



Environmental Stewardship in Theatre and Performance Education

Canadian Association of Theatre Research
June 13, 2022

Agenda

1. Acknowledgements and introductions
2. Offerings from existing practices
3. Mapping and engaging resources
4. Ideation & next steps

GOALS

The primary goal of this group is to discuss how we teach, document and prepare students for sustainable practices in theatre and performance.

Year One – The first year will be gathering information, resources, and research in order to present what is currently happening, what could be implemented, and what shifts the theatre milieu will need to make in order to be responsible stewards. The first year will address the question ‘How are sustainable practices being implemented and how do we need to adjust curriculum to match?’

Year Two – In the second year, we will shift to reporting back and dissemination of research to date; alongside meetings between institutional representatives to begin mapping a way forward.

Year Three – Creation and dissemination of an action plan and work plan.

Introduction Prompt

Where is your Department at in their climate journey?

1 - Unaware

2 - Feeling the need for change

3 - Adapting slowly

4 - Radical change

Existing resources

• Arts Service Organizations, think tanks, and committees

- [Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts](#)
- [Arts and Climate Initiative](#)
- [PACT Environmental Stewardship Committee](#)
- [Broadway Green Alliance](#)
- [Julie's Bicycle](#)
- [Creative Carbon Scotland](#)
- [Land Arts Generator](#)
- Theatre Communications Group Climate Action - [Climate Action in a Global Landscape: A TCG Virtual Summit \(padlet.com\)](#)
- [350.org Day of Action for a Just Transition - 350.org](#)
- [Conseil québécois des événements écoresponsables](#)

• Network building projects on the radar

- [Climate Arts Web](#)
- [Hemispheric Encounters](#)-Ecologies cluster
- [SCALE](#) (Sectoral Climate Arts Leadership for the Emergency)

• Tools, guidebooks and reports for greening theatre practices

- [Creative Green Tools](#)
- [Canadian Green Alliance – Sustainable Theatre Guidebook](#)
- [Sustainable Production Toolkit](#)
- [Theatre Greenbook](#) (UK)
- [Green New Theatre](#) (Groundwater Arts)
- [Syllabi](#) on Artists & Climate Change website
- [Écoscéno](#) (courses on eco-design and eco-responsibility)
- [Green Theatre: Taking Action on Climate Change report](#) (City of London)
- [Centre for Sustainable Curating – Using the Resources at Hand: Sustainable Exhibition Design](#)

Recent writing (very selective!)

- Ian Garrett, "The Ethical Turn in Sustainable Technical Theatre Production Pedagogy," *Theatre Topics* 31.2 (2021): 179-86.
- *Theatre Pedagogy in the Era of Climate Crisis*, ed. David Fancy and Conrad Alexandrowicz (Routledge, 2021)
- Tessa Rixon, Tanja Beer, Ian Garrett, "Ecoscenography in the global classroom: Creating sustainable worlds for theatre through international collaboration," *Performance Design Futures Symposium* (2022)
- Sheila Christie et al, "Theatrical Calls to Climate Action: Excerpts of a Conversation," *TRiC* 43.1 (2022): 125-36.
- David Maggs, "[Art after the Virus](#)," *The Philanthropist* (2020)
- [What Is Ecotheater? – Superhero Clubhouse](#)

• Upcoming professional development opportunities

- [Creative Climate Leadership](#)
- [Artists & Climate Incubator](#)

• Available recordings of relevant events

- [Soulpepper Theatre's Green Sessions](#)
- [NAC Green Rooms](#)
- [Viewpoints #2 Indigenous perspectives on climate - YouTube](#)
- [A Press Conference from the Future - 350.org - YouTube](#)

• Other projects and groups we love

- [Climate Change Theatre Action design Charrette \(play anthologies\)](#)
- [School for Climate](#)
- [Good Energy Story](#)
- [Just Powers Podcast](#)
- [Conscient podcast](#)
- [Synthetic Collective](#), especially their Enough Manifesto
- [Artists for Real Climate Action](#)
- [Artist Brigade](#) (The Only Animal, Kendra Fanconi)
- [Cape Farewell](#)
- [Complicite "Can I Live?"](#) by Fehinti Balogun

Arts Service Organizations, think tanks, and committees

- [Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts](#)
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- [Broadway Green Alliance](#)
- [Julie's Bicycle](#)
- [Creative Carbon Scotland](#)
- [Land Arts Generator](#)
- Theatre Communications Group Climate Action - [Climate Action in a Global Landscape: A TCG Virtual Summit](#)
- [Ministry of a Just Transition - 350.org](#)
- [Conseil québécois des événements écoresponsables](#)

Network building projects on the radar

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- [SCALE](#) (Sectoral Climate Arts Leadership for the Emergency)

Upcoming professional development opportunities

- [Creative Climate Leadership](#) (deadline June 19; scholarships available)
- [Artists & Climate Incubator](#) (still accepting applications; scholarships available)

Tools, guidebooks and reports for greening theatre

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- [Canadian Green Alliance – Sustainable Theatre Guidebook](#)

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Howlround articles (<https://howlround.com/series/climate-emergency>)

[All we can save; how to save a planet](#) (esp [Where's our climate anthem?](#))

Zizek dump walk- dump philosophy https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_K_79O21hk

How do we develop curriculum to match these initiatives?



How do we scale up individual responses to these initiatives?

- Take up front stance at first class to frame that will look at ecological approach
- Take into consideration what students are thinking by using classroom assessment techniques (CAT) (eg Ask students - How do you think theatre might tackle climate change and make it more present in the curriculum?)

Curriculum Development

- Class agreements
- Incorporate CGA toolkit
- Life cycle change being called for by limited resources
- Do away with auditions, existing process/practices = open to other students

What barriers exist to developing this curriculum?

- Post-sec curriculum development all individualized beyond learning objectives, so is up to each instructor
- Mental health and climate anxiety/grief
- Siloing of departments means don't hear from different approaches/voices = need to learn more about histories
- Social issues impact student labour
- Motivation in incorporating environmental topics = greenwashing, pursuing topic as a fad could be barrier to seeing active change; could open up networks to counter this
- How to target the mushy middle = politicization of the environmental movement means needing to be careful how present it
- Faculty and grad labour = everyone already maxed out on service so how do you create a committee (it is issue #2 so don't trade it in for other service)
- Theatre and ecology = what are the skills we need to develop and acquire in order to launch the inquiry and then to be able to teach it?
- Universities siloed from community and Western in framework; need to have more community engagement and share artist innovations
- Invisible time and labour in repurposing = time-based resource

How might we troubleshoot through these barriers?

- Need a culture change as per sexual violence prevention initiatives - not inside curriculum, but pressure instructors to respond
- Tenured faculty can introduce more provocative methods/topics = get them to respond as if it is a crisis
- One on one relational building = labour intensive but way to get folks on board
- Create interdisciplinary courses = creating a first year course that deals with the climate crisis
- Collaborate with sciences = think about rubric, course design = new thing
- What is the unique value proposition of the arts = use this to reach out to scientists and climate experts so can show what we bring to the table
- Theatre students taking courses from environmental studies
- Community organizations offering classes/workshops that drama students could take
- Good for universities to support collaborations across departments
- Get students from other departments to take eco-drama
- Touring productions
- Collaboration with community/artists outside the university beyond mainstage productions (hospicing the mainstage)
- Theatre -> performance depts / expanding ideas of what is theatre/theatrical

How do we ensure this work is rooted in climate justice, intersectional and anti-colonial?

- Re-imagine what a Department/University is from the ground up to address racism, colonialism = what community space are we creating instead? = for example Soulpepper creating the garden
- Indigenous Department at Cornell have housing, food pantry = treat students as a whole person
- In theatre department ask students to devote huge amount of time/labour = what does it mean if apply resources less to productions and care for student as a whole person instead
- [The Intersectional History of Environmentalism - YouTube](#)
- [Podcast — Intersectional Environmentalist](#)

Further Ideas

- Rethink the aesthetics = source from the dumpster
- Eco set of values e.g. stay local (can't just Amazon), share between institutions
- Walk through dump to really understand nature = discussion is at the core of dramaturgy
- Carbon footprint in production budget
- Instead of starting with values, start with time (10% of your week set aside to examine your structure each week)
- Value statement with action plan and set of measurables
- Need for more professional development time
- No longer prevent but manage climate change = articulate values to deal with array of losses now facing = theatre can do that
- Internal review process- mechanism / phase to hospice certain established courses to redesign everything
- Go back to traditional forms of practice (eg Noh theatre actor spends lifetime as one character and in one costume) and deep study of role (life role/performance practice), depth rather than versatility perhaps
- Quality of materials, inheritances of properties so they last for the long-term
- Audiences - too much anthropocentrism, need performance practices for the more than human
- Exhibit set, costumes, props after production (without the human)

Next steps?

● Initial ideas

- White paper = MANIFESTO
- CATR-wide CGA Tools session
- Speculative performance from the future
- Climate acknowledgements
- Workshops/plenary on **traditional practices (non-Western and those that existed in the West and have been lost)**
- Action item list - questions for self-reflection, departmental reflection
- Synthesis of existing resources = breakdown into categories for easy reference
- Joyful invitation in to the work
- What kinds of knowledge we want to mobilize and for whom? = communities to work with, is it for CATR or Departmental audiences?
- Partnerships with communities and CATR
- **In proposal to host a CATR conference include carbon mitigation plan**
- **CATR conference and flying? Alternate in-person and digital?**
- Partner with groups in conference host city and Indigenous partnerships
- Reading group (using materials from resource list and invite all CATR)
- **Present to CATR thematic link of aesthetics and traditional practice = could support those who want to shift their practice = propose as a plenary**
- **Workshop for ecologizing your syllabi**

Potential Outcomes From Initial Proposal

- A **written report** on current shifts towards sustainable practices in theatre and performance, and resulting needs for changes to curriculum at post-secondary theatre and performance studies departments will be created.
- **Connections and conversations** among researchers, practitioners and educators who wish to engage in environmental stewardship will be formed.
- Greater **cooperation and communication** from CATR and post-secondary institutions with PACT, ADC, SCALE, and other theatre associations/organizations working towards environmental stewardship will be undertaken.
- A potential **commitment** from CATR for environmental stewardship would be suggested in line with SCALE's advocacy agenda.
- An **action plan** for next steps for further implementation will be developed, as well as a work plan that can be used by educators and scholars at their respective institutions.
- The possible creation of a **long-term committee** with representatives from multiple institutions to continue to share resources and information.
- **Articles** will be published in professional theatre publications about the initiative, including knowledge sharing in newsletters of partner organizations/associations.
- **Presentations** by the Working Group will occur at other organizational conferences such as PACT, ATHE, and ADC.

Thanks!

Keep in touch:

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