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THE ART OF CONNECTING: A COLLECTION AND STUDY OF COMMUNITY-
BASED ARTS AS RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

Dual Degree Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

Hilarie Rose Spangler

* * * * *

Western Kentucky University
2019

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Hilarie Rose Spangler
2019

To the movers and shakers, storytellers,
unheard and unseen. You have the power in your communities,
and you are allowed to and encouraged to embrace it.

Thank you for
for establishing the art of connecting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been the driving force of most of my work over the last four years and has existed to connect me with some of the most brilliant, kind and empathetic collaborators one could imagine. I can't even begin to know how to provide all of the people deserving of thanks for their support of me and this project, but I will begin with a thank you to everyone who has listened to me, closely and with an open heart to the contents of my heart and this work.

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To my other mentors, Liz Weir, Jennifer Brennan-Hondorp, and Annette Lucyx, you each have shown me the power of storytelling, music and art as it creates connectivity and provided me with deep appreciation for the art of travel and connections beyond the borders. You both have taught me so much and I look to you, now, as female mentors and role models.

To my family and friends, I would be lost without you. You have supported me and given me life in many different ways. To my parents, thank you for helping me along the way and for supporting me as I move into these crazy next endeavors. Thanks for always being there to help me as I fell down and also, thanks for giving me life, literally. Thank you, Hannah for being both a sister and a best friend and guide as I do life. Thanks for being a shoulder to cry on.

To my best friends, I love you. You support me in more ways than I can count. Thank you for making and being beside me through everything. I have many more words to say, but I love you and believe so hard in you.

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To everyone who has ever told me a story and listened to mine, thank you.

ABSTRACT

“One thing life has taught me: if you are interested, you never have to look for new interests. They come to you. They will gravitate as automatically as the needle to the north. Somehow, it is unnecessary, in any cold-blooded sense, to sit down and put your head in your hands and plan them. All you need to do is to be curious, receptive, eager for experience. And there’s one strange thing: when you are genuinely interested in one thing, it will always lead to something else.”

— Eleanor Roosevelt, *You Learn by Living*

The power that is wielded when people come together to engage in discussion, application, and exploration of the state of their community is unlike any other power. When that exploration is done through artistic outlets, the work transitions from discussion into creation, and creation is where we find innovation.

This project is a collection of examples, testimonies, stories, and methods that explore the power of storytelling and community engagement as restorative practice. It is the written part of my broader Capstone Experience which culminated in the creation of Cardinal Cross arts collective. This work builds on my curiosity and drive to learn by doing, and functions as a portfolio of work that I, as an artist and culture bearer, have engaged with, observed, learned from, and created. The theme that is carried through this project is that of artistic expression and education for social change and restoration, in various forms. I have chosen several different artistic movements and programs that each contribute in making social change in communities. Further, I have worked traveled widely to observe the power and restorative power of storytelling in building community. This project consists of case studies, a personal method for the devising process, reflections, and the development of a 21st century arts collective that embodies the various aspects of which I have researched.

Keywords: Cultural Identity and Belonging, Community Restoration, Ambivalence of Place, Performance Art, Storytelling, Cultural Rifts, Community-Based Arts, Theatre Performance, Rural-Urban Plurality

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Introduction

Cultural identity is something that most of us spend our whole lives trying to decipher: who are we, where does that come from, where do we go with it, and how does it work within the greater scheme of our lives? Within this life, we are awarded experiences, whether good or bad, and opportunities, whether vast or scarce, that mold us and our identities. Identity lives within the cognitive process of categorizing ourselves from the relatives around us, but also in the systemic ideas that are incorporated into our lives through our mentors, society, institutions, and experiences.¹

Personally, my identity has been a complicated one. It has fluctuated and felt detached at times and connected at others. Within the different facets of identity, I find myself relatively ambivalent about place, and through my work as a human and artist, I have sought out the deeper connections within my own cultural identity. Growing up in a conservative region of the United States was not always easy and I have often found my personal ideals to be in discourse with those of the culture in which I grew up and claim. In my experience, I typically found myself feeling “too everything else to be Appalachian and too Appalachian to be anything else.” I think this space in the “in between” is what has led to the significant amount of growth and openness that I have found to be a larger building block of the cultural identity that I have shaped for myself in my developmental years.

Growing up in Eastern Kentucky, it is a common identity, in which, you belong to three main groups: The Church, The Republican Party, and the in-group of traditional family life. I have never fit into these ideals exactly. I have always been more of a leftist

¹ See, for instance, Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh, *Narrative Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture* (John Benjamins Publishing, 2001).

thinker, even from a young age; and this influence comes specifically from my grandmother, who believed in the merit and importance of supporting all people, regardless of socio-economic background. While my political beliefs have grown and developed from this idea in seeing the various facets of political influence, I can recall the stories that I was told at a young age that actively enhanced my political preferences. This leads me into the way that the Appalachian way of life has shaped the way that I view the world economically.

It's not an unknown fact that the Appalachian region has significant problems.² Throughout the years, the Appalachian region has suffered major economic challenges which have resulted in the escalation of problems such as extreme poverty, declining health status, increased drug abuse, and community division. In Eastern Kentucky, many of these problems have overtaken the communities. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission's 2018 Fiscal Year Report, 84 counties are considered distressed, while 110 are at-risk. Within these 84 distressed counties, 41 are within Eastern Kentucky.³ When the coal industry declined and became unsustainable in Eastern Kentucky, many of the counties were left without a central bonding factor, as the coal industry had acted as for years. With the loss of this central bonding factor in commerce and in community, the communities were left distressed. This economic shaping of a society has actively fit into the way that I view power and privilege in my community and

² See, for instance, Elizabeth Catte, *What You are Getting Wrong About Appalachia* (Belt Publishing, 2018).

³ Appalachian Regional Commission, "Investing in Appalachia's Future: The Appalachian Regional Commission's Five-Year Strategic Plan for Capitalizing on Appalachia's Opportunities," www.arc.gov/images/newsroom/publications/sp/InvestinginAppalachiasFutureARCs2016-2020StrategicPlan.pdf

within my own identity. As a white woman, this is where intersectionality⁴ comes into play because of the racial privilege I have in the American society doesn't always coincide with the prejudices that I have faced growing up surrounded by poverty. This environment has affected the way that I am regarded in settings involving social and economic capital. I find myself in solidarity with my Appalachian heritage.

This awareness of my inherent privileges and prejudices has prompted the way I communicate and the way that I work as an artist. The best way that I can describe this is through my most recent project. As a part of this capstone experience, I sought to research and explore different artistic organizations in Appalachia that were creating development using art. One of those organizations is Roadside Theater in Norton, VA.⁵ Roadside Theater developed one of the community-organizing techniques called the Story Circle, which is at the forefront of my process for using Applied Storytelling to create development. After attending the Imagining America conference in October of 2018 in Davis, California, a colleague from Roadside and I decided to draft a proposal to create a work about an "Avant-garde Appalachia." The conversation began with the discussion of female archetypes in Appalachian artwork and how one of the binding factors for Appalachian discussion is the significance of place. Which, according to Bob Leonard, "Place is significant to all grassroots theaters." This knowledge that both Amy and I had of the significance of place probed us to question where the narratives of Appalachians who are ambivalent of place find themselves in the collection of

⁴ For more on intersectionality, see Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989), 139-169.

⁵ The Roadside Theater, <https://roadside.org/>

community identity. ⁶This question was the catalyst for development which, in its first iteration took place through under the Roadside Theater New Play Development wing, called "Cross-Roads Lab" where we explored different ways to create an artistic piece to open commentary on how women, members of the LGBTQ community, and other underrepresented communities fit into Appalachia. This work is continuing under Cardinal Cross Arts Collective at present and as someone engaging in this work, I aspire to participate in society and life, both, as an artist and encourager of my people in Appalachia that they can too. Artistic practice often feels not accessible in Eastern Kentucky and this is a notion that I seek to set fire to. Throughout my life, I have experienced inferiority complexes based on my cultural upbringing, especially in the arts industry as there are significant stereotypes that come with being Appalachian such as being uneducated, close-minded, poor, and stuck in the past. Appalachia has a rich and deep history that lives on past these stereotypes, but they have actively impacted my professional career. I often find myself adapting to situations through code-switching of my Appalachian dialect, and through my ambivalence of place, adapting to the environment that I am in. This skill is one that was wholeheartedly developed through necessity in obtaining the same respect that is freely given to other women of my intellect, educational background, etc. that are not tied to Appalachia, culturally. By engaging in and creating art, alongside community development that is relevant to unique communities stories, we see the restorative practice that comes from engaging in the humanities and that we can support a stronger Appalachia. An "avant-garde Appalachia"

⁶ Robert Leonard and Ann Kilkelly. *Performing Communities: Grassroots Ensemble Theaters Deeply Rooted in Eight U.S. Communities* (Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2006).

is an Appalachia that breathes new life into old traditions. I am deliberate my interest in and in the use of the term, “avant-garde”. Nato Thompson, in *Seeing Power*, discusses that “the history of the avant-garde isn’t just a history of isolated individuals caught up in the winds, but a series of calculated individuals that produce networks.... They are a mafia of meaning making.”⁷

The writing here is a description of my capstone experience and reflection on it. It is the process of how that I came into the business of meaning-making. It does not fully capture my journey to develop Crossroads Lab, but it helps to describe my intellectual and artistic journey that that contributed to it.

⁷ Nato Thompson, *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2015).

Chapter One

Storytelling and Community-Based Art

“Building and sustaining solidarity has to be much more than a political project. It is about reactivating the sentience of the social body much more than it is about political organizations... This empathy is the foundation of the solidarity we need today.”⁸

Nicole Garneau puts so beautifully what I think that we are all looking at when we engage in socially engaged art work, and that is building empathy and sustaining solidarity. Community-based art is all about the process of building and sustaining. We build our communities from the ground up and each of these communities has its own collection of stories, ones that are crying out to be heard. Community-based art work is exactly what it sounds like, its art made by and for the community in which it is created within. Throughout artistic history, different scholars and artists have revolutionized the way that we look at something that comes so naturally to all of us: the art of connecting with one another. This capstone experience and reflection came together because of the willingness of communities, including my home community in Appalachia, to welcome me in and embrace me as someone who could create, or help recreate a story that was central to the communities. In my capstone experience and reflection, I explore the way that community artmaking has occurred in the scope of rural, urban and international communities.

⁸ Nicole Garneau and Anne Jennifer Cushwa, *Performing Revolutionary: Art, Action, Activism*. (Chicago, IL: Intellect, University of Chicago Press, 2018).

I was recently able to work alongside Nicole in a community-based project at the Morgantown Care and Rehabilitation Center in Morgantown, Kentucky called Wendy's Neverland. The project was developed through Anne Basting's TimeSlips Creative Storytelling which developed and uses "evidence-based and award-winning approach inspires awe and brings joy to elders and their care partners. Our trainings and resources infuse creativity and meaning-making into aging services programming."⁹ The project utilized the talents and passions of various artists both local and from around the U.S. to engage and create a magical "journey of belief" in the home of many inspiring and artistic elders whose stories helped to build a larger community response. Artists worked with the elders over a year to write a script, based on Peter Pan, that incorporated the personal stories of the elders and how important it is to be believed in today's society. Once the production reached the point of rehearsal and performance, local artists and musicians came together to create an immersive, magical environment in the center to bring audiences in and guide them through, all the while, establishing a new perspective on elderly care facilities that is positive and destigmatized. I collaborated as one of the choral leaders that helped lead groups through and the restoration of joy in the elders, staff, and audience was evident and created an environment for further development and creative engagement to come. The piece will continue in two other facilities across Kentucky and seeks to become another care plan for further patients living with Alzheimer's and Dementia.

⁹ "Our Story." Timeslips. Accessed April 29, 2019. <https://www.timeslips.org/about/our-story>.

International Research¹⁰

Part of my work for my capstone was to study internationally. I was able to travel, teach, and read many articles in order to begin to scratch the surface of what, I feel, to be a very important idea in the future of arts advocacy and public service.

I first set out on my Europe research to discover how people were using various artistic initiatives to build community in their respected areas. As I began, I intended to explore how community and broad-based community organizing can be stimulated by adding an artistic approach. As I started my research, however, I found a more specific form of art that really tied everything together: storytelling. Storytelling is one of our most basic forms of humanity, and one of our most natural instincts. I found that through this research, I was able to connect the dots between how stories connect on both the rural and urban frontlines. We find stories in every profession, art form, and even within our subconscious thoughts. According to *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* by Jonathan Gottschall¹¹ insights on storytelling can not only be found within our artistic areas of study, but also are very prevalent in biology, psychology, and neuroscience. Yet we often don't find these connections because, "Human life is so bound up in stories that we are thoroughly desensitized to their power."¹² My research begins with the story and ends with discoveries that truly add to the work I wish to add on to throughout my career.

My first excursion was a three-day travel weekend to Vienna, Austria in order to attend an international storytelling festival, called Magic Stories.¹³ As a part of an effort

¹⁰ Hilarie Spangler, Reflections (FUSE Narrative, July 2017).

¹¹ Mariner Books, 2013.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ International Storytelling Festival, <http://www.storytellingfestival.at/>

to create a unified interest amongst the community of Vienna, The Museums Quartier arranged a summer initiative to bring free, artistic events to the public. The Museums Quartier is in the heart of Vienna and is an ideal place to begin to build the connections within the community from the inside-out. During Magic Stories, storytellers of all different genres gathered together to perform a story marathon to narrate events and create awareness of their individual cultures. Below is a list of observations made during the festival, focusing on storytelling method:

- Storyteller from Berlin: uses space and level to enhance his spoken narrative. Also integrates music into the narrative. As a whole, he opens up an opportunity for the community to gather and opens up the idea that storytelling takes on various forms and mediums.
- Deepa Kiran, India: Uses traditional elements of Indian culture: song, dance, costume, fable, instruments. Uses an open forum technique, audience participation and interaction, uses traditional instruments as symbols within her stories. The stories have a strong female presence and incorporates the arts within the actual story. Question that spurred from this observation: How do we integrate personal elements of culture into our stories? Extending from this question, we can implement certain cultural acknowledgements into how we assess storytelling in community-based settings and we can tailor our cultural information to the way that we engage storytelling into methods.
- In any form, we have to paint the picture through our storytelling for the listener. In the middle of a cultural mecca of the community - provides a meeting place to bring together social, artistic, community and educational ideas into one, common meeting place.
- Stephanie Deshalle, France: She uses choreography to tell stories through the body and the way it moves through shapes and in space. Interesting body shapes- uses very robotic and focused movements. The body can represent our thought and movement is a voice that can be used as a storytelling method. How does this type of storytelling change within communities of different abilities?
- Antonio Rocha, Brazil: Uses mime and traditional Brazilian movements. Integrates acting and movement to tell a folktale- natural and animal like sounds and movement are used to paint the picture. He is a big performer. How do we go

BIG and then internalize those ideas and emotions for a more natural delivery. (Note connections to methods from Michael Chekov technique.¹⁴)

- Allegra, violinist creates the bond between teller and audience, then introduces something new to the audience. (See “Variations on Mundane Experiences” in Chapter 2). You can utilize movement while playing an instrument to story tell.
- Peter Cook, USA: communicates through deafness. Storytelling through both spoken word and sign language. Offers a sense of how we combat language barriers when we are trying to communicate an idea or tell our story. We can utilize our differences to enhance our art and our issues that we want to bring awareness to. He uses techniques of creating groups amongst the audience and interacting with them. Builds community amongst his audience with a common goal to achieve. It takes physical narrative to a new level by incorporating the sign language. Intercultural communication can come from something as simple as learning another language to communicate with someone else.
- Gabri Vosteen, musical comedian: uses the recorder to incorporate comedic elements into his musical playing. His performance both plays with accurate pitch but also with using body movement as a way to interact with the audience. Uses the whole body as a vessel for storytelling. Juggles and plays 5 recorders at once.
- Peter Shub, USA uses musical mime and prop work to physicalize his narrative. The way we connect with our body can evoke clear, entertaining messages.

Each of these observations helped to create the model of devising found in Chapter Two of this capstone.

My second excursion included a residency at Iris Art Centre in Afidnes, Greece working under Annette Luyx on artistic voice. It is difficult to describe my experience in Greece, because I learned more than I ever thought to be possible in just four and a half days. The way the workshop was structured was to be a live-in community where each of the artists, different from each other, lived together, are together, created together, and discussed with one another. I believe this is an excellent example of how intercultural communication can be beautiful. Among the artists present were: myself, the American

¹⁴ "Writings On The Technique Of Acting." *Michael Chekhov*: 35-80.
doi:10.4324/9780203380475_chapter_2.

student and youngest of the artists, an arts educator of Egyptian origin from Sydney Australia, Annette, a Dutch collage artist now living and creating in Greece, and a British-Greek collage artist from Afidnes. It was incredible how a group of artists could find connections among each other, but the fact that we were all women had an even stronger connective hold on the art and discoveries we made. I think this experience really opened up the perspective on how to create community amongst very different populations: and that comes from finding a collective effort to bond over. Our artistic pursuits created a group effort to bond over, but what happened over the three days really opened up perspective. On the first day, it was very difficult to create connections with the other artists. I had nothing to really “measure-up” to what they did, and I had no cultural connections to make, as we were all from all over the world. But throughout the workshop, we were forced to write and share stories that inspired our art. It was through our stories that we began to find more ways that we were alike, rather than how we were different. Roadside Theater, one of the arts for community development organizations that I study, uses a technique called Story Circles which is a Socratic seminar type discussion that asks each participant to tell a story about the current topic at hand. After each person tells their unique stories, connections start to be drawn by the circle leader in order to find the common ground amongst different experiences. This technique, although not as intentional as this, was quite effective during my time in Greece. Not only did my personal art get better, but I found real-life applications of the techniques that I have been studying over the past year and new perspectives on how to bond people over intercultural communication. In fact, the bonds that are created using this technique

are not just temporary, they stick. I know that it stuck in our case, as we will continue to do artistic check-ins via Skype from Afidnes, New York, Sydney, and Alexandria.

My study within Europe inspired me to continue finding these connections between art and community, as they are prevalent throughout the world. I will continue researching intercultural communication and how it contributes to the bonding of unique populations across borders. My previously discussed experiences led to my work in Northern Ireland, apprenticing with storyteller Liz Weir. Northern Ireland is the home of magic, mist blanketing over the Glens, and above all, stories. Stories as medicine, stories to make friends, stories to heal old wounds; all of these methods are alive and well in Northern Ireland.

It's always amazing the way that life moves us, it takes us far across the sea and presents us with an opportunity to learn and breathe life in. I first set out on my research to discover how people were using various artistic initiatives to build community in their respected areas. When I found myself at Liz Weir's barn in Ballyeamon, I found a more specific form of art that really tied everything together: storytelling and the deep roots that it has throughout the world. As noted by Jonathan Gottschall and stated in my introduction, storytelling is one of our most basic forms of humanity, and one of our most natural instincts.

My research in Northern Ireland begins with the story. Liz Weir and I were strangers who met through a mutual friend: an amazing dance artist who I worked with in New York City two years prior. We talked and I somehow managed to acquire an apprenticeship with one of the most impressive and wonderful women that I have had the opportunity to be mentored by

Liz Weir is a very accomplished storyteller, librarian, author, a true renaissance woman. Throughout the two months that I spent with Liz, she taught me many things. She told me stories of how, throughout her life, she would use stories to try to bond students in both Catholic and Protestant communities, she told stories to promote the necessity of culture, and to connect with those different from us. Liz took me under her wing and worked diligently to show me how to tell stories; which is something I was still new to. Throughout my career with stories, I've been immersed in applied storytelling rather than the performance or telling of stories. Liz encouraged me to tell, not only stories that I heard from various storytellers from my whole life, but also my own personal stories.

Liz is the Librarian in Residence for most of Northern Ireland and travels throughout the region to tell at different schools, libraries and community centers. As Liz's apprentice, I traveled with her to observe and was able to tell stories at a few of the Yarnspinner events. We also helped student groups to have them create their own stories and engage cross ages within their schools. Liz told stories to each guest that entered her barn and encouraged all of us to relate stories to each experience that we encountered. Living amongst people from across the world, I learned that story and music are universal languages. Liz encouraged me to work through my insecurities about telling stories and allowed me to delve into the community of Cushendall with stories from Eastern Kentucky. Each Saturday night at the barn, we had story sessions where people would run from the hills to share in laughter, stories. and Irish music.

In Northern Ireland, I found adventure in ways that were all surrounded by story. Through traditional Irish tale, music, folk life, connectivity; all of these things that Liz

helped me to experience showed me the necessity of stories in our daily life. They show us the way that, at the end of the day, our cultures are connected, that we are connected.

Chapter Two

The Three Pillars: An Appalachian Community Arts Devising Method

“To start—a definition. By now, most people in the theatre world know what devised theatre is. But, just in case, devised theatre is theatre that begins without a script. The script gets ‘written’ as the rehearsal process takes place through a series of improvisations and collaborations. And what results is, in my mind, the multifaceted and omnivorous child of both the Internet and age-old traditional forms like Commedia dell’arte—both fluid and pastiche.”¹⁵

Within the realm of community-based artwork, organizing, and planning, comes the collaborative practice of storytelling and how the stories we listen to, share, and devise contribute to our communities as a whole. Through story circle methods,¹⁶ we find that the collective practice of structured story sharing has been a popular mode of community-engagement, planning, and facilitator of discussion. Through study of these strategic methods of community-organizing, I have developed a specific method of artistic story sharing to be used in further community-based arts projects, called the Three Pillars.

The Three Pillars exist as single words: “Uncovering, Rediscovery, and Variations.” These three words relate to three phrases: “Uncovering Truth, Rediscovery of something familiar, and Variations on Mundane Experiences.” Each of these pillars contribute to a call to open up curiosity and connecting thoughts from collaborators in specific groups seeking to artistically devise a new community-based project, whether it be a play, poem, musical piece, etc.

¹⁵ "The Paradox of Devised Theater on the Twenty-First Century Stage." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Accessed April 08, 2019. <https://howlround.com/paradox-devised-theater-twenty-first-century-stage>.

¹⁶ About Story Circles, <https://roadside.org/program/story-circles>.

The way that each of the three pillars function in the process of devising is with application and exploration of the way that a specific element of artistic practice works with each of the pillars. For example, “Uncovering Truth” can be paired with the aspect of movement in the piece. The ensemble is challenged to use their bodies to move throughout space with the idea of uncovering a truth about an event. For instance, a performer may decide that the truth they are uncovering is a fork in the path they are imagining. They must then use movement to react to that truth and move forward in space.

“Rediscovery of Something Familiar” can also work with movement moving from a mundane, observational movement into something that has a different vibe to it. A performer may decide that the movement they engage with is that of kicking a rock down the path but discover an element of dance or musical rhythm that comes from the swinging of their leg or the sound as their foot skims the floor. This “rediscovery” combines with an “Uncovering of truth” and leads to a “Variation on a mundane experience.”

“Variations on Mundane Experiences” work especially well with the music aspect of devising. The ensemble can be given a melody, rhythm, etc. and are challenged to create a variation on it each time that a “Rediscovery” or an “Uncovering of Truth” occurs in the devising process. These variations that are built then allow curiosity and new rhythms and melodies to be layered, creating a full song that is actively being inspired by the movement and words being explored by the ensemble.

Each of the pillars are interchangeable in nature and exist to prompt curiosity and a freedom of exploration. The pillars act as guideposts for community building and the

process of building ideas off of one another. Other ways to engage the pillars is to form a game of telephone with each of the pillars and have a specific prompt. This prompt could be anything, such as: “When Fear turns into something else” which is a common prompt used in many other methods. This prompt can then be engaged with the aspects of “Uncovering truth” about when fear turns into something else, how that uncovered truth can lead to a “Rediscovery of something familiar,” and then how both of those things can happen through “variations on mundane experiences” throughout the piece (i.e. how to get from A to B when creating a narrative).

Of course, this method is a work-in-progress. It will be taught as a workshop through Arts in the Gap in Cumberland Gap, TN in June, 2019. As with all methods, there is always room for discovery and alterations to be made.

The way that this method will function as a workshop is best described as communal and collaborative. In the workshop, I will facilitate a medium to large group of people who are interested in the process of devising through music. The workshop will occur over five days with a group performance at the end.

In the first day of the workshop, we will be getting to know the pillars and how they function within the group that we have. We will, as a group, set the protocol for how we will engage with the pillars and what subject we will be devising around. From there, we will go over the concept behind Uncovering, Rediscovering, and Variations and identify the truths that are already present around the current topic. For example, if the topic is youth involvement in the community and we are devising a piece around young voices in the community, then the group might decide that the truth around that topic is that “There is a lack of support for youth in our community” or “We feel like youth is

very supported in our community” and from there we will pick out words and ideas that present the foundation which we will vary and explore.

Next, we will start to imagine the artistic elements of these ideas and generate ideas and how they manifest into melodies and rhythms. I will probe the makers to think about how adjectives and verbs sound like so, perhaps, the word perseverance sounds like a strong drum beat with a recurring melody that is minor. This can be applied to any of the words that we generate as a group. We will then break into groups and take what we have already established as a group and pull in the other pillars. One group will be challenged to find variations on mundane experiences as they discuss and listen to the content generated and the other will be challenged to rediscover something familiar in the way that they progress with the devising. We will then share the segments and switch groups to keep generating and varying the content. The last days will consist of picking the generated pieces that we, as a group, like the best and putting together a song in a rough form to be performed as a work in progress at the end.

Chapter Three

Implementation of The Crossroads Lab into Cardinal Cross

Introduction

The Crossroads Lab is a fiercely feminist, first-voice exploration of 21st Century Appalachian identity in contemporary art practice and performance. Focused on fostering change in traditional artmaking, we seek to create a space for the unheard voices of artists in Appalachia. The Lab intentionally creates producing, directing, writing, and performance opportunities for Appalachian-identifying women, womxn, and gender-nonconforming or LGBTQ-identified individuals; documented and undocumented immigrants; people of color, particularly indigenous and Native; people with disabilities; our incarcerated neighbors; those informally educated or sustained by alt-economies; non-rural "Metrolachians" with affinities for mainstream culture; and mountain people either deeply-rooted or itinerant-by-circumstance or disposition. We cannot tell the stories of others, they don't belong to us, but what we can do is join the collective, create the space, and nurture the practice in solidarity as artists, storytellers, and Appalachian Mountain Women. The lab, as previously mentioned, was inspired by the collective interest in the stories of Appalachians who are ambivalent of place.

The following collection of materials exist to document and detail the process of how the two-woman arts collective Cardinal Cross was born out of the research from this Honors Capstone. The following materials are the planning documents from when the arts collective was under parent organization Roadside Theatre and existed as The Crossroads Lab. These materials were created and written in collaboration with my co-

artistic director and lead artist, Amy Brooks, who guided the language that we developed together to present our work as collaborators. Amy's brilliance and dramaturgical background helped to create clear language in our development phase. My individual research, which has pulled from rural, urban, and international community-based projects, has informed most of the contributions that I made in co-developing Cardinal Cross. The study of storytelling, which we use frequently as a mode of community-organizing in our work, has been the foundation for many of the ideas that are presented in this work. Below is the collection of language, discussion, questions, ideas, and our March 2019 Crossing Roots Workshop Precis. This section of the capstone is portfolio of work and process.

Background

The following collection of work was presented at the Community Theatre for Social Justice Action Conference in South Bend, IA on April 24th-26th, 2018 and will be presented at the Inaugural Crossing Roots: A Rural-Urban Workshop in Cumberland Gap, TN on March 4th-7th, 2019. Cardinal Cross' collaboration with The TEAM will be featured in articles published by TheatreMania, PlayBill, the website of participant Chloe Loos, and will be featured in upcoming articles with HowlRound. The collaboration with the TEAM also yielded a 2019 NET (Network of Ensemble Theaters) Grant and the Artist in Activism Grant from the Kentucky Foundation for Women. The collective will continue to produce work and maintain a relationship with the TEAM into 2019.

Crossroads Lab: Master Planning Document¹⁷

¹⁷ Amy Brooks and Hilarie Spangler, The Crossroads Lab Planning Discussion Series (November 22, 2017).

The traditional and indigenous are integral to grassroots theater and valued for their ability to help us maintain continuity with the past, respond to the present, and prepare for the future. Thus, *the relationship to the traditional and indigenous is dynamic, not fixed.*¹⁸

Overview

Principal Artists: Amy Brooks, Hilarie Rose Spangler

“In 1975, Roadside Theater was founded in the coalfields of central Appalachia as part of Appalshop.¹⁹ Its young founders start telling, in a new ensemble way, the stories they had grown up hearing from their families – tales more intact in Appalachian communities than they were in the British Isles where they originated.²⁰ Through collaborative research and play, these artists would go on to recognize and fulfill a sharply-felt need in their communities: for a new theater which would draw upon the collective riches of memory, imagination, and heritage in order to tell stories that revealed the distinct character and texture of late-20th century Appalachian life. By turns hilarious and elegiac, ribald and reverent, Roadside Theater’s early riffs on eastern Kentuckian and southwest Virginian culture rang like a bell through audiences in community centers, church revival tents, middle school auditoriums and off-Broadway theaters alike. The ensemble spoke of-the-moment truths to exploitative (often invisible) power structures within the region, sounded depths of civic feeling without succumbing

¹⁸ Dudley Cooke, Harry Newman, and Janet Salmons-Rue, *From the Ground UP, Grassroots Theater in Historical and Contemporary Perspective* (Community Based Arts Project, Cornell University, 1993), available online at <https://docs.google.com/gview?url=http://roadside.org/sites/default/files/From%2520The%2520Ground%2520Up.pdf&chrome=true>

¹⁹ Appalshop Home, <https://www.appalshop.org/>

²⁰ Roadside Theater, *Highlights of Roadside’s History*, <https://roadside.org/highlights-roadsides-history>

to sentimentalism, and flouted official historical narratives with an exuberance and technical virtuosity that could not be bought in elite theater conservatories. They were ornery and footloose, touring every state in the nation; and they did not shy away from the audacity of making art in a democracy – that is, plays which reflected the whole, complex communities in which they were created and performed.”

The Crossroads Lab expands Roadside’s joyful, subversive political theater repertoire by providing a dedicated space for interdisciplinary, first-voice exploration of 21st century Appalachian identity in live performance. Focused on seeking out, collaboratively developing, and presenting new community-based plays and performance art that probe current issues identified in story circles, interviews, and intercultural exchanges, Lab programming will reflect the aesthetic and cultural values of contemporary Appalachian artists. To build this repertoire, the Lab will draw upon selected Roadside Theater playmaking and CCD methodologies – tested in diverse communities of every U.S. state and 6 countries over 42 years – to dramatize life at the intersections of heritage and imagination; tradition and Appal-futurism; generational folk wisdom and its of-the-moment expressions in the music, storytelling, reporting, and digital media and design of today’s transitional mountain culture. From the personal research of both Brooks and Spangler, the Lab will demonstrate a new perspective on grassroots and the intersection between avant-garde, urban, rural and international practice and engagement. Lab artists will address the core questions:

- What would an Appalachian avant-garde look like – that is, what movement (if any) are Appalachian artists at the vanguard of; and what principles do we reject? How does an Appalachian avant-garde differ from urban/non-Appalachian/20th century rebellions against the mainstream?

- What critical and aesthetic qualities define a distinct 21st century Appalachian form, and how do these qualities draw on *and* diverge from folk roots?
- How has immersive daily technology changed our relationship to Stories? to Community? to Intimacy? How can contemporary artists embody these changes in performance; and how do they affect our perceptions of the Rural places and natural world in which our work is grounded? What role does technology play in the art we produce and perform in our communities?
- From Todd London’s *An Ideal Theater*: “How does [theater] live in a place, a community, a culture? And more: How does a theater reflect and embody the genius of its founders? Of its artists? Of its geographical place? Of its community or audience? Of its historical moment? *How does a theater continue when that moment passes?*”
- How can mobile, itinerant, or unrooted Appalachian residents and/or former residents connect with their birthright of mountain heritage? Through what new disciplines and perspectives do they view this heritage, and how can their truths be expressed onstage?

Core Principles

1. We investigate the boundaries of Appalachian identity and belonging.

In *Hillbilly Elegy*, nonwhite people, anyone with progressive politics, those who care about the environment, LGBTQ individuals, young folks, and a host of others do not exist in Appalachia.²¹

The Lab will discover, amplify, and celebrate the voices of Appalachians whose stories are seldom told on stage: women, womxn, and gender-nonconforming or LGBTQ; documented and undocumented immigrants; people of color, particularly indigenous and Native; people with disabilities; our incarcerated neighbors; those informally educated or sustained by alt-economies; non-rural ‘Metrolachians’ with affinities for mainstream culture; and mountain people either deeply-rooted or itinerant by circumstance or disposition. Vanished from national media narratives, underrepresented by elected officials and urban arts institutions, these “invisible” Appalachian people – loners and

²¹ Elizabeth Catte, *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia* (Belt Publishing, 2018).

culture bearers, iconoclasts, dreamers, and pilgrims – and their stories are the arterial blood of the Crossroads Lab’s community productions.

2. We perform intentional and radical Recovery.

This core principal was inspired from a personal interest from Amy Brooks and her experience in her West Virginian heritage. Whether in the coalfields of West Virginia or the forests of the long-leaf pine, the earth beneath us queers committed to collective liberation buzzes. We find ourselves both energized and grounded by that electric dirt. Our desire to claim our own labels, reimagine our childhood myths, share our own stories, and create a better, safer world for all manifests itself in-between art and activism. The art we share and show is political; the way we show up and resist in spite of all that seeks to invalidate or erase our existence is art.

We must imagine a new country. ...The recovering alcoholic may well have to live with his illness for the rest of his life. But at least he is not living a drunken lie.²²

To identify as Appalachian is to grapple with a vast old machinery of negative idealization. This machine generates endless images of material poverty, abuse, narcotic addiction, mental and physical illness, xenophobic isolationism, and environmental catastrophe. While we recognize these entities as real and pressing threats to the well-being of Appalachian communities, Crossroads Lab artists use traumatic images in the sole service of transcending, subverting, deconstructing, and rehabilitating their legacy of despair. Blunt honesty and fierce compassion; political, economic and cultural literacy; humor; aesthetic skill; a definite commitment to healing, truth & reconciliation; and even facility with the basic tenets of addiction and codependency treatment (to wit, *know*

²² Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

thysel) are the tools with which Crossroads Lab artists confront our cultural contradictions to address the need for agency, sanity, and belonging onstage, in our communities, and in national dialogues.

3. We emphasize Imagination, Progressivism, and the Future.

The Scots-Irish Appalachian identity has been documented, pondered, caricatured, and folklorized, both to the benefit and – in the case of mass-marketed products like *Hillbilly Elegy* – to the detriment of our region’s collective capacity to define itself rather than be bounded by negative stereotypes. Roadside Theater will continue to uplift and preserve the inherent genius of traditional Cumberland mountain story, song, and British Isles heritage. Within this heritage-based framework, however, the Crossroads Lab serves as a constrained creative experiment in rendering Appalachian folk forms through an equally-Appalachian progressive lens; blurring the boundaries of Eurocentric aesthetic values to better reflect our region’s plural cultural identities; and putting place-based arts in direct conversation with the rural diaspora, urban cultures, and mobile populations that increasingly inform daily life, politics, and creative initiatives in the Eastern mountains. In a folk field distinguished by clear-eyed articulations of our collective past, the Lab is an exploratory project for showcasing images and performances staked on an equally clear-eyed commitment to the present and future.

4. We seek adventurous artistic exchanges that redefine Interculturalism.

As the success of Roadside’s past intercultural collaborations has depended “on extensive, long-term exchange between...theater companies, their audiences, and their

home communities,” The Lab intentionally cultivates cost-effective strategies for sustainable cross-geographic, small-scale (but patient and deeply engaged) exchanges with artists, social scientists, activists, organizers, teachers, and diverse collaborators whose voices illuminate and complicate our own understanding of Appalachia. The Lab further understands these exchanges to be intergenerational and multidisciplinary, drawing on the expertise of creatives within grassroots, academic, and mainstream regional nonprofit institutions; individuals working outside of credentialized systems; and fledgling ensembles sounding similar themes within and without the region.

5. We affirm and prioritize minority leadership.

American Theater magazine reports this year:

A 2015 study released by the Wellesley Centers for Women measured the leadership of 74 LORT theatres (most of which are in a co-equal leadership model, with power shared between an artistic and managing or executive director) in 2014. They found that there were zero managing or executive directors of color and, on the artistic side, just six people of color. Since then the figures have worsened: Three artistic directors of color have departed, or will depart... So there are currently only four people of color leading LORT theatres...That same study also found that women made up 59 percent of managerial staff presumably next in line for leadership positions (associate artistic directors, general managers, finance directors, development managers, etc.). But women have historically never held more than 27 percent of leadership positions in the American theatre, and the needle on that percentage hasn’t budged in 30 years.²³

Roadside’s community engagement and audience-building strategies have historically subverted U.S. theater’s race- and class-based systems of exclusion in residencies and play presenting. The Crossroads Lab builds upon this foundation for cultural equity by consciously creating collaborative producing, directing, performing, and writing

²³ Joseph Haj, Succession and Diversity Must Go Hand In Hand, Wellesley Centers for Women, www.americantheatre.org/2017/08/31/succession-and-diversity-must-go-hand-in-hand/

opportunities for female-identifying, brown, black, queer, and differently-abled people from every socioeconomic background. Lab artists recognize the imperative of diverse stories performed for audiences which reflect whole communities and will develop creative strategies which promote parity, fairness, and careful listening as core ethical and aesthetic values. Both Amy and I have equally experience the throes of being an actively engaged woman at the forefront of pioneering and collaborating on work that is a part of a male-dominated society. One of our core inspirations comes from the necessity to change the face of organizations and leadership to reflect the diversity and changing world around us. As a two female-run fledgling company, we are actively searching for how to involve and uplift minority leadership in our organization.

Potential collaborators, advisors, or support:

Dustin Hall	Affrilachian Poets: Crystal Good, Crystal
Tammy Clemmons	Wilkinson
Ollie Baker	Joy Harjo
Oakley Fugate	bell hooks
Skylar Griffith	Izzy Broomfield
Tanya Turner	Elizabeth Catte
Editors/contributors - <i>Electric</i>	Emily Hilliard
<i>Dirt</i>	Courtney Cook
Mark Kidd	Bob Martin
Robert Gipe	Jonathan Clark
Nicole Garneau	

Looking for Lilith

Liz Weir

Inaugural Projects - samples & hypotheticals

- *Appalachian Dance Revisited*: Exploring new & experimental iterations of traditional Appalachian dance forms (e.g., flatfooting, square dance, clogging, & contra dance) in collaboration with classical practitioners
- *#Mutsmeg*: A storytelling project to study Jack-and-Mutsmeg, Junebug Jabbo Jones, traditional Native and other historical trickster legends and re-contextualize them for youth and modern audiences. What is the cultural value of the trickster archetype and what are its contemporary forms? How do we understand the trickster character differently in 2017, and how are new visions informed by changing relationships to place, technology, political structures, and personal identity?
- *Mountain Mamas*: A collective ensemble play project that integrates elements of drag and satire to explore various sacred tropes of Appalachian womanhood, from the “wise mamaw” to the “girl with a guitar” to the Mother Jones-type labor organizing goddess. Writer-performers will explore various mythological identities of cultural importance to the region, asking: to what extent have these Appalachian tropes relied on cis-hetero definitions of motherhood & childbearing, and in what ways did they subvert those conventions? What types of women have *not* been included in the pantheon? What can we learn from the leadership of such women, and how might they perform resistance in 2017?

Creative Resources & Influences

Nonfiction/Policy:

- *An Ideal Theater*, Todd London
- “The Mythical Whiteness of Trump Country,” Elizabeth Catte
- *Crappalachia*, Scott McClanahan
- The writing of bell hooks (Berea, KY) & Nikki Giovanni (Blacksburg, VA)

Fiction

- James Still, *These Hills Remember*

Drama

- *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven and Other Plays*, Young Jean Lee
- *Mountain Tales & Music*, Roadside Theater
- *Looking for Lilith*, Carrie Piccard, Shannon Woolley, Trina Fischer, Jen Thalman, and Mik'ala Jacobs

Poetry

- *Electric Dirt* zine
- poems of Wendell Berry

Podcasts

- *Inside Appalachia*
- *Trillbillies Workers' Party*
- *She Does*
- *On Being*

Film

- AMI youth documentaries

Potential Funders

- Appalachian Community Fund: <http://www.appalachiancommunityfund.org/>
- Arts & Culture Alliance: <http://animatingdemocracy.org/organization/arts-and-culture-alliance> (This one is specific to TN, but I work through Cumberland Gap with most of my work- like my storytelling work is all through the Gap- and where we are in the tri-state area, it might be worth a try)
- Kentucky Foundation for Women: <http://animatingdemocracy.org/organization/kentucky-foundation-women>
- Native Arts & Cultures Foundation: <http://animatingdemocracy.org/organization/native-arts-and-culture-foundation>
- NEA Our Town: <http://animatingdemocracy.org/organization/our-town-national-endowment-arts>
- Appalshop Presenting & Education (P&E) allocation
- Alternate ROOTS Artistic Assistance Project Development (\$5K)
- LMDA Dramaturg Driven Grant (\$1K)
- MAP project fund (\$10,000 – \$45,000)

TBD:

- Work plan (initial phases)
- Advisory team
- More specific role within Roadside FY18 program plan/my capacity
- Potential connections to/collaborations with Appalshop

CROSSING ROOTS²⁴

A Rural-Urban Theater Workshop

March 4-7, 2019 • Cumberland Gap, TN

This event is made possible by the generous sponsorship and support of Arts in the Gap and Lincoln Memorial University, Appalshop, the Kentucky Foundation for Women, and Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas.

OVERVIEW

Kentucky-based artists Amy Brooks and Hilarie Spangler (Cardinal Cross Arts Co.) will partner with Arts in the Gap and Lincoln Memorial University to produce Crossing Roots, a 3-day theater workshop and intercultural exchange in Cumberland Gap, and various central Appalachian cultural sites, in March 2019. Crossing Roots will feature Tony Award-nominated director Rachel Chavkin and her NYC ensemble Theater of the Emerging American Moment (or The TEAM), as well as diverse Appalachian and Southern theater artists and performers from the National Theatre of Scotland. The workshop, loosely structured around The TEAM’s “Devising In a Democracy” training and its 2016 Appalachian-Scottish play Anything That Gives Off Light, will admit 20 diverse local, regional, and national participants with degrees of performance experience from amateur to professional on a sliding pay scale. Participants will explore devised theater-making; exercises which explore memory, trauma, and identity as embodied traits

²⁴ Amy Brooks and Hilarie Spangler, Crossing Roots Workshop Planning Discussion Precis, (February 2019).

we carry and perform; and intercultural musical, culinary, and storytelling exchange as tools for transforming our rural and urban communities. A rich documentation plan including short film, podcasts, and published articles, co-produced by local artists (including the media makers at grassroots arts center Appalshop), TEAM members, and Arts in the Gap staff will showcase Tennessee, Kentucky and other Appalachian artists as leaders in convening international talent and culture.

The TEAM and NTS actors will kick off the week with an intimate “pub” version of their 2016 Appalachian-Scottish play *Anything That Gives Off Light*, directed by Tony Award-nominee Rachel Chavkin (*Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812*) at a ticketed public event on the LMU campus. The play’s intercultural themes, experimental form, and high-voltage musical backbone will serve as a framework for the 3 days of theater-making and community immersion to follow. Participants will attend two to three “master classes” per day in subjects drawn from the toolkits of The TEAM; Brooks and Spangler’s Cardinal Cross; National Theatre of Scotland actors and musicians; and Looking For Lilith and other Appalachian theater ensembles. These will include learning to move from intellectual or thematic ideas to dynamic theatrical moments; generating material through physical and written assignments; cultivating an ensemble bond and navigating emotional waters amidst a process; strategies for editing as a group; building dances; writing on your feet (and other approaches to improvisation); using story circles as a community cultural and ensemble development tool; and more.

Crossing Roots will further build upon a three-year relationship between New York-based ensemble The TEAM, the National Theatre of Scotland, and the community-based artists of eastern Kentucky, eastern Tennessee, and southwestern Virginia,

advancing the missions of regional community engagement programs like Arts in the Gap. Workshop sessions will be interspersed with a broad range of local cultural immersion, including a community meal event hosted by LEE award-winning Vietnamese-Appalachian chef and Amity Foodworks founder AuCo Lai; a public musical meet-and-greet for Cumberland Gap residents and LMU students, faculty, and staff; conversation with leadership from Jonesborough's International Storytelling Center, and a day working with the media makers of grassroots arts and cultural center Appalshop in Whitesburg, KY.

“It was in these hills, among such coalfield artists, that The TEAM first conducted its 2016 research tour for *Anything That Gives Off Light*, which examines Appalachian-American and Scottish national myths. The play was created from a series of talks with people across Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky – interviews with mountain people as far-ranging as conservative and libertarian "land-grant" farmers and a 70+ year old community organizer and cultural worker who has been fighting racism, capitalism, and the coal industry his entire life.”²⁵

PARTNERSHIP GOALS

- To make visible to mainstream arts, media and funding outlets the cultural diversity and aesthetic excellence of rural Appalachia and the South;
- To bring new pedagogies of performance, devising, and community cultural development into both rural and urban participants' and teachers' toolkits;
- To model sustainable, community-grounded creative careers for aspiring artists in Cumberland Gap and other economically struggling towns; and
- To generate financial and reputational capital for participating Appalachian artists, particularly partners Arts in the Gap, LMU, and Appalshop.

The financial model for the workshop (including ticket sales for *Light*; enrollment fees scaled to avoid exploitation; and the attractiveness of the collaboration to potential funders) will generate revenue and visibility for southeastern artists' teaching, touring,

²⁵ Amy Brooks, *Crossing Roots Discussion*, (February 2019).

and convening labor; boost traffic to community businesses the week of the event; and help to establish Cumberland Gap and its partner sites as thriving creative communities within and beyond the region.

Appalachian cultural workers – and the communities where we live and raise our families – deserve to benefit materially from the value we create in the form of songs, stories, language, and cultural knowledge. This value which has historically been extracted by urban companies building “Appalachian plays” which do not financially compensate Appalachian people. Crossing Roots aims to explicitly address and correct this historic injustice by placing international artists on equal creative terms with Tennessee, Kentucky, and other Appalachian culture-bearers.

ROUGH TIMELINE

NOV 2018

- Brooks, Spangler, and TEAM staff wrap up initial research and planning phase
- TEAM & Appalshop contract negotiation & signing - partnership finalized

DEC 2018

- National announcement of workshop & performance
- Logistical planning & contract signing w/Arts in the Gap, LMU
- Online workshop enrollment open
- Brooks & Spangler coordinate partners/co-teachers in eastern KY
- Tiffany Sanchez (Arts in the Gap) coordinates Cumberland Gap local partners, sponsors & participants

JAN 2019

- Jan. 15: *Anything That Gives Off Light* tickets go on sale
- Workshop curriculum design finalized
- Workshop participants notified

FEB 2019

- Brooks, Spangler & all partners promote event on social media, regional, and local media outlets

MAR 2019

- Mar. 3-7: Workshop & performance commence in Cumberland Gap and partner sites throughout eastern KY and TN

SAMPLE WORKSHOP SCHEDULE – This *will* change!

Sun, Mar. 3

- TEAM travels from Blacksburg, VA to Cumberland Gap, TN
- Evening musical meet-and-greet with workshop producers, faculty & community

Mon, Mar. 4

- 11:00AM: TEAM tech load in & brush-up rehearsal
- 3:00: Workshop leaders & participants arrive, check in at various lodgings
- 4:30: Story circle led by Cardinal Cross (Convention Center)
- 6:00: Opening dinner (Angelo's)
- 7:30: *Anything That Gives Off Light* performance at Duke Theater
- 9:00: Post-show community talkback & reception

Tues Mar. 5: LMU – Cumberland Gap campus

- Morning: 2 Workshops in Conference Center; TEAM load out
- Lunch break: AuCo Lai & community food event at Olde Mill Inn
- Afternoon: 2 workshops in Conference Center
- Dinner
- Evening social

Wed Mar 6: Whitesburg & Appalshop

- Morning: Media workshops at Appalshop & historic Boone Building
- Afternoon: to Cowan Community Center for lunch (catered by Hemphill Catering/Black Sheep Brick Oven) and 3-hour workshop led by the TEAM
- Evening: moonshine sampling at Kentucky Mist distillery; dinner with Letcher County Culture Hub members at Thirsty Heifer farm-to-table restaurant & optional visit to the Little Bookstore in Big Stone Gap for discussion and singalong

Thurs Fri Mar 7:

- Morning: Farewell breakfast
- 10:00AM: Final workshop & reflections
- 1PM: All depart

COMPANY BIOS

The TEAM

The TEAM is a Brooklyn-based ensemble whose mission is to “collaboratively create new works about the experience of living in America today, and to generate

dialogue about our nation's past, present, and future through national and international touring.” Using music, multimedia, live performance and educational workshops to build civic participation, The TEAM “crashes characters from American history and mythology into modern stories, drawing unexpected and sometimes uncomfortable connections across time to touch the raw nerves of the current moment.” This aligns deeply with regional efforts to challenge pat media and historical narratives about Appalachian and Southern culture, politics, and people; and to uplift diverse traditional and place-based art forms by bringing them into conversation with complex contemporary values and aesthetics.

Cardinal Cross

Cardinal Cross uses interdisciplinary theater and rural-urban exchange to produce, amplify, and celebrate the art of womxn and other Appalachians whose stories are seldom told on stage. Developed in 2017 under the name “Crossroads Lab” within Appalshop’s award-winning theater wing, Roadside – and now an independent two-woman company – Cardinal Cross offers a dedicated space for adventurous first-voice exploration of 21st century Appalachian identity in live performance. We seek out, collaboratively develop, and present new community-based plays and performance art that reflect the aesthetic and cultural values of contemporary Appalachian musicians, storytellers, performers, digital media makers and designers. We direct, write, perform, teach, and produce in partnership with women, womxn, gender-nonconforming and LGBTQ+; documented and undocumented immigrants; people of color, particularly indigenous and Native; people with disabilities; incarcerated people; people informally educated or sustained by digital/alt-economies; non-rural ‘Metrolachians’; rural people with affinities for

mainstream culture or tech; and all mountain folk whose relationship to Place is too complex, ambivalent, or flawed to fit into pat “creative placemaking” narratives.

PRODUCER BIOS

HILARIE ROSE SPANGLER is an interdisciplinary musician, theatre artist, visual artist, storyteller and activist interested in the connection between rural, urban and international art practice. In her studies, she has conducted research in both the arts and in community development as seen throughout her thesis entitled: *The Art of Connecting* which studies the restorative practice of Community Based Arts. She is the Co-founder and Co-Artistic Director of Cardinal Cross Arts Company the betwixt-and-between Appalachian-New York feminist misfit theater: a growing womxn-led, interdisciplinary team of writers, directors, producers, performers, dramaturgs, and creative artists. Hilarie is currently working with South Central Music and Arts as a piano, vocal and musical theatre instructor, has worked with HERE Arts Center as an assistant to Kristin Marting, festival assistant for PROTOTYPE: Opera, Theatre, Now festival, founded Living Stories, a collaborative workshop on storytelling in the present day. Hilarie can be seen on various directing, music directing, and stage-managing projects in Appalachia, New York, Nashville, Louisville, and surrounding areas. She is also the Music Director of the annual Appalachian Youth Performing Arts Camp in Cumberland Gap, TN. Hilarie has told stories in various settings, including her own workshops, in Northern Ireland and in the Moth's Young Women's Voices festival. Hilarie serves as a Quadrant Director on the board of the Kentucky Storytelling Association, is a member of Alternate ROOTS, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth.

Hilarie aspires to continue her work in community organizing to foster a narrative of strength for women and unheard voices.

AMY BROOKS works as a Communications and PR Associate at grassroots Appalachian multimedia arts center Appalshop. As the co-Founder and Artistic Director of Cardinal Cross Arts Co, Amy investigates the confluence of dramatic narrative (“What is the story we choose to tell onstage?”) and public narrative (“What is the story we are called upon to tell about ourselves, our community, and our future?”) in intercultural rural-urban performance. She holds a BFA in acting from West Virginia University and an MFA in dramaturgy from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she co-founded and produced the first two seasons of the UMass New Play Lab. She is the former Humanities Director of the Contemporary American Theater Festival and received the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas’ 2016 Residency Program Grant and 2017 Bly Creative Capacity Grant for her work with Roadside Theater. Amy is 2018-19 fellow of the Intercultural Leadership Institute, a year-long training program for culture bearers and other arts professionals co-led by Alternate ROOTS, P’AI Foundation, First Peoples Fund, and the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures.

Conclusion

The last four years have been significant to the growth and development of myself as a human, artist, friend and storyteller. The people that I've engaged with and learned from have influenced this work so greatly and I cannot take credit for the work that I've done without their influence. From the start of the CET research, this process led me to the collaborators that without this experience, I may not have ever encountered. From all of the work and exploration that led to Crossroads, to Cardinal Cross, to the Crossing Roots Workshop, I reflect on the outcomes of this work. The workshop, which concluded on March 7th, 2019 in Cumberland Gap, TN, presented itself with a very successful pay off for the many fires that started throughout its process. The community of Cumberland Gap, my community, came together and lit up in a way that I haven't seen in a long time. The show, *Anything that Gives Off Light*, was not a piece that I would have expected my community members to enjoy, let alone engage with at the level they did, but what this workshop revealed to me was the hunger for this engagement in the midst of so much scarcity and hopelessness. The workshop also brought together creative place-makers, thinkers and artists from around the United States to be able to see their communities through and in my own, in a way that was not extractive, but engaged and connective. The process of connecting community members from New York, Brooklyn, Tuscon, Phoenix, Indianapolis, Knoxville, and so many more to the community members of small town, Cumberland Gap, TN revealed another bonding factor: story. In this workshop, we were able to test our theory that place doesn't necessarily have to be at the forefront of how we define ourselves within the scope of our communities, but the stories that we hold within ourselves that create community in places that do not belong to us, but rather

we belong to. The workshop will continue as an annual endeavor to be improved upon and developed further and our collaboration with The TEAM, Cumberland Gap, and our cohort will continue, but for the moments and discussions we shared in this inaugural workshop, we were able to restore, if not within the community as a whole, but within ourselves, how we define the **places** we inhabit and their power to be supported and connected to. This process that I'm just now beginning to discover and explore, is the art of connecting.

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