not the same with the Geary, because they didn't get to just stand up

and walk away for a year. They had to keep their eyes open for the future, but we only really had to worry about getting through that one season.

When we closed our second (and final) season of BarnStorm, Chris, Kathryn and I sat down in Second Stage, and reminisced. We talked about our application for this job as bright eyed and bushytailed graduate students. We all knew it would be very hard work, and very time consuming, but none of us had any idea what we were actually in for. Very quickly on we learned that our jobs were not about simply running a company. BarnStorm leadership meant we were who people turned to when our favorite new motto, rich in irreverence and expletives, began to rapidly gain popularity.⁵ We were the ones who were expected to handle the crisis. We had to remain calm. We should have known problems would arise, but never to the degree that they did. Every day became more of a struggle to see into the future, which we all hoped to do. We learned very quickly that we had to focus on here and now, because once each problem is found a solution, only then could we move on to the next one.

I learned so much more from BarnStorm than I could ever put onto paper. One is that in the world of theater, one person cannot do it all. Sometimes, not even two people can do it all, but when a third person is added that trio can handle almost anything. I learned what it feels like to be in charge of something and that everyone expects you to be able to effortlessly switch from one mindset to another; while teching one show, I needed to keep my ears open for news on the opening of another. In the middle of that first show's tech, I needed to be able to answer questions that did

⁵ "Shit is fucked!" It is not the most appropriate of all mottos, but it got us through the quarters.

not pertain to what I was currently doing. I was always competent at multitasking, but these last few quarters taught me to multitask while having to make decisions that affect more people than just myself.

As simple as it is, one of the most valuable lessons from BarnStorm was the simplest one: “treat people how you want to be treated.” As a production team, we are those in charge. We are the ones that deal with every single other person in the company. We do not necessarily need to be everyone’s best friend (in fact it’s dangerous to do so), but we do need to be pleasant and relatable. People are always easier to deal with if they are nice, and as leaders, we must reciprocate the behavior we wish to see.



Fig 6. Classroom E100 as BarnStorm’s new home

Ultimately, I am not sure if I am satisfied with my work with BarnStorm, as strange as that may be. It is something that I did – some of it well, some of it not so well, and it is over. I survived without too many battle scars, mental or physical, so I’m proud of myself for that. I still have a great personal and working relationship with both of my Co-Directors, and I’m very proud of that as well. Of course there were some days that I did not do all of the work I could have, but

that’s the nature of this three-person model. In the beginning of the season, people would ask what our individual responsibilities are. Then, we tried to think of each person’s specific job and list that out. Now, our response is, “Whatever the other two

cannot handle that day.” We all did a little bit of everything, and we all saved each other from disaster more than once. We put up three full productions and upwards of thirty smaller shows in two quarters. We took over the DARC lab, which no student company has done before, or will ever do again. We had *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* go up in UCSC’s Mainstage, which, like many things from these past two quarters, will never happen again. We turned a classroom into one of the best spaces for one-nighters. Students created art, and we stopped at nothing to allow that to happen.

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