

INSIDE ARTS

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTERS

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VOICE

By day, Allen Moon heads up touring and artist management for David Lieberman Artists' Representatives, which represents such visionaries as Kronos Quartet and Eighth Blackbird. In the off hours, Moon moonlights as a presenter, bringing under-the-radar performers and performances to underused spaces in his hometown of Santa Ana, California, through an initiative he calls Santa Ana Sites.

He was inspired by a similar effort by Storefronts Seattle, which sponsored a performance of Bartok's controversial ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin* as interpreted by Spectrum Dance Theatre. It was staged in hotel windows for passers-by to see. And it was so scandalous it ran only one night and sparked a broader conversation about censorship.

"It really caused quite a stir," Moon recalls of the 2012 show. "I became interested in the idea of taking over spaces that are not traditional performance spaces and exposing them and the artists to a larger community."

That started with his own community, which was ripe for such an endeavor. Santa Ana's downtown is full of interesting, beautiful old buildings – some of which are vacant, some of which are under development. And the arts scene is strong. So he partnered with John Spiak of the Grand Central Arts Center to stage a few performances in his own downtown loft.

Soon, he was presenting on a racquetball court, taking over a downtown building with dozens of contemporary micro-concerts and filling an old staircase factory with the sounds of a rock 'n roll cellist.

"I think it solidified my hunches about audiences craving artistic experiences that are different from most of the offerings in arts presenting these days," says Moon. "Having work in alternative spaces has opened up audience curiosity and openness to much more contemporary ideas. This work tends to be a little more



POP-UP PRESENTING

An artist manager crafts a community role as presenter in unexpected spaces.



Bang on a Can All-Stars performed at the eSports Arena in Santa Ana.

challenging. It allows audiences to be more open to novelty, more open to works of art that they know less about and have a different relationship with.”

In addition to feeding his creativity, the experience has given Moon a new perspective on his day job. “I know a lot of presenters are eager to look outside their traditional venues, and they do ask about the experiences I’ve had, the successes and the failures,” Moon says. “I’m much more empathetic to the day-to-day stress of presenters’ concern about attendance.”

The shows have been well attended – a collaboration between contemporary music collective wild Up and the Pacific Symphony attracted more than 500 people to Logan Creative, a cavernous Quonset hut that has been converted to an artist compound. And the initiative has garnered high-profile media attention. A *Los Angeles Times* reviewer described a performance by sound artist Steve Roden in an underground racquetball court “one of the most intense listening experiences I have ever had.”

That said, the effort is not without its challenges.

“So far, I’m always most stressed about getting people to show up,” Moon says. “I’ve been really fortunate to be able to find financial support. I have limited means, and each project I do, I have to sniff around. I also work on a much more truncated schedule than most of my colleagues, who are working on their 2017-2018 season. With Santa Ana Sites, I’ve got to start finding something for three months from now.”

Although the day-to-day realities he faces as a pop-up presenter differ from those of his clients who present in more traditional venues, Moon says the broader experience reflects a larger trend in the industry.

“Something I’ve considered since the beginning, in the different roles I have as an artist manager working with presenters and also on the other side doing what they do, it brings to mind a changing environment in the industry, how new roles are being established,” he said. “Just like the mediums themselves, where lines are being blurred, it’s happening on this side of the process as well. It’s just another sign that things are changing rapidly and you have to be able to respond to it in creative ways.”

COURTESY ALLEN MOON

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TE VAKA, AMY HANAIALI’I

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