

## Introduction to SWS Performance's Organizational Development Report

### Note to Reader:

The following report is a culmination of a year and a half long analysis and consultative process around SWS Performance's activities. Perhaps of equal importance, the report is also designed to be used as a tool for artists and companies across Canada. A key goal of SWS Performance's organizational development funding was to lay bare their strategic planning so that others could benefit from their investigation. A definition of who SWS Performance is and what they do is all included in this report but it is worth mentioning that this view towards the unpacking of process and generosity of ideas is a common theme in their operations. They are recognizers, amplifiers, deep-thinkers, activators and, essentially, responders to an ever-unfolding theatre of the future.

SWS Performance's activities have two main streams: internal and public-facing. Their internal activities fall largely into research and development and include their **workshops**, their **shows** and **teaching**. Their public-facing activities currently feature three brands: 1) **CdnTimes**, a curated online magazine featuring diverse perspectives on current Canadian culture; 2) **foldA** (Festival of Live Digital Art) an annual event taking place at the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts in Kingston, Ontario; 3) **Thought Residencies**, monthly podcasts featuring a wide array of theatre-makers in Canada. At the core of all these activities is a deep interest in examining the way work is created, questioning the hierarchies and conventions of theatre and amplifying disruption in the field.

The latter half of the report focuses on the organizational strategies that SWS Performance will use to embed their well-considered values into all their operations. Other artists and companies may consider taking a similar close-reading of their practice or operations and applying some of the same critical assessment and future visioning as SWS Performance. With this application, the reader may acquire new tools towards defining core principles and using them as both the bedrock and North Star in their activities.

Here is a summary to what you will find in this report:

### Introduction (p. 1-3):

- *An overview of the organization and the report's intent.*

### The Organizational Context - Truths (p. 4 - 8):

- *An in-depth look at SWS Performance's beliefs, identity and organizational responses to their position in their sector.*

### The Organizational Context - Values (p. 9 - 10):

- *Identification of SWS Performance's defining values.*

#### **The Organizational Context - The Experiments (p. 11 - 12):**

- *A look at the findings from a series of experiments conducted with the aim of expanding artistic form.*

#### **Findings: The Future Face of SWS Performance (p.13 - 19):**

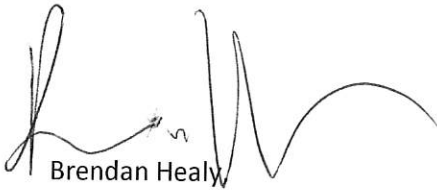
- *An articulation of where SWS Performance is at, where they are going and how they will get there.*

#### **Conclusion (p. 19 - 20):**

- *A synthesizing of findings from the consultative processes.*

Currently, SWS Performance is singular in their field. Indeed, they are actively *designing* their field. Their shows are laboratories for new technologies. They have a history of “going there”, asking hard questions and trying out propositions and technologies that are truly experimental. This desire to go deep into how things are made and to radically redesign creation models means that research is at the core of their operations. The outcomes of their research is offered to others open-sourced. This push toward accessibility and inclusivity are key values in their institution and that reaches across all their activities. They make space for under-represented artists and under-represented ideas. They’ve positioned themselves be responsive to what does not yet exist.

This report documents a critical moment in SWS Performance’s trajectory. They are rallying their resources so that they may develop into leaders in the exploration of liveness where performance and digital tools meet. Organizational restructuring and a public re-framing of their activities are planned so that their activities and provocations can impact a wider audience. Readers may take note of the considerable courage and resourceful nature of this organization, and how that is intimately linked to their nimbleness and relevancy. They are deeply connected to a national community and their networks are ever-expanding. The invitation here is to make use of this report as you see fit, and become part of this growing network.



Brendan Healy  
Consultant



## Dylan Goes Electric

### Making Theatre for Tomorrow

SWS Performance

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## THE INTRODUCTION

*"Something is happening here, and you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?"*

- The Night Bob Dylan Went Electric, Elijah Wald



*foldA festival team, preparing for our inaugural festival of live, digital art. Photo by Mariah Horner.*

Since its inception, SWS Performance has been an organization with skills to distil, synthesize, and/or analyze the social interaction embedded at the intersection of live performance and the digital realm. In 2013, SpiderWebShow Performance (SWS Performance) sprouted from a dramaturgical urgency: a wish to capture, and possibly define, the current state of Canadian theatre. Sarah Garton Stanley in her work at the National Arts Centre, was compelled by this question, and her interest in Michael Wheeler's work at Praxis Theatre set the stage for a conversation that ultimately gave birth to the company. While much has shifted in the past five years, at its core, SWS Performance remains interested in disruption and intervention, and what revolutionary Canadian theatre artist Darren O'Donnell calls social acupuncture. We started with an urgent wish to capture the state of theatre only to discover that all the states are changing. We have come to understand that what we are really compelled by is the "liveness" of now and of tomorrow: *we are working to build a theatre for the future.*

This report focuses on the organizational strategies we will use to cement our values in the fabric of the company. For example, as an organization, SWS Performance's leadership model is built with iterative design in mind: curatorial and decision-making power is shared equally between the three heads of the company: **Michael Wheeler** as **Artistic Director**, **Adrienne Wong** as **Digital Architect** and **Sarah Garton Stanley** as **Creative Catalyst**. In this triangular leadership structure decision-making circulates between the three leaders. Movement and revision are built into the model, as ideas and plans are bounced between the three, who each have equal decision-making capacity.



This report aims to distill the findings of **three consultative processes** that took place over the spring and summer of 2018 in Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa.

1. The first process was a set of parallel conversation between Max Valiquette of Publicis Marketing with Stanley and Wheeler.
2. The second was comprised of several in-depth facilitated conversations between Stanley, Wheeler and Wong with consultant Brendan Healy.
3. The third was a series of three experiments with artists and technologists exploring strategies for digital performance innovation.

This report's intent is to focus on our discovered values, how we plan to embed these values in a newly considered organizational structure, and how the products and services we provide act as an outcropping of our values.



Performers IRL in Kingston with artists in Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto in *The Revolutions*. Photo by Sarah Garton Stanley.

SWS Performance understands digital disruption as a catalyst for social and theatrical change. In philosophical terms, our organization believes that engaging with digital tools helps to unlock the theatre of tomorrow while simultaneously preserving our passion for “liveness” as we understand it today. In practical terms, digital tools help creators work across distance, reduce carbon emissions and travel costs, and close geographic gaps amid our sea to sea to sea landmass. Facing the very real consequences of climate change, and the importance of increasing equity and inclusion in our sector, SWS Performance understands the urgent need



for more traditional theatre practitioners to find relevance and to explore creative possibilities. We believe that employing a new set of tools might support these needs. We have no wish to banish “the roar of the greasepaint” from the theatre, indeed we hope to find ways to make the very essence of our humanity roar more potently than ever before.

Not unlike the reaction caused by Bob Dylan strumming his fingers on electrified strings at Newport in '65, SWS Performance challenges theatre makers to consider digital innovation even if it flies in the face of theatre defined as people gathered together in a room. Innovation jars some and thrills others. The disruption is real. SWS Performance also believes theatre has an underused potential for supporting creative considerations in technology development. We see ourselves standing at the nexus of a two-way street.

Theatre is poised to grow. The tech world is poised to grow. We believe SWS Performance can not only trigger growth, but catalyze change.



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## THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT - TRUTHS



*Participants gathering for conversation at foldA 2018. Photo by Naseem Loloie.*

In this section, we will dig into what we believe in, who we are, and how we operate. These findings are a result of the consultative processes we have been engaging with since the Fall of 2017 through to the completion of our first foldA in June of 2018.

In our first consultative process, Max Valiquette guided us through a process to define certain “truths” about our organization.

### **Our Category Truths:**

*Category Truth: Truths about the specific category our organization exist with in. In our case, the live performing arts.*

We are theatre people. Our category is comprised of theatre people. In general terms, theatre people appear to have a tremendous amount of anxiety associated with the loss of agency in the face of technology. Stanley, had direct experience of this anxiety when working on Stan Douglas’ groundbreaking Helen Lawrence. Actors were required to perform completely different conceptual duties while, all the while, delivering on the crafts for which they had trained. Similar examples of this heightening of practice(s) and feelings surrounding the devaluation of the actors’ core skill set can also be traced to multiple critical responses to Lepage’s groundbreaking Coriolanus. In general terms, theatre people are also concerned about making



a living and about the art form losing purchase amid the ever-changing cultural markets of today.

Our category is comprised of a very high number of festivals but foldA (festival of live, digital Art), our annual meet-up dedicated to evolving theatrical form, is the only one like it in Canada, and one of a handful internationally dedicated to performances that engages with the digital world. It is also the only festival in Canada dedicated to programming work in varying stages of development alongside one another.

### **How we are responding to our Category Truths:**

SWS Performance is comprised of theatre makers. We love good, visceral, powerful theatre as much as the next theatre maker. So we start by sharing this with our category by saying, “we, like you, love what theatre can do.” Then we say: “the world is changing and we want to see how we can change with it or maybe even contribute to the change.”

Although a festival model is recognizable to participating artists, **foldA** is the only festival of its kind in Canada, exploring and presenting live performance integrated with digital technologies from coast-to-coast-to-coast. At **foldA**, we curate works from companies across Canada who are creating digitally integrated works. Our iterative development structure of ALPHA/BETA/GO at **foldA** coupled with built-in infrastructure for full audience feedback, fosters experimentation in the field by theatre people and technologists. **foldA** aims to see work experienced by live audiences in Kingston and digitally by audiences across the country.

### **Our Competitive Truths:**

*Competitive Truth: The nature of the various competitors in our category.*

Although there is infrastructure to write and think about theatre online in spaces like Howlround and Intermission<sup>1</sup>, there is currently no other arts organization in Canada primarily dedicated to experimenting with and curating performance work that engages deliberately with digital content (organizations like the Battersea Arts Centre and the FuturePlay Festival in the UK are understood as international competition). Unlike other examples of Canadian theatre company websites such as Nightswimming, Outside The March and Playwrights Workshop Montreal that focus on specific shows and company missions, we at SWS Performance are working to connect more people and their organizations through a set of shared values and goals. **foldA** (our marquee activity) stands apart from other performance festivals in our category. Nonetheless our category is alive with festivals that present live performance and this fact stands as our most powerful competitive category truth.

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<sup>1</sup>*Intermission* came online a little over a year after us and has surfaced as SWS performances most understood Canadian Competition.



## **How we are responding to our Competitive Truths:**

Identifying other online publishing spaces as a portion of our competition, helps us to narrow the scope of our focus to delivering stories and ideas that appeal directly to artists and institutions who are dedicated to what “now” means for “tomorrow”. Each of our two key publishing initiatives: CdnTimes and the Thought Residencies engage deeply and personally with artists at the edge of discovery or reflection. We avoid intersecting with artists who are promoting work and choose instead to focus on artists working through questions about the work itself.

SWS Performance publishing practices compete by deliberately aligning ourselves with a mixture of experimenting practitioners and academics, and by so doing not only sharply defining our market, but in fact creating the market to exist within.

**foldA** is a competitive player in a busy market place of festivals. Canada’s funding history makes festivals fertile ground for theatrical innovation, practice and excitement. **foldA** itself was birthed from a festival that shut down due to pending bankruptcy, and since **foldA**’s inception, many other festivals continue to launch across the country.

Our competitive edge comes from focusing on the iterative model that is at the heart of all of our beliefs and practices. We focus on geographic and inclusive accessibility models in our practice, and we focus on place, Katarokwi (Kingston), Ontario, on the the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee on the shores of Lake Ontario. **foldA**’s curatorial model is linked to core values (discussed in the next section “Organizational Context”) that keep our mission distinct and of-the-moment. . Our curation is national in scope and focused on equity-seeking artists, virtually connecting communities from across the country by both elevating and supporting distance.

SWS Performance develops cutting-edge technologies such as CdnStudio and is cultivating new partnership that will take initial idea forward to a next level. These technological advances coupled with our residency at Queen’s University, and our collective imperative of being at the head of the curve, offer us possibilities for key advantages in the festival field. We are unique. We are resourced. We are energized. And we are on track for being deeply supported by our home base in Kingston.

## **Our Customer Truths:**

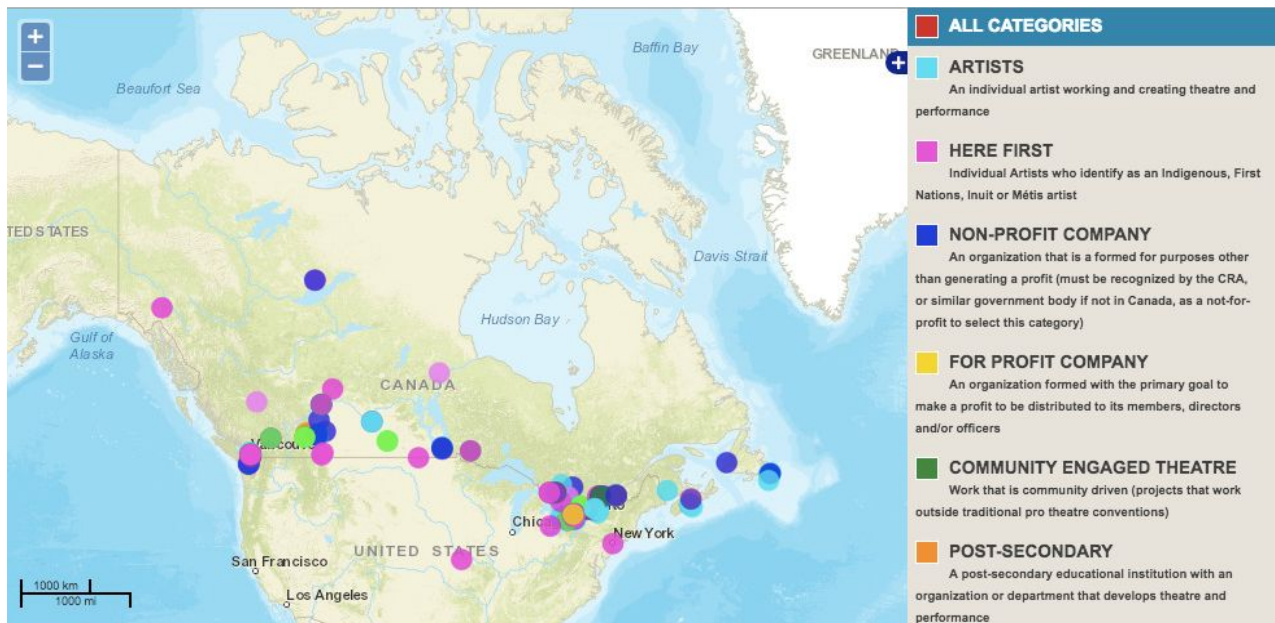
*Customer Truth: Truths about the customers in our category.*

Our customers are diverse. They are comprised of 3 key groups and 1 aspirational group:

- *Institutions:* Queen’s University, City of Kingston, National Arts Centre, Stratford Festival and PACT are our 5 topline customer institutions.



- *Practitioners:* Producers, creators and arts thinkers are our 3 topline customer profiles for our customer practitioners. The centralizing feature here is that practitioners drawn to SWS Performance appear to be unified by an equity-seeking impulse.
- *Students:* Queen's, National Theatre School, York, University of Waterloo, and University of Ottawa are our 4 topline student customers.
- *Tech and Gaming Sector:* We intend to include the tech and gaming sector as customers but for the present they remain aspirational



SWS Performance Maker's Map, with content from artists with varying experiences coast-to-coast-to-coast.

## **How we are responding to our Customer Truths:**

### *Institutions*

- Working with NAC, Stratford, the Citadel and other major PACT Houses as key producing partners for **foldA** provides these organizations with the opportunity to house innovative work and participate in conversations with other target customers from across distance.

### *Practitioners*

- As our marquee activity, foldA's iterative presentation model (ALPHA/BETA/GO) affords artists the opportunity to experiment in digital innovation, whatever stage their work is at.
- Thought Residencies are curated by Creative Catalyst Sarah Garton Stanley with a focus on elevating theatre practitioners from coast-to-coast-to-coast.
- Our online magazine, CdnTimes commissions artists and thinkers unified by equity seeking and sector-building ideas for publishing online.



### *Students*

- SWS Performance Artistic Director Michael Wheeler regularly teaches courses at Queen's and the National Theatre School on social design and digital innovation as a tool for live performance. He is a key member in reimagining curriculum for Queen's University's *Media and Performance Production*.

### *Tech and Gaming Sector*

- Although an aspirational customer, we are currently working to establish meaningful connections with technologists looking to explore the capacities of their work through art. We recently partnered with the University of Waterloo Games Institute to pair established playwrights with VR technology, with a goal of integrating and advancing both sectors.
- We have also begun a partnership with Kingston-based audio technology systems creator Audioconnexus as company looking to art and artists to inspire innovation and community through use of their technology at foldA.



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## THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT - VALUES



*Electric Company Theatre's Kevin Kerr at foldA 2018 experimenting with VR. Photo by Naseem Loloie.*

The second process we engaged with was comprised of several in-depth facilitated conversations between Stanley, Wheeler and Wong, and consultant and thinker Brendan Healy. During this time SWS Performance was able to identify a core set of organization defining values:

- Thought Leadership
- Social justice
- Coherence across distance
- Flexibility and responsiveness
- Remunerations for all artists and administrators intersecting with our project
- Accessibility (geographic, ability based and economic)
- Creating a 'Theatre for the Future'
- Non-Hierarchical/Iterative Leadership
- Liveness is key
- Innovation through risk-taking, experimentation, inventiveness, disruption, fearlessness, and conversation



As an outcropping of our work with Brendan we began to see that our main task was to filter our activities. We knew that we were maxed out from a human resources perspective, but it took us longer to understand that we were also wasting creative energy (resources) by casting our net too wide. From this we undertook an inventory of our output and started to strategize how to reassemble our various parts.

This work led us to think about **foldA** and while this was helpful in terms of understanding where our public face could really shine it was also a strong organizing principle for how best to organize our operations. As a result of this process **SWS Performance** becomes more a silent producer who works in the background to facilitate our festival, our online magazines:

**CdnTimes** and **Thought Residency, Research and Development** (this includes any of the shows that SWS Performance produces).

By reducing the public emphasis on the producer (SWS Performance) and putting focus on the outward-facing programs, this will not only afford us streamlined trajectories but we believe it it will give our customers, category, and competitors a much clearer idea as to who we are.



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## THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT - THE EXPERIMENTS



Lisa C. Ravensbergen explaining *Citation* at foldA 2018. Photo by Naseem Loloie.

The goal of our organizational development funding was to open up the process of our own strategic planning and improvements making it a useful tool for artists and companies across Canada. With an aim to expand artistic processes, we created *The Experiments*. Each experiment was designed with a specific goal in mind and all were about moving the form forward.

1. We commissioned **Lisa C. Ravensbergen** to experiment with a design sprint as she developed her piece *Citation*. We wanted to see how development processes developed for product design might translate to live performance. SWS Performance provided Lisa with resources and expertise, and she used technology alongside her practise of Indigenous art-making. See a video of the process here.
2. We invited **Electric Company Theatre's Kevin Kerr and Kim Collier** to explore developing narrative for the VR component of their project *The Full Light of Day*, slated to be presented by Canadian Stage and Luminato in 2018-19. We wanted to test our role as national connectors, and to see if we could leverage our network of artists and organizations to find "matches" -- in this case a company with some rehearsals space with an artist who needed space to work. SWS partnered with Thousand Islands Playhouse to provide a one-week residency complete with artists, space, and equipment. The residency culminating in an "alpha" presentation of the material,



including user-testing and feedback from test-audience and witnesses. [See a video of this process here.](#)

3. We partnered with the Games Institute of the University of Waterloo to present a 2-day writing intensive for playwrights. The workshop was taught by Gada Jane, Research Creation and Partnerships Specialist at The Games Institute and covered technical aspects of writing for VR including viewer point of view, directing attention, and using cuts. We invited Nicolas Billion, Erin Brandenburg, Ahmad Mere, and Rosamund Small to join us in Waterloo. Through the intensive, playwrights considered how their skills could translate to the explosion of AR and VR technologies. [See a video of this process here.](#)

With our experience, rigorous experimentation, and previously established networks, we have the tools and expertise to be the theatre organization that connects the URL and the IRL. We now need to organize SWS Performance to sustainably create this movement. Given the established context and the values inherent with **SWS Performance**, we propose a new organizational model with an inward-facing research and development wing, and three outward facing sub-brands associated with established media strategies that we continue to maintain and improve.



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## *FINDINGS: THE FUTURE FACE OF SWS PERFORMANCE*

SWS Performance is an organization that itself has developed through improvisation, responding to current opportunities, and experimentation. The goal of the organizational development process we're engaged in is to refine the company's activities and structures into a form that is coherent, sustainable in its current form, and has room to grow.

Each of the activities described so far in this document have provided critical information towards that end. We've identified key truths about the organization, articulated values and aligned the thinking of the three leaders, and tested strategies for the organization to catalyse new work, push the form forward, and leverage our unique role as connectors in the national and international theatre communities. SWS Performance is poised to be a leader in the exploration of liveness where performance and digital tools intersect.

Key to the future growth of SWS Performance is a clear understanding of the organization's identity as creator/producers of the work of the company's core artists, presenters of other artists' work, and animateurs of new work. Looking at the range of activities SWS Productions shepherds, we asked ourselves two key questions:

Which initiatives are having the most impact?

Where could SWS Performance have more impact nationally and internationally?

In answering these questions, the leadership realized that while we appreciate the cultural products that are plays, performances, and live interventions, we are equally if not more interested in the examining the ways these works are created.

One of the keys to the magic of theatre is its impermanence. These days, the "lifespan" of a theatrical production is lengthened through touring, but also through translation into other mediums either by capturing the moment to film or publishing the manuscript.

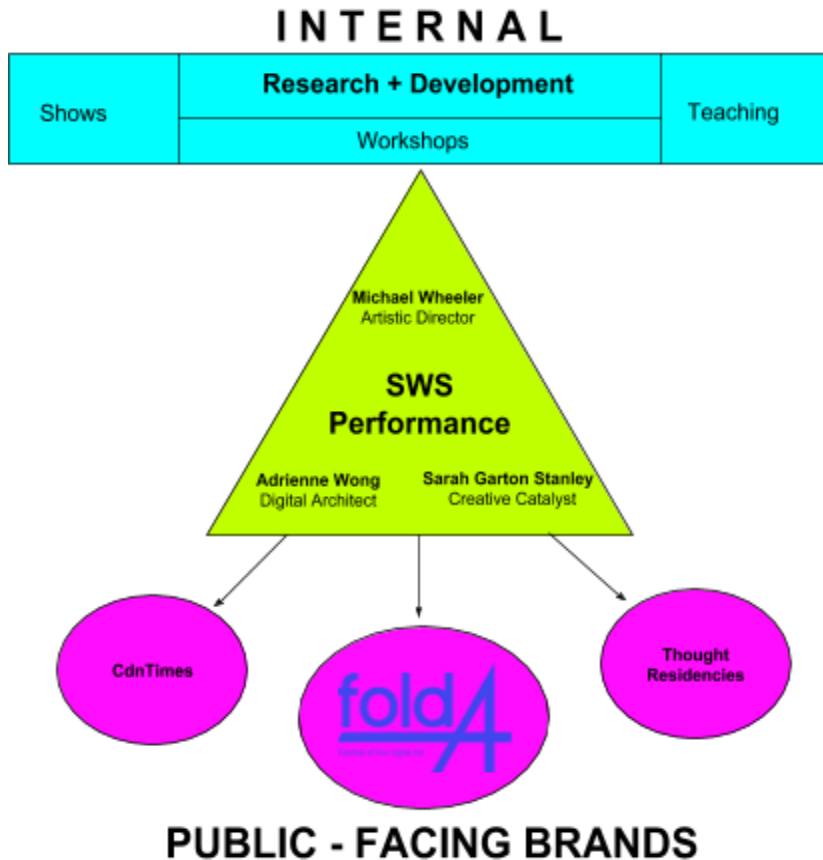
But the way a group of artists approach a creation process, the tools they use to generate and refine material, the way in which they consider the spectator in their thinking about performance, these and other invisible forces not only shape the eventual artwork, but also the culture of our organizations, institutions, and communities themselves.

Our dual interests in presenting "final products" and our passion for how those works are made have been apparent in SWS Performance programming from the very start. Through the current organization development process we've designed a matrix that encompasses all our diverse activities, defines their relationship to each other and allows room for growth.



SWS Performance activities can be sorted into two categories: internal and public-facing.

Internal activities are driven by curiosity, research, and development. They include workshops, teaching, inventing, and shows. The first three activities are familiar as research and development activities. Examples include Garton Stanley inventing CdnStudio with Joel Adria, and workshops led by Wheeler about Social Design. In the research and development stream these workshops unpack strategies for implementing digital tools (beyond marketing) to deepen or broaden the nature of a live performance.



But what about shows as research and development? For most organizations focused on performance, the shows are the ultimate expression of the creative impulse. This is another way that SWS Performance is different.

We know that new technologies and approaches need testing and that this testing process is integral to refining the technology itself. For us, the shows are places where we can pilot the new ideas with an eye to using those refined tools in our outward-facing activities. An example of this process is SWS Performance's first show *The Revolutions* (2017) which used CdnStudio (an invention developed through our R+D activities, discussed more below) to combine spaces in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, and Kingston. An artistic endeavor in its own right, *The Revolutions* also served as a field-test of the CdnStudio technology itself.

Public-facing activities are powered by a desire to bring together makers who are working in similar territory to catalyze relationships and synergies, and act as animateurs introducing artists and audiences to the dynamic work that is happening right now where performance and digital meet. At SWS Performance we consider ourselves as recognizers, we recognize artists and



technologists doing innovative work in the sector and amplifying those voices. Our public-facing activities reflect this.

We have identified our outward-facing activities as sub-brands, which include:

1. **foldA**, the most substantial of the sub-brands, a yearly national and international event that physically combines space by inviting creators, engagers, digital innovators, and presenters to the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts to engage in conversation and work created with iterative design in mind. We aim to expose the tech sector to theatre creators, exciting them about possibilities for both the future of theatre and the future of theatre as a creative process for digital innovation. In a public debrief of foldA 2018, artists in attendance described attending the festival in four words: learning, upskilling, listening, and leveling up.
2. **CdnTimes**, a curated online magazine. We commission articles from artists and activists engaging with dramaturgical questions associated with being a creator in Canada, now. We recognize watershed moments in Canadian culture and respond to them with sophisticated and diverse perspectives.
3. **Thought Residencies**, monthly podcast residencies with a diversity of theatre artists. This initiative leans into our organizational value of digital accessibility to leverage voices of often disenfranchised and sometimes disconnected creators working in Canada.

Through CdnTimes and the Thought Residences, the leadership team has demonstrated five years of curating some of the most revolutionary Canadian artists working with disruption and the digital world. foldA builds on this foundation and manifests our capacity for connecting with artists working in digital media from coast-to-coast-to-coast and more recently, internationally.

Internal and public-facing activities at SWS Performance are interrelated and integral to each other. The story of CdnStudio is an example of how this dynamic can work.

In 2015, Creative Catalyst Sarah Garton Stanley and technologist Joel Adria invented CdnStudio, an online performance and rehearsal hall that uses green screen technology to combine spaces over distance. Crowdfunded into existence, testing CdnStudio became a major research function of SWS Performance over the last few years.

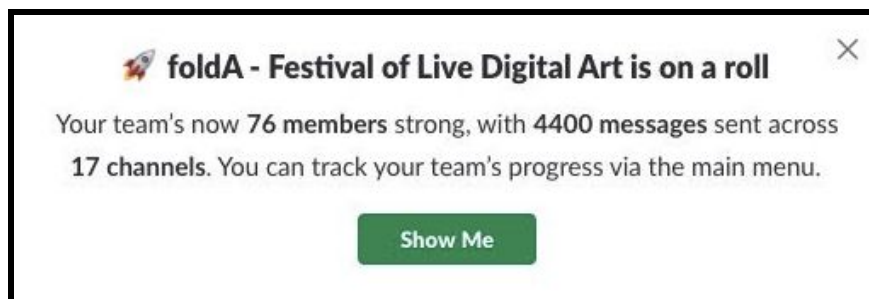
AD Michael Wheeler leveraged teaching contracts at the National Theatre School, Queen's University, and the Canadian Association of Theatre Research to execute live tests with students. Through using CdnStudio to play and devise work, students and artists discovered limitless possibilities and also identified bugs in the system that never would have been found without this rigorous experimentation. The most demanding testing of CdnStudio occurred when SWS Performance used the platform as the foundation for *The Revolutions* in 2017. Findings from each test and the production were fed back to Joel, who then refined CdnStudio making it



a robust and reliable system to use to connect venues in different cities during the inaugural foldA in June 2018.

We plan to apply a similar approach with an upcoming production of Darrah Teitel's *Behaviour* at the GCTC. As co-producers, SWS Performance's Michael Wheeler will direct the play, but will also integrate a 3-camera livestream into the performance schedule. This is an opportunity to refine the 3-camera set up, mic-ing, and tech needs and to get really good at livestreaming – addressing an internal organizational goal to research and develop best practices for livestreaming. These skills and knowledge will then be applied to the livestream of performances during foldA 2019—our marquee public-facing brand.

With experimentation at the forefront of art-making, the show itself becomes a means to the ends and not the ends itself, revealing a “a whole new kind of creation”, one where we can work to refine technologies through practical use and share our knowledge and innovation widely through our public-facing brands and activities.



Screenshot from the foldA Slack channel with foldA artist, staff, audience, and volunteer online from June 19-21.

Another example of the how SWS Performance uses internal and public facing activities to develop how we use technology is our myriad applications of the online communication tool SLACK. Because we are often working across distance (Wheeler is located in Kingston, Wong in Banff, and Stanley is often mobile), we rely on SLACK to keep conversation immediate, professional, and productive. When faced with the pragmatic challenges of running *The Revolutions*, a show that connected multiple locations and time zones, our team's familiarity with SLACK's instant messaging made it the natural and logical communication solution. The success we experienced using SLACK this way led to a desire to use the platform to communicate with foldA delegates, with the secondary benefit of reducing the festival's printing needs and environmental footprint.

These two examples demonstrate how the internal and public facing wings of activity feed into each other, bouncing back and forth, sparking innovation and invention.

For SWS Performance, thinking about and supporting change in how things are made is of equal, if not greater, importance to creating the thing itself. We want to redefine the means of production. We question the hierarchies and conventions of theatre as it has been institutionalized within the hierarchies of industrialization and capitalism that we've inherited. By



changing the way art is made, the ambition is to ultimately dismantle and subvert the power dynamics entrenched in Canadian theatre.

At the heart of SWS Performance is profound optimism that art can change the world. How we work, with whom and the processes we use not only reflect the currents of progressive change currently sweeping North American, but that we as art-makers can work to influence and add momentum to this evolution. Actions that are, arguably, needed now more than ever.



*2018 foldA participants experiencing Lisa C. Ravensbergen's Citation. Photo by Naseem Loloie.*

For our organization to grow, and to build upon the impacts we are already having, we've identified the following next steps:

#### For Internal activities

- Continue and expand workshops and teaching
- Strategically produce shows with specific technologies that we want to test
- Seek out opportunities to learn and build network of knowledgeable professionals who can execute technologies for foldA

#### For Public-Facing activities and SWS Performance Sub-Brands

- foldA:
  - Invest in the local, building our audience in Kingston
  - Invest in the national, partner with like-minded organizations to realize our ambition for foldA to take place simultaneously in multiple cities across Canada



- Invest in excellence, use the lessons we learn through R+D to set an industry standard for livestreaming and collaborations over distance.
- CdnTimes:
  - Rename and rebrand but maintain editorial vision and online distribution
  - Continue to catalyze online exchanges and seek out the energy of where important conversations are happening
- Thought Residencies:
  - Continue to pass the mic to artists whose voices might not otherwise be recognized
  - Find ways to expand reach through iTunes and other platforms

Ultimately, all of these activities are only realizable if we have a robust and responsive organization as a foundation. The momentum from this process is propelling the following organizational development activities:

- **Organizational development:** the core members of SWS Performance are engaged artists working nationally and our meetings often span time zones. We continue to use tools like Slack and Trello to streamline communication and decision making. We are introducing the RACI matrix to analyse workflow, and manage projects.
- **Strategic planning:** having identified the key focus and activities of SWS Performance through the generation of this report, the natural next step is to build a five year strategic plan, identifying strategic objectives and goals necessary to grow foldA, maximize the impact of the Thought Residencies and CdnTimes, and continue to develop new technologies and ways of working.
- **Rebranding CdnTimes:** the online publication manifests many of the organizations goals for developing voices and creating space for under-represented artists to share their experiences and arts practices. At the same time, we recognize that the current brand, CdnTimes, is not dynamic nor does it hold name recognition. A renaming and rebranding process is underway.
- **Board Development:** to grow the organization and foldA, we must grow the board. Involving more local Kingstonians on the SWS Performance board will help establish foldA in the local ecology, and expanding the skill-sets and levels of engagement of board members will better support staff's capacity.
- **Rebranding as SWS Performance:** as our core sub-brands foldA, CdnTimes, and Thought Residencies do increased work as public-facing aspects of the organization, SpiderWebShow Performance will become SWS Performance as the producing hub that connects and facilitates these activities with our internal research and development.
- **Business Development:** Through our consultations with Brendan Healy, we embraced the idea that SWS Performance holds knowledge, expertise and connections with skilled professionals that are valuable to other organizations within and outside the arts sector. Our next phase of growth is to develop products and services that fill gaps for these organizations.



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## CONCLUSION:

This process of reflection and strategizing has revealed an integral truth about SWS Performance and the artists at the organization's core: we are connected.

One of the company's most valuable assets are the extensive and ever-growing networks of national and international connections cultivated by Sarah Garton Stanley, Michael Wheeler and Adrienne Wong. All three artists value the importance of creating space for under-represented artists to work, and platforms for alternative voices and perspectives.

The network provides all three curators access the artists and makers invited as Thought Residents and contributors to the online magazine. But no network is ever complete. A key strategy for continued growth of the organization is to continue to expand our professional and personal networks into intersecting and, what our friend JD Derbyshire calls, "eccentric communities."

We do this by fostering conversation and intentional outreach to these artists—who are often friends of friends—and by capitalizing on the extensive travel and research afforded Cultural Catalyst Sarah Garton Stanley's through her work with Canada's National Arts Centre.

This rich and growing network feeds the creative processes of the inward-facing research and development wing of SWS Performance, which in turn serves the evolution of technologies and ways of thinking for creators and for digital innovators. As recognizers, we strive to keep our fingers on the pulse of what's happening and what could happen in the future. At the conclusion of this organization development process, we have at the very least developed ways of having difficult conversations – conversations about artistic vision, about personal and organizational capacity, and the prioritizing that results.

Our proposed organizational model celebrates iterative creation, failure as generative engine, and evolution. We have come to understand that what we are really compelled by is the "liveness" of now and of tomorrow: we are working to build a theatre for the future.