

ENGAGING COMMUNITY IN MUNICIPAL PERFORMING ARTS SPACE PROJECTS
ARTS BUILD ONTARIO
JANUARY 30, 2019

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>> Alright, it's 12:00 p.m. We'll get started. Welcome, everyone, to our webinar on engaging community in municipal art space projects featuring the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre and the Toronto Centre for the arts. I'm the program and assistant Executive Director of ArtsBuild Ontario. We're pleased to have two guest presenters for today's webinar, Steve Solski, who is the Executive Director of the FirstOntario performing art Centre and Kristopher Dell, director of protection at T.O. Live, known previously as Toronto civic theaters.

One moment as we flip slides. All right.

Before we get started, we just need to review a few housekeeping items. First of all, you can hear us, but we can't hear you. Your microphones have been disabled for this webinar. You can use your speakers or headphones to listen in. You can adjust the sound by clicking on the speaker icon at the top of the meeting. We will also be offering closed captioning throughout the webinar today. The closed captioning will be happening at the bottom of the screen where participants can change the font type, size and color. I will just take a moment and ask our participants to confirm using the chat box in the bottom right that they can see the closed captioning box at the bottom of the meeting room. That it is working and transcribing. If you can type a click yes, terrific. Thank

you, everyone! Great.

A record of the closed captioning will be sent to participants following the webinar and made available on our website.

A couple more things to cover as well. We'll record the session today and will be emailing a link out of that recording for you to share and watch again as you wish. We will also be emailing out a quick survey following the webinar. We really ask that you complete the survey so that we can continue to improve our learning series for creative spaces in our network.

Finally, we'll have 10-15 minutes at the end of the webinar to answer any questions that you may have. For the questions, we ask that you use the chat box again at the bottom right of the screen to type in the questions and we'll get to as many as possible.

In case you have not heard of ArtsBuild, we are a non-profit arts service organization that provides programs and learning opportunities that help make Ontario's creative spaces more sustainable.

One of our programs is the Learning Series which is a series of webinars, workshops and resources that support our core programs which are SpaceFinder in Canada, Creative Spaces Mentoring Network, and Asset Planner for the Arts. Many of the webinars we will be offering over the next year will focus on capital projects and accessibility in creative spaces.

In this webinar, we will be exploring the topic of Engaging Community in Municipal Art Space Projects. As many of you know, community needs, in the municipal art sector and arts sector at large are always evolving.

So how can municipal performing arts venues continually serve local creators, artists, and community with creative space? In this webinar, Steve and Kris will both be sharing their experiences and recommendations for understanding and building performing arts spaces around community needs.

I would like to now introduce our guest presenters for today's webinar.

Steve Solski is the Executive Director of the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, located in St. Catharines, which opened its doors in November 2015. Steve's role was to oversee the design, construction and operation of the state-of-the-art, multi-venue centre, as well as engage community artist groups to present and perform in the space.

With over 30 years working in the entertainment business, Steve has built successful arts programs and

venues. Prior to the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, he managed three performing arts venues in the City of Brampton, including the conception and design of Brampton's renowned Rose Theatre.

Steve is passionate about bringing the experience of live performing back into local communities and his experience has shown that arts and culture can be both social and economic drivers of change.

Kristopher Dell has been working professionally in the Arts since 1994. He is the Director of Production at T.O. Live which operates the Sony Centre, St. Lawrence Centre and the Toronto Centre for the Arts.

Attending York University in 1991, Kristopher graduated with a BFA in Theatre specializing in Production. Working as a freelance designer, technician and production manager, Kristopher has worked at theatres and festivals such as Buddies in Bad Times, the Tarragon, Factory Theatre, Leah Posluns and the Luminato Festival over the years.

Kristopher joined the Toronto Centre for the Arts as a Production Manager in 2002, and has immensely enjoyed working with all the different acts, artists and organizations that have appeared upon the TCA's stages.

The working through the amalgamation of the Sony Centre, St. Lawrence Centre and the Toronto Centre for the Arts into Civic Theatres Toronto, now T.O. Live, has been a tremendously rewarding challenge and opportunity and Kristopher looks forward to helping T.O. Live grow further.

To get us started, I would like to now hand things over to Steve to begin his presentation - over to you, Steve!

>> STEVE SOLSKI: Thank you for inviting me to speak today. Community engagement is at the heart of opening any performing art centre, certainly if you want to be successful. We're here located in St. Catherine's and as part of the engagement, the location is important.

We'll talk about the history of the centre, talk about the user group community, talk about the building component of the venue, what we were designing for each of the spaces. I want to talk about fundraising, bringing the community together, mission, vision, values and we'll talk about the impact on the community and challenges.

From a history perspective, we started talking about building a performing art centre in St. Catherine's in 1968 and in 1977 and in '80s and then in the '90s and then finally in 2006

there was the ability to get a feasibility study for the venue. What started that, was that Brock University wanted to come off the main campus and engage with the community by coming into account community and off of the main campus. It was part of their need and deliverable which was driven by a financial gift by somebody from the community who wanted to see Brock off the main campus. The study, was commissioned to sort of layout for the city what exactly a performing art centre could do and what it would do.

Leading from that, as a condition of getting funding, you needed a cluster master plan in the late 2000s so there was a city-made creative downtown master plan including bringing Brock University downtown. There was an old factory in the middle of downtown, it was a hair cloth factory and operational well fool this century. The University saw that as an opportunity to move their Maryland School of Fine and performing arts. They said we will move our University if you build a performing art centre. With that partnership, the city, it was able to go and get funding from all three levels of government, the municipality, the province, the feds. The city actually got this building for a third of a dollar because the other levels of government picked up the other costs.

Out of that, it came a User Group Committee which was formed based on people that perceived themselves as users and I'll talk a bit about that later.

Hiring an architect, obviously, to pull the venue together, they brought in myself in 2011 with the exception we would be opened in 2014 and for reasons we didn't open in until 2015. Bringing in an Executive Director early in the project allows first of all -- it certainly allows to pull a venue together that will function in a number of different ways, not just as the user group will see and also to work with the community to get them ready for an art centre to come in to their city and work with the industry itself to prepare for the art centre to be coming into a place where people want to perform.

The user group Committee was responsible for the design concept, like I say, I'll talk about that in a bit and the venue opening in 2015. Those were the steps that we needed and I'll touch on the specific community engagement parts of it.

Developing the first Ontario performing arts centre in the downtown was specifically for revitalization of the downtown. It was a revitalization project and an economic development project. That's what sold the city on bringing in the arts centre. The idea of what do we do with downtown Ontario, and certainly in St. Catherine's they had the same challenge, bringing it back to its hey day. That's the picture I show you there. It was a long time ago. St. Catherine's had street cars

and the downtown, it was a bustling area, a hub for the community and certainly what they wanted to bring back by developing the art centre and bringing the University into the downtown.

So as part of building the performing arts centre, as I suggested, we got three levels of government. This was a 60 million-dollar project, 6 of million was for the land acquisition. They had to appropriate land as well as the hair cloth venue which they gifted to the University for a dollar. That partnership between the city and Brock University, they also had a presenting series up at Brock University, those of you that have been around, you know about the centre of the arts at Brock University, it was a 40-year venue with a presenting series. We literally absorbed that program and brought it back in the new centre. An instant audience came with it which helped obviously as part of the community development.

Coming in the downtown, it was a challenge because the downtown was not known as a safe place. Actually it was known as a really rough place. It was known as a place where a lot of people were challenged, a lot of drugs on the streets, a lot of things that prevented people from coming to the downtown. Part of that engagement with the community was convincing them that first of all, this was going to change that. That they were able to come in the downtown. That's a big challenge for us, no doubt about it.

We developed a user group. The user group was given -- was an official Committee of city council. They were empowered by the city to literally research what the components of this venue should be. There were a number of groups that participated, and I got a list of them there. My point about this, those groups, not everyone of them made it to the opening of the venue. We started this conversation in 2010, we didn't open until 2015. A number of these groups were engaged in designing the venue and what was going to be the components of the venue, they weren't around when we actually opened the venue. Critically, an Executive Director had the ability and what I would do, I would look at the venue and make sure that even though it was designed for a certain need in the community, that it had the ability to be a multifunctional space and provide access to more than just the company that was building it. That was a bit of a challenge for the groups to make it to the opening, to hold on to the opening. They were literally still in church basements. They were out of -- they were performing in conference centers, they didn't have a professional performing centre in Niagara. They had went and toured a number of very news for a number of years to get as much information as they could and the Committee attended numerous design sessions. A lot of volunteer work went

into this design by this group that was referred to as the user group Committee. They had many subcommittees. It wasn't just those groups, they could invite other groups in, to give their input, so that when the design was done, the final design, it had input from all of the arts community across Niagara in different components of what the venue would be. That final design was presented to council for final approval. When council delegates authority to a group, there wasn't much debate at city council around this, they had already given that authority over to the group. They were there really to rubber stamp what the group wanted and obviously in that group were City Councilors, city staff representation on that also.

Out of that user group Committee, we designed a multipurpose venue, 95,000 square foot venue with four very news under one roof, the main concert hall, a black box, multipurpose venue of 200-fixed seats -- not fixed but retractible. In a seating environment, that's a maximum of 200 but we can get up to 400 people standing in that room and we have deployed that type of venue in that room as well. It is very, very multifunctional.

The next two very news are shared very news with Brock University. As part of our relationship with Brock University, we built them a recital hall that they have access to Monday through Thursday exclusively and the community has access to that venue Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Similarly with the film house, it was designed as a professional cinema, but it functions as a lecture hall. By day, Monday through Friday, the University is using that as a lecture facility, and then by night, it is a film house. I'll talk a bit about the impact of that.

The next aspect of community engagement, so first of all, the first level was with Brock. You know, we got Brock as a partner to come in, the first level of community engagement. The second level was to engage the User Group, and then I saw the third level of development is in the fund-raising. You are out before the venue is even built, it is a design concept at that point. The real barometer of acceptance is the community, when you go out and try to fundraise, so you'll either run into resistance and very little support or run into what is overwhelming support - what we found our situation.

Our goal was to raise 5 million and we ended up raising 7.5 million. Luckily because the Venue came over budget a million, we needed an extra million to pay for the very new, and we have a small surplus within our fundraising right now that we'll be able to use for risk and sustainability reserves that we're working on.

Out of the fund-raising, it was an indication to us that

this venue was seen as somethings that was needed and that the community would engage with and there were people in the community that were prepared to put their money against that dream. The first major part of it, was naming the venu, they obviously came with a gift, those were the first things we chunked out, major gifts, then we went out to the community for a smaller 5 to 10,000 gift, doing that in this a order, it allows you to get the bigger dollars first and then go after the smaller dollars afterward.

We have the capital portion and the community portion [speaker quality is low] people could start to donate 5, or 10,000, we found that program, it was very successful. A good indicator that the community was starting to engage in it. We felt it was important that the community feel a part of the opening of this centre.

This is a picture of the opening. There is the politicians on stage. You know, there is some from last term. There are two mayors up there, one mayor approved it, one mayor opened it, there is the MPP, the MP, you know, they're all there. That's not what it is all about. It is about the community. We really wanted to open this and share that experience with the community. If you look into the crowd there, you can kind of see that people have scissors in their hands, we have ribbons kind of across the seats, we put a ribbon across every row in the auditorium and gave everybody scissors, yes, our front house people were not happy and they were safety scissors and we had things to make sure people couldn't stab themselves with them. That was a challenge, getting people to understand that we were going to give everybody a pair of scissors, but we did that. Everybody in the auditorium shared in the cutting of that ribbon. It was a full house, we all cut the ribbon, then people were able to take a piece of that ribbon home with them. We wanted it to be more than just a politician up on stage getting their moment in the sun, we wanted the community to feel a part of the opening.

We saw that as the fourth Level of engagement. Getting the community involved, getting the community excited about having this. For us, the final level, it was what the venue said. What did we say to the community in our mission, in our values? So we set a goal as a staff group to be the best performing arts centre of its kind in Canada. You know, what's that mean? It means a lot of things. It may mean something different to me than it means to some of you out there. We wanted to set this goal, not only for ourselves, but for the community because the community didn't really see themselves or see the value necessarily as we were building this. They see the value now.

We wanted to come out and say we'll be the best at this.

Not only are we building a performing art centre for you. It will be the best performing art centre. Making a statement to the community on what to expect from the very new to deliver for them, and then we really wanted to use engaging language in our vision statement, the performing art mission is to engage people in exceptional performing arts experiences to enrich the lives of the citizens in the Niagara region and to provide a world class venue for local artists and local organizations. We wanted the community to see themselves, we would provide leadership to help develop the audience to help you, providing exceptional services to those that use the facility, we're here to help, serve them, we'll increase accessibility and enjoyment of the performance. We'll stimulate understanding and the curiosity of the performing arts and establish partnerships that increase potential and the value and our vision as a community that values and participates in the performing arts. Again, more community, engagement, involvement, for them to see themselves in this venue.

So our values -- I'll talk a bit more about the challenges in a bit -- our values, these values we want to demonstrate to everybody that's going to use this, including our funders and donors and our patrons and clients, we want to inspire, we want to welcome and engage, we want to set an example, we want to be -- we want to strive to improve, find better ways of doing things, we want to be true to our word, be transparent and honest as we try to act fairly through the challenges that we have.

Let me talk a little bit about -- sorry. Our purpose, using engaging languages, engaging people in exceptional experiences. We wanted to be in the heart of Niagara, so we're regionally -- we wanted to show we were a collaborator and that we were here to host, inspire, engage a diverse audience. Really, the next statement about it being driven by our collective creativity, I felt that this was important because people built this 60 million-dollar building, you know, the building is doing this, the building is doing that, it is not the building doing anything. It is the people that are doing it. It is the people that work here. It is the people coming together, it is the community. It is about the people. It is not about the building. A lot of people, they just feel that our success is based on the fact that we have a world class performing art centre in the middle of this community, but it is far from that. Challenges, these are real. The user group Committee -- and it was difficult, because everybody has personal Agendas as they go forward. Frankly, that can be the worst thing that can happen to a community, if the arts community doesn't speak with one voice, or they start letting

personal Agendas interfere with the end goal which is to have a performing art centre.

The user group Committee was kind of -- I wouldn't say forced, but they were brought together to have a conversation to understand and learn about what each other's needs were as well as being able to get out what their needs specifically are around the venue was.

It was contentious at times, you had big organizations like the symphony orchestra that professionally led and full of fund-raising, staff, then you had smaller producing theater companies with two people that did everything, they were artistic director, administrative director, fund-raising, you know, they did it all. This real diversity of groups that came together, but the understanding that they had, it was well led by cultural Department of The city, so how they managed that the thought was really an important component of getting this venue opened because the arts did come together and speak with one voice. I find those are challenges now even as we go forward, that we still see personal Agendas wanting to take the precedence, but in a lot of cases, in an arts centre that's here for the whole community, personal Agendas, can divert you from that and get away from the idea that these centres are for everyone and everybody to be able to use and to actually participate or see a show.

The other thing, you know, getting them to understand that the new centre will cost money. It sounds good on paper when you talk to these people. That was part of my role, was to meet with everyone of the groups and start looking at the budgets. They were given a key, they were given a key to where they were using, they got 24/7 access to this thing, they could do whatever they want, show up at 8:00 in the morning, leave at 3:00 in the morning, they could work right in the space, they didn't have to worry about safety equipment, they just did what they did. Coming into a professionally led centre which I'll talk a little bit about in the next bullet, it comes associated with a cost. Those costs are scary when you have no understanding or the understanding of the future is based on the present situation. A lot of them lived in their present situation.

How can I afford this place. We only sell 110 tickets over our 7-day run. That's all we'll sell in the new performing art centre. A lot of the experiences of opening a few other venues and I knew in all cases audience for the groups would raise by 30%, just opening the new centre, the audiences would grow by 30% Me telling them that didn't help them understand that. When you're going through a church basement and paying \$15, that's the expectation. You don't come to a professional

performing art centre and expect to pay \$15, you'll pay \$25, you'll pay \$35, you will pay \$55 because you're at a professional venue that has all of the amenities that go with it.

This are the things I needed the groups to understand, even to the day they moved in here, they didn't believe it could happen. The centre absorbed the majority of the risk in the first year. We did a lot of back-end deals with our renters saying what do you need to cover your nut? It was a full disclosure from us. What's your budget? What are you getting in fundraising? What did the 110 tickets equal? Let's put it in a budget. What's the it Delta between using this place -- oh, here is the money. now you are whole, you have 0 risk, and when we split ticket prices, you'll get X amount of dollars and then I'm going to take my money that I should have got, plus the money that I gave you, and then we'll split after that. Through the first year, because of my understanding of growth, ticket prices, I was able to get my money out of every single one of those renters and they were able to split something beyond everybody getting paid. It become a real positive experience, they could see the business model and business case changing because they could charge more. They were getting more people coming in.

>> ALEX GLASS: I just want you to know that you have about 3 more minutes.

>> STEVE SOLSKI: I'll wrap it up.

A world class professionally run centre comes with a lot of rules as I started to indicate. There is a huge learning curve on their part. What it allowed them to do, they couldn't come in, they didn't have a 24/7, they couldn't do whatever they wanted, they couldn't build sets, they couldn't disregard all safety components, they had to work within our rules, our regulations, our safety procedures, our rate and fee structure, our staff costs. We're not an AI house, AI house, comes with challenges as to how you service some community groups, we have a great deal with AI that allows access for some of these groups it is another component I can't go into, but the union agreed with access and gave us a fairly good deal with dealing with the groups. That led to them being a far better prepared organization, much more efficient in the operation and certainly better off now that they're in a professional -- that's a challenge getting them to understand that if you come in, there will be a lot of rules.

I'll quickly go over the impacts that we had, which have been quite amazing. I just -- the slide on the right size, the verbiage there, it is all of the investment in the infrastructure. We add that up, it is about a quarter of a

billion dollars worth of infrastructure money that was dropped right into the very block that we're operating in.

So you would expect that type of infrastructure, it is going to have an impact, and it did. It was immediate. The impact of what the art centre meant to the community, we do over 600 performing art events annually with over 500 screenings with 1100 events right now. We do 125 performing art visitors annually and another 20,000 film house visitors. Brock University, 250 students are using us by day for the access of this venue, it is really all day, all night, we did a little survey, a little summary for our board and we are operating 57 hours a day right now is what we're at with our four venues and you see how that would work out. Very busy.

Our mandate was to be open every day, we were open 365 days last year, it is downtown revitalization, it is pulling people into the downtown, having thousands of people in the downtown every night, changing the feeling and the vibe of the downtown.

We have an amazing volunteer program, which again, it is another indicator to me that the community is supportive, that the community is engaged, when you have that type of dedicated volunteer force.

On that point, I will conclude.

I put this slide, hey, maybe it is cold outside, the arts live here and it is cold outside.

>> ALEX GLASS: Thank you for the presentation.

We'll now switch gears over to Kristopher Dell who will present on his project. I'll get you set up with the slide -- there you go.

>> KRISTOPHER DELL: Thank you very much, Alex.

Good afternoon, everyone.

So I just want to comment on a couple of things that Steve said that I think are really important in case I forget to comment on them later. One of the things Steve mentioned that really should be underlined, bringing in key people early. Steve referred to himself as to the Executive Director, but my experience in going through a slightly different process in my case, it was a renovation process, but that was one of the things that -- I wouldn't say we did that wrong at all, we did have key people there along the way from start to finish. It really became clear how valuable that was, that we had key people involved with the project early. That's something, even if it seems like an unnecessary expense at first, bringing in key people that will be there when the project is done, bringing them in early so that they understand why decisions were made and can influence how decisions are made is critical to the success of the project afterwards.

The other thing that Steve mentioned that I think really

bears repeating, not everyone makes it to the opening of the venue or the completion of the project. It is important to understand that. I mention that, it underlines my first point which is bringing key people in early. You need a layer of continuity, a level of continuity and that's what bringing in those key people affords you.

People retire, people move on to other career opportunities and that needs to be -- Steve mentioned that one of the mayors was no longer mayor, so that needs to be understood that will happen in any process, building in a certain level of institutional memory is essential for successful of the project to go forward.

I wanted to mention those things.

I work for T.O. Live, formerly civic theaters Toronto, it which operates the Toronto centre for the arts. That happened in 2016 and that's another example of -- so not everyone makes it to the opening, certainly, new parties can be involved before the opening as you'll see going through a bit of the timeline of this process that we went through.

So the Toronto centre for the arts was built in 1993 in the former City of North York. It was a vision of the mayor and council of it North York at the time to have an art centre in the heart of North York, young and Shepard. The original feasibility study commissioned in terms of putting in a performance venue called for a 1,000 seat auditorium, live entertainment. We were brought it in to manage the facility and we were having great success, immediately the scope changed, we were having success with phantom and the opera, Joseph and the technicolored dream coat and they had plans and aspirations and they needed a Broadway house. The plans for a 1,000 seat venue came became plans for a 1,000 seat venue, an 1800 seat venue and a smaller community space of about 180 seats. You could see that the complex itself now contains three theaters, it got considerably larger and the scope considerably broader.

Live event was managing the facility, it opened in '93 and they brought in shows like show boat, sunset, rag time, Fosse, in the main auditorium, main stages, an 1800 seat theater. We had -- they programmed a concert season in the 1,000 seat room, now a dedicated recital hall and the image in the background is of the recital hall itself.

They were programming that space as well, and so operating it as if it were a commercial theater. We also said, as I mentioned earlier, the 189 seat studio theater, it was a black box style of room, also with retractible seating, you can see the image in the background and that was what the theaters were in the building and the only space that was really available to anyone was the studio theater, you could occasionally squeeze

yourself into the recital hall, you could never get access to the main stage. However, in 1998 live is event seized operations and the main stage was suddenly available. When I say seized operations, they stopped programming a concert season, they stopped doing any shows on the main stage and we were forced -- or rather, when we say we -- by this point, we're talking about the amalgamated City of Toronto, there is an example of people changing along the way, formed a governing board, in Toronto, it is an agency board, commission, and in our case we functioned similar to how the Toronto zoo functions, which is that it is an arm's length organization with city council representation on our board, but the bulk of the board is made up of citizen members.

They became the powers that be. They put in place a management structure to operate the facility. Instead of doing risk programming, operating like a commercial venture, we were strictly a rental facility or a road house.

We were operating in many years on a shoe string budget as we tried to get our footing.

So we had 100 days of booking a year in the main stage in particular, and that was true of the recital hall. The studio, which was hoped to the community, considered a community access space, it was a little bit stronger. It had about 130 days of booking in this time, but it was building very quickly a user group, a user base of community and not-for-profit theaters that we're using the studio space, taking advantage of it.

In 2008, a bit of a white knight came in to use the main stage, Dancap productions, the biggest show was Jersey Boys which ran flat out for two years, from 8:00 to 2010, that was eight shows a week, 52 weeks a year on the main stage and they were selling out the room. All good things come to an end and ultimately when the ticket sales started to dip, they decided to close that show while it was still profitable, and they brought in other shows like My Fair Lady, in the heights, million dollar quartet, American idiot, just a green day musical, those of you not familiar with it and we had an excellent relationship with them for about five year cans, so from 2008 until 2012. Now, this allowed us to do a couple of things.

It allowed us to not worry about booking the main stage and focus our energies and our capacity, when I say capacity, staffing, resources, to filling the other two rooms, the recital hall, we did some equipment investment and made it a multifunctional space, which was something that Steve mentioned earlier about building rooms that were intentionally multifunctional spaces. We had to retrofit the recital hall to make it a multi-functional space, make it more flexible. We were able to actively pursue users for the recital hall and the

studio theater during that time knowing that the big room, the 1800-seat theater had essentially from our perspective full occupancy, whether or not Dancap was putting a show in there or they were in between shows, they had booked the space for the five-year period.

All good things come to an end. Eventually Dancap decided to suspend operations under different circumstances than Live Entertainment. They decided to suspend operations. Every once in a while I hear rumors they may, in fact, bring a show in to town. We'll see if they are, in fact, finished as a presenter in the business. My suspicion is not, but that's purely speculation on my part.

We were suddenly left with an empty room. Having a single user in a room for five years means that all your other old users are gone. They have all moved on. We were literally starting from scratch again. In many senses, it was 1999 all over again for us, and we had to find users for that room. That was the new challenge.

We approached large companies to book the space. We approached medium-sized companies to book the space, keeping in mind it is an 1800 seat theater we are talking about. We approached small companies to book the space. We were looking for a couple of anchor tenants that we could build a relationship with that would book large blocks of time and that we could then do rentals in and around, to do the one-offs around. At the end of the day, we talked to over 100 for profit and not-for-profit presenters and promoters of who would like to come in and use the main stage space. The answer was well, we could use you for one, two days, maybe we could use you for two weeks, we couldn't find anybody that was willing to take a substantial period of time. We're talking about four weeks, eight weeks, block booking. We're back to one off bookings, single day rentals and much uncertainty. Background in terms of what was happening -- I'm not saying politically, that's not an accurate statement. I will say socially.

Some of you may have seen articles over, you know, the entire period of the 2000s talking about how there is nothing happening with the Toronto centre for the arts, I know it was certainly a favorite line from a number of columnists in some of the newspapers. To say that there is nothing happening when we do 100 days in a room is not -- you know, it is a little bit disingenuous perhaps. Certainly there was a perception both in the media and subsequently from our principle stakeholder, the City of Toronto that owned the building, that we were underutilized. I would not argue with that statement. The main stage, it was underutilized at 100 days a year.

However, in the studio, we had found ourselves, we were up

to 285 days of use, which is actually speaking as a director of production, it is actually too much usage. It is kind of the right problem to have.

What we were having, it is that we found that we were turning people away because there are certain number, as most of you know, certain number of prime dates to present shows and events Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays in the evenings, that's where most shows happen. All of the good real estate so to speak in terms of dates that are available, they are all booked up, it was all taken. We were, in fact, some user groups we had in the studio, they were looking to use more days in the studio but couldn't get them because other user groups in the studio already had those dates. They were stepping on each other's toes. We were actually in danger of losing some of our clients in the studio because of the lack of availability.

So I mentioned earlier that we had talked to over 100 different user groups in what I'll call a market survey, and the feedback that came to us consistently was what we really need is a 300-seat auditorium, a 500-seat auditorium, a 700-seat auditorium. That was the response to "could you use a certain size of auditorium?". We turned around, said we're overbooked in the studio, we'll round it up, call it the 200-seat room, the recital hall was now operating at about 160 days a year, just over 50% capacity when you factor in holidays, things like that, and so we went out to the marketplace again with those user groups and we said so how many days would you actually use a 300-seat venue, a 500-seat venue, a 700-seat venue. What came back to us, is that there was a potential demand of 400 days of booking per year. More again, so those are the -- now we had a real survey. We hired a consulting firm to go out, do the survey so it is arm's length and we could present that as empirical data, there was demand for spaces of that size, by talking to not-for-profit arts and community groups.

We had a room in our own building, the studio which was bursting at the seams in our opinion, and then the general manager of the Toronto centre at the time, he's since moved on to other -- to a different job -- he found an old survey or feasibility study commissioned by the board when the live entertainment wing back in 1998 had seized operations. One of the first things that the new board that I had referred to earlier did was commissioned the feasibility study on what could be done with this 1800-seat vee new. It had all kinds of options. There was an option to turn it into an aquarium. An option there to build a condo, use the other rooms around it as kind of podium space, podium retail space, it would still be theaters but that's essentially the function that they would serve. There was a suggestion to turn it into a casino. There

was a suggestion to turn it into a dinner theater and use part of the facilities to make a restaurant, a proper restaurant, one of the things that was in this feasibility study was that the main stage could, in fact, be divided into two smaller theaters and those theaters, they would be approximately 600, 300-seats in size based on this feasibility study.

The light bulb went off. It looked like we were having what I'll call a crisis of opportunity. The renovation project was born. These circumstances, facts were brought forward to our board, the board approved a second level of feasibility study and an architect was commissioned as a consultant to say, okay, if we were actually going to do this to this room, what would we do, how would we do that.

We spoke with the city, specifically economic development and culture, finance at this point, we said here is something we're thinking about doing. Is there interest from the city in partnering with us in this project, the city was very supportive because they understood the circumstances we were in this terms of the studio theater and our community and not-for-profit art groups needing more space. We had empirical data from our market survey that corroborated that. As I said, there was a perception of under utilization in the main space and people were very keen to avoid going through that cycle of what I have called the empty years again. The architect brought in a consultant and put together a feasibility study with a proposal, we brought in a cost consultant, so that's a company or an agency, in our case we used Turner Townsend and they looked at the materials that the architect had prepared, and they did a cost study to say how much it would cost so we attached a price tag to that.

That was brought forward as a plan to city council who owned the building, we had to get approval from the city to make substantive changes to the building. It was approved. We were off and running.

We used the city tendering process to select an architect in an open bid format and the winning firm was Diamond and Schmidt and we went into a design development phase and it really -- so the first thing that happened with the design development phase is there was a Committee of our board that was -- that was formed specifically for this project and senior staff at the Toronto centre, they were brought together to work with the architect and talk about what this room may be like, what the uses could be so there is -- there was a consultative process there.

That let the Diamond and Schmidt work up general concepts, refine the general concepts I should say, and then we went and brought in more consultants, specifically an acoustic engineer,

a theatrical consultants, we used theater consultants collaborative and they have expertise in a variety of areas, electrical, rigging, any number of items. Engineering Harmonics who is not -- they're more for performance sounding video as opposed to being acousticians. They were brought in and they had their input, we took this plan, we had a had ground plan, we had sketches, we went back to our stakeholders. When I talk about our stakeholders, I'm talking about the people that were using our building already, specifically people coming out of the studios. So community and not for profits arts organizations, because they were the ones who were most in need of relief and a new space, some were ready to grow into a larger space. We talked with a couple of other people that had been using the main stage and subsequently the recital hall, and these are groups that had been long-time users and clients and partners of ours, they were not necessarily getting the sales to fill 1,000 seat room so they were brought in as people to consult with -- well, if we make this new space, it can do this for you, what do you think of that? We did stakeholder consultation.

We went back, the architects were refining the concepts even more. We did another stakeholder consultation.

The architects, they went back, refined the concepts even more. All the while, of course, the Committee of the board, senior management had lots of free and open dialogue with the architects.

There was a final round of stakeholder consultation because we did have a timeline that we were aiming to hit, there was some pressure to get this project underway and started as quickly as possible.

You can see multiple rounds of consultation with stakeholders, and when I say that, I'm specifically referencing the community -- when I say that -- and present users of the room and a design was finalized. A constructor was contracted again through an open bid process, that constructor went out and put out tenders and proposals and we opened those bids and proposals and had a revised working budget.

I want to pause here. One of the things we build into our budget that everybody needs to build in a budget, it is a contingency fund. One of the things that's tempting -- so a contingency fund should be from 10 to 20% of your budget. 10 to 20% of the budget. In a 10 million-dollar project like this, we're talking about -- we had a 1.5 million-dollar contingency fund, you split the difference there, about 15%. That contingency fund is not for buying stuff. It is actually for when surprises happen. It was one of the things that I cannot emphasize enough is needed.

You will have surprises. There will be things despite all of the planning, you will find out oh, oh, there is already something buried in the ground here that we thought was 20 feet further South. We're going to have to move that, we'll have to go around that. A lot of good and wonderful surprises like that.

That's what the contingency fund is for. If you're lucky enough to have money left over at the end, go ahead, spend it! Be very strong in your discipline of not touching your contingency fund except for my God, we need extra money, where will we find it?

So what you're seeing in the background here, this is the stage tower theater. We approached a client from the studio theater and they became the principle resident of the stage tower and we were lucky enough to secure naming rights with that. The stage tower theater is now the Green Win theater. Green Win is a construction company. So they have -- they have -- they're a naming right sponsor.

You see, the volume, the height still above in the room. We're actually looking at a photo of a theater sitting on the old Stage of the main stage. This sits 299 people, this room.

The Lyric Theater, we see a photo here of the Lyric Theater. It was a bit of a different process. It was a design/build process. The reason for that, is the panels, the white bright Geo metric panels that you see, they had something like this so they're programmable, they work -- the lighting board operator, the lighting designer can actually change the color, intensity of these panels, which ones are on, which are off. A concept on this scale and size, had not actually been done in North America before. It was a design/build process, we contracted a special firm just to come in and do that work.

That is another way to go through. We were not working off of the set of blueprints prior to building it, we were working off a concept and as the work progressed, the design was refined.

You could see that. Here is a view from the stage of the same room from the Lyric Theater. It gives you a sample of what the walls can do, how they can be incorporated. The room was completed and the first show -- we did the ultimate construction in two phases. The Green Win or stage tower theater was completed in 2015 and was doing shows in 2015. The Lyric took a bit longer, we didn't start doing shows until the fall of 2016. It was designed as a two-stage process. We did a very soft opening. The room is open and active today. One thing that changed, it was the grouping of the three centres, there is a different management structure that was put in place. One of the repercussions of that, the money that had been set aside to

market the new rooms and promote them, it was decided that as we were going through all of the changes with civic theaters Toronto that we would delay the marketing of the opening of the rooms. That was a change that happened there. It is only now that civic theaters, it is now called T.O. Live has officially rebranded itself, that we'll see the rollout for these rooms. We're into early 2019 now. These are, you know -- it is a process as far as that goes.

The rooms have not been unsuccessful. That's my little thank you slide. The rooms have not been unsuccessful in the sense that they in 2018 -- and this is absent of marketing strategy -- you know, have a combined use of 235 days. Any way you cut that, they're both used more than 100 days which is what the main stage was operating at. We have increased accessibility for communities and not-for-profit arts groups.

I'm looking forward to what T.O. Live can do in terms of bringing the rooms even more into the community for usage.

That's it in a nutshell. Thank you.

>> ALEX GLASS: Thank you. That's great.

We have a few minutes left for questions. I would like to invite anyone that has one for Steve or Kris, type it in the chat box below. We'll spend a few more minutes, I'm conscience of time, we do have a few minutes to answer some in the next little bit. Yeah. If you have any, feel free to type it in.

Wendy, - I'm wondering from Steve and or Kris, are the naming rights term limited? Kris, answer first and then Steve, you answer.

>> KRISTOPHER DELL: Yes. The naming rights are term limited. So for the green win theater, that's a 10-year term. I'm happy to share with the group that T.O. Live has entered into a naming rights agreement for the Toronto centre for the arts itself. As of September of this year it will be called the Meridian can art centre, we have entered into a deal with the Credit union Meridian and the Sony Centre will be called the Meridian hall, we have the art centre up town and the hall downtown. I think I said 10-year agreement, but it is actually a 15-year agreement.

>> ALEX GLASS: Steve, are you able to answer this as well.

>> STEVE SOLSKI: Sure.

So yes. The first thing is that -- first Ontario performing art centre, it is a termed agreement. That's over 20 years, although the payment structure we had with them was over 3. It was an interesting conversation with the credit union, I said if I'm giving you a 20-year deal I have to borrow money to build the building now and then take your money in over 20 years. They said well that's ridiculous, we're a credit union, why not let us give you the money in a shorter time period, so I

got the money in three but we gave the naming rights over 20.

That's a company. Every company that we have dealt with has a term. When we're dealing with philanthropy we took it in a different direction. So Partridge hall, that's from a local family. The thought is when we go to refit that hall in 25 years we believe that family will still have the wherewithal to help us, so we feel in those cases, the best thing is in perpetuity to sort of leave it with the family to want to continue that relationship.

Now, it is really for the life of an asset. That's about 35 years. Although we say in perpetuity, it really is to the life of the asset. That's what we determined the life of the asset to be. It is a bit complicated in that regard. In that case, businesses are termed and philanthropy is given in perpetuity, we believe it gives us the best chance to refund raise when we have to with the families again as our first refusals.

There's another question up here, do you want me to go on.

>> ALEX GLASS: Yes. I'll just read it out for everybody.

>> STEVE SOLSKI: The feasibility study, the city funded that, it was 280,000 that they spent upfront. I tell you, it was one of the documents that attracted me to the job because it laid out so well for the community what they were getting, what to expect, how much the thing was going to cost from now until the end of time.

At never any point did it talk about breaking even, it talked about a city-supported organization, it always -- that's what we built. It gives me sort of a bit -- when council says when will you break even, Steve, I say when you redo the feasibility study and it says we'll break even and then you build the building that that feasibility study says to break even, don't do a feasibility study saying it will cost and then build that, it is going to cost and then come back afterwards and then say by the way, when will you break even. It doesn't work that way. It was funded by the city.

>> ALEX GLASS: Steve, the next question, for you both, you both talked about building a user group of supporters. Who led that group, the city, community or users? Steve, why don't you go first.

>> STEVE SOLSKI: Since I'm unmuted.

Basically the user group was led by the cultural department. The cultural department wrote a report to city council for the user group, got them the authority, and they were in charge of setting Agendas, minutes, all of that stuff. There was the cultural Department of The town, city, that took on the role and responsibility of managing the user group and their outcome.

>> ALEX GLASS: Thank you.

Kris?

>> KRISTOPHER DELL: In our case, it was the general manager of the TCA at the time, we had advisors from the city participating in that. We had people from economic development and from properties and real estate who I should mention, their advice and expertise was invaluable. It was him that assembled the community support and user groups. He really took the lead in that.

>> ALEX GLASS: The next question, from Cecilia, Steve, could you talk a little bit more about the box office split model with the groups and what kind of impact in the programming has the organization seen because of this model?

>> STEVE SOLSKI: Well, the way it worked, I needed to have an honest discussion with each one of the groups that was using the place. We had to expose our budgets. I had to see everything they had. What are you bringing in from a revenue perspective, what do you expect from a ticket revenue perspective? What we did, we said -- it wasn't a large input for us, these groups, they were using -- they didn't have huge production values at the time anyway. What I did, we're a presenting organization, I took money out of the presenting budget and gave it to them as a presenting copro. That's how I structured it. Not as a rental deal but as a pro deal. The expectation, we'll look at the budget, see all of the red music you expect and feel comfortable with. You will add up the expenses of using the venue, what is the difference, I'm going to pay that to you. Then at the end of the day, we look at what's that total that you needed in all of your revenues, you needed -- I'm just going to use an example, you needed 5,000 dollars out of ticket revenue to make your budget whole. You get the first 5,000 out of the ticket revenue. I have given you 3500 out of my presenting budget, I want to recover that with the next 3500. If you rented the venue, it would have cost you 7,000, I want to recover that 7,000 next and then if there is anything left, -- now you're whole, I'm whole, if there is anything left, we'll split it based on the investment. As an example, I invest 10 is, you invest 20, you get two-thirds of the split because you put in more risk than I have. That's how we looked at the split after we were made both whole. When all of those -- on all of those examples, I got my rental money, I got my presenting money back, we got into a small split of what was left over.

I hope that answered the question, if not -- looks like --

>> ALEX GLASS: I think that was great. That -- not seeing anymore typing.

Cecilia is typing. In the meantime -- says yes, thank you.

Kris, anything to add to that question at all?

>> KRISTOPHER DELL: Other than that I think that's a brilliant idea.

>> [Chuckle]

>> KRISTOPHER DELL: No.

>> ALEX GLASS: Mel say says she also thinks it is very innovative.

That wraps up the questions for this part of the webinar.

I did want to bring everybody's attention to two things we have, plan it, build it, it is looking at the four stages of a capital project or four types of capital projects, a new build, major renovation, a small to medium renovation and ongoing operations. So we encourage you to take a look at that. It is basically like a checklist of all of the steps you need to take approaching this as an arts organization for any creative space project. It is free to access for anybody. It is available on our website, arsbuildontario.ca.

The next is SpaceFinder, we have it in 8 Ontario communities and 3 provincial communities, if you have a creative space in any of these, Toronto, Hamilton, Waterloo region, York region, simcoe county, Ottawa, sudbury, mississauga, BC, Alberta, manitoba, list your space, it is free to use for both venues to list the rentals and for artists to look up space that may be available in the communities.

The next webinar we're hosting, it is a design for public spaces 101: Where do creative spaces start, this is February 12th, 12:00 p.m., this will be hosted by Thea Kurdi, vice were the of designable environments and our presenter is jay pitter. You can register on the website.

A last throw in for the survey, we'll email it later today, please take 5 minutes to fill it out. We want to hear your thoughts on the programming so we can continue to serve your needs. Lastly, thank you to Steve and Kris for the fantastic presentations, they're very valuable for the network and we appreciate the time you took to put that together and share that with us. ArtsBuild Ontario recognizes the support of our funders, the Canada council for the arts who supported the development of this webinar and our learning series.

Thank you for attending today. We hope to see you back again in our next webinars coming up. Other than that, stay warm. I hope you have a great rest of your day. Thank you.
