



LUMBERYARD AND BILL T. JONES/NEW YORK LIVE ARTS CO-HOST EVENT TO ADDRESS CRITICAL GAPS IN NEW YORK CITY'S PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTING ECOSYSTEM

Event brought together leading theater and dance artists, performing arts presenters, and funders at the Park Avenue Armory to begin urgent, industry-wide conversation about the need for technical rehearsals to develop new American work

NEW YORK, NY (November 21, 2019) – On Tuesday, November 19, **LUMBERYARD Center for Film and Performing Arts** partnered with **Bill T. Jones/New York Live Arts** to host an event at the **Park Avenue Armory** addressing a growing structural challenge facing the city's performing arts presenting field: the need for technical-rehearsal residencies for NYC-based artists to develop new work. The event included a panel conversation moderated by **Joe Melillo, Executive Producer Emeritus of the Brooklyn Academy of Music**, and featuring five acclaimed New York City-based performing artists:

- **Bill T. Jones**, Artistic Director of New York Live Arts and Co-Founder of Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company
- **John Collins**, Founder and Artistic Director of Elevator Repair Service
- **Kaneza Schaal**, Theater artist
- **Raja Feather Kelly**, Founder of the feath3r theory, Artistic Director of New Brooklyn Theatre, choreographer of theater productions including *Fairview* and *A Strange Loop*
- **Susan Marshall**, Artistic Director of Susan Marshall & Company

The evening concluded with an open discussion amongst the artists, presenters, producers and agents, and philanthropic funders assembled for the event. Attendees included:

- **Artists and companies:** Alan Cumming, Big Dance Theater, Ain Gordon, The TEAM, and Tectonic Theater Project, Jane Comfort, Joanna Kotze, Kimberly Bartosik, Martha Clarke, Maya Beiser
- **Presenters:** Abrons Art Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Guggenheim, The Chocolate Factory, Jacob's Pillow, New York Live Arts, the Park Avenue Armory, and The Playwrights Realm
- **Patrons:** The Mellon Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, Creative Capital
- **Producers and agents:** ArKtype, Columbia Artists, Pentacle, and Pomegranate Arts

In opening remarks at the event, **Adrienne Willis, Artistic and Executive Director of LUMBERYARD**, urged the audience, "Given the ever-increasing premium on technical and design innovation, we need to identify out-of-the box, low-cost, high-impact solutions that make it possible for American artists to create new work. Innovation cannot occur without experimentation, and time and resources to experiment must not be reserved solely for artists with access to significant funding."

Bill T. Jones participated in Tuesday night's panel discussion after spending two weeks at LUMBERYARD in August developing *Deep Blue Sea*, a collaboration with renowned architect Liz Diller (Diller Scofidio +

Renfro) that the Park Avenue Armory presents April 14-25, 2020. He says the company's LUMBERYARD residency was critical to the creation of the new work. "It astounds me that we could ever have thought that we could do a piece of such ambition—with all of the technical needs—that we could do it without such a residency. LUMBERYARD made this piece possible."

John Collins said, "When you go into tech, once you're among all of the elements of a work, it's impossible not to make important discoveries. Our residency at LUMBERYARD showed us the enormous possibility of what our work can be when all aspects are taken seriously early in the process. We artists are always going to be struggling, but we need more to struggle with."

Kaneza Schaal shared, "Recently, I worked on a piece where we had to go to Abu Dhabi for technical rehearsals because it was the only place available that could accommodate our needs. That made me think to myself, if we could have done that in America, it would have created local jobs."

"I've never had a technical residency, so I honestly don't know what that would do to my work – and neither does the audience that comes to see it," said **Raja Feather Kelly**. "Going from studio to stage is a matter of constantly adjusting your vision and figuring out what you can do with the limitations you're given. Which makes you think, what could this be if we had the support to fully see out our ideas—recognize what might fail and what might inspire change—all before we reach the premiere?"

Susan Marshall, who developed *Chromatic*, her collaboration with visual artist Suzanne Bocanegra and composer Jason Treuting, at LUMBERYARD, said, "The studio and the stage could not be more different... And when you go from studio to theater, something always gets lost. What if we had a way to put that back in? Does anyone actually doubt the work would be better if all these elements could be baked in from the beginning?"

LUMBERYARD is the first organization to bring the contemporary performing arts presenting community together in a collective effort to catalogue the needs of the field and assess persistent structural challenges facing art-making. Tuesday's event built on a [white paper](#) that LUMBERYARD released in September that draws on eight years of experience readying over 60 productions for New York City premieres through its technical rehearsal program to offer a sustainable and collaborative path forward for the performing arts presenting ecosystem.

Photos

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From Left to Right: Adrienne Willis, Joe Melillo, Kaneza Schaal, John Collins, Raja Feather Kelly, Bill T. Jones, and Susan Marshall participated in a panel discussion at an event hosted by LUMBERYARD and Bill T. Jones / New York Live Arts at the Park Avenue Armory on Tuesday November 19, 2019.



From Left to Right: Joe Melillo, Kaneza Schaal, and John Collins discussing the growing structural challenge facing the city's performing arts presenting field at the LUMBERYARD and Bill T. Jones / New York Live Arts event on Tuesday November 19, 2019.



From Left to Right: Raja Feather Kelly, Bill T. Jones, and Susan Marshall on stage at the LUMBERYARD and Bill T. Jones / New York Live Arts event at the Park Avenue Armory on Tuesday November 19, 2019.



Adrienne Willis, Artistic and Executive Director of LUMBERYARD, addresses a packed room of artists, presenters, producers and agents, and philanthropic funders at an event hosted by LUMBERYARD and Bill T. Jones / New York Live Arts at the Park Avenue Armory on Tuesday November 19, 2019.

About LUMBERYARD Center for Film and Performing Arts

LUMBERYARD is a non-profit performing arts and film campus located in the heart of Catskill, New York. With a state-of-the-art facility, LUMBERYARD offers a center for performing artists to test and perfect their work, and gives Hudson Valley audiences the opportunity to see performances before they premiere in New York City.

In addition to serving as a technical rehearsal site for performing artists, LUMBERYARD rents its 12,000 square foot space to film and television production companies. 100 percent of the net proceeds from these rentals are invested back into the Catskill community through programs such as: LUMBERYARD Young Performers, which provides free dance education for students living in low-income communities in and around Catskill, Fresh Start, an intervention program for incarcerated teens, and Junior Crew, which provides local high school students summer jobs and workforce development training – from resume building to learning how to network.

Set on the waterfront and just blocks from Main Street, LUMBERYARD is also a venue for weddings and large events, making the space an important part of the community's fabric and an economic driver for the region.

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