



▶ **NATEAC Transcript #2008.210**

NATEAC 2008 Plenary Session

Steven Ehrenberg and David Taylor

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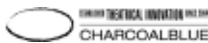
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► **Message from Bill Sapsis**

Dear Subscriber,

Thank you for your interest in the North American Theatre Engineering and Architecture Conference (NATEAC). The session you are about to read is one of the twenty that made up the inaugural conference in July of 2008.

The idea for the conference grew out of the very real need to improve communication between everyone involved in the design and construction of performance spaces in North America. NATEAC was modeled after two similar conferences produced by Richard Brett in London in 2002 and 2006. Over 250 industry professionals attended NATEAC, which was held at Pace University in the financial district of New York City.

The NATEAC mission statement reads, in part, *“to promote communication between the architects, engineers, consultants, and manufacturers responsible for designing and building new theaters and renovating existing facilities in North America. It is also our goal to promote a higher level of interaction between these professionals and the end users of their facilities.”* By all accounts NATEAC achieved its mission in excellent form. Not only were the panels well presented and received but the social events also provided an excellent opportunity to continue the discussions in a less formal setting.

The transcripts have been lightly edited to remove some of the blemishes that occur in situations like this from time to time. We have however, maintained the intent of the each speaker so that you have a clear understanding of what each session was about.

Thanks again. I hope you enjoy this transcript and that the information it provides is useful for you.

Best regards,
Bill Sapsis
NATEAC Director

EDDIE RAYMOND: It is my genuine privilege today to introduce to you our plenary speakers. David Taylor and Steven Ehrenberg represent to me the definition of professionals in our business. They're extremely motivated, they're smart as can be, they're generous with their wisdom and their advice, and they both possess the ability to laugh, a good laugh, when it's needed most of all.

Steven is the vice president of Technical Production at BASE Entertainment. He began his career while at Columbia University, a career that has included work as a stage manager, a stagehand, technical director, technical supervisor, and production manager across the world. At BASE, Steven has the opportunity to work on both venue construction and show production internationally. Previously as the vice President of technical supervision at Clear Channel and then Live Nation... What are they this week? Oh, I'm sorry. It's an inside joke. His responsibilities included technical oversight for the touring network of Broadway Across America and consulting on construction of new buildings and renovations. Since 1990 Steven has been the Production Manager/Technical Director of the Reich Music Foundation, and he also serves on the ETCP Certification Council.

David Taylor is an internationally known theater consultant and theater designer who has led some of the most renowned arts buildings projects of the last twenty years, including the New Amsterdam Theater for Disney, Verizon Hall for the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Kodak Theater for the Oscars and the new Goodman Theatres in Chicago. He leads the Performing Arts Business Sector for the design-engineering firm, Arup in New York and sits on the board of ESTA and on the Showlight Conference. I have to tell you, David plays a mean fiddle. Did you bring it?

This is a business whose gears are greased on relationships. I think everyone has experienced that this weekend, starting with the boat ride where people were reacquainting themselves with people they hadn't seen in years, and pretty much picking up where they'd left off, and then introducing them to people that they knew who the other person didn't know, who then introduced them to other people. We have far fewer than six degrees of separation.

David and I met in 1992 when he was the theater consultant and I was the evil end user on the reconstruction of the Geary Theater after the Loma Prieta earthquake. We've become friends and colleagues since then, and we both serve on the ESTA board of directors together. Steven and I met through our mutual work on the NTCP Certification Council, and I'm really pleased to consider Steven a personal friend at this point in my life.

With no further ado, I'd like you to welcome Steven and David. *[APPLAUSE]*

STEVEN EHRENBURG: I'm Steven Ehrenberg. That's David Taylor over there. We've been asked up here to help wrap up the last couple of days and to bring some of the scintillating information that we all have spoken about, heard or discussed, and discussed heatedly, argued about, agreed upon, disagreed about and came to blows over. You didn't see the consultants fighting in the courtyard earlier? To try to pull all that into a bit sharper focus and put it into a perspective that we all can take away and try and use for the future. But before we get into any of that, I think it's mandatory that we all thank Bill once more for putting so much on the line in time, reputation, energy, and drinks, to try and make this conference happen. I know everybody who's here and participating and who organized this and who attended will all go forth with bells pealing as champions of the next conference. I think that's true.

Vast amounts of useful information have been tossed out for consideration here. Undoubtedly, this is a great new forum for those of us whose focus is building and populating new theaters. I thought this was a truly remarkable group of speakers, panelists and participants to have in one place to discuss this wide-open topic. David and I tried to attend as many sessions as we possibly could

over the last few days. I picked up a few things over the last couple days, and I wanted to share some of the notes and scribbles from the sessions I attended before we get too deeply into what we think is the real topic here.

The first note says how many architects does it take to screw in a light bulb? None. We just draw them. What happens after that is your problem. How many consultants does it take to screw in a light bulb? I don't know. I need to check with the architect and see if that's in our scope. You may all get the answer to this one quickly. How many acousticians does it take to screw in a light bulb? What?? How many engineers does it take to screw in a light bulb? Huh? Sorry, I dozed off in the middle of that; what was the question? And lastly, how many owners' reps does it take to screw in a light bulb? One. It only takes one owner's rep to really screw in anything.

I said it's a wide-open topic because I think every building we look at or work on is unique. Of course, sure, the systems are all the same. They're all basically similar. They have audio, they have video, they have lighting, they have seats, there's a stage, there's rigging of some kind. But depending on the organizations they're being built for and people involved, and the uses that are envisioned for them, the ultimate goals that the building is to be put to, each one is its own separate and unique sum of the same basic parts.

In baking -- I cook from time to time -- in baking you can use the same basic ingredients to get chocolate cookies, chocolate brownies, chocolate cake or chocolate soufflé. It depends on the proportions and the way the baker or the bakery team, as it were, puts them all together. They are all terrific and they all serve their purpose. But each one has a different taste and a different texture and appearance, and it appeals to different people. But in the end they're all chocolate, and I think the same is true of all of our buildings. In the end, they all support live performance and they're all chocolate.

DAVID TAYLOR: It's an enormous pleasure to be here talking to you from this strangely positioned podium. We were originally going to put the podiums next to each other, but Eddie Raymond suggested we be a bit like Statler and Waldorf from the Muppet show. It's great to join all you chocoholics, as Steven has categorized you. I've been amazed as I've flitted from room to room here, who is in which session. It's quite remarkable that despite knowing a good number of you here as delegates, I would have failed terribly if I'd taken up Jules Love's suggestion to bet on not only who goes to which session, but who sits next to who and whispers in whose ear. Now, Jules Love is a consummate matchmaker, so I'm sure he'd have done much better than me. This observation of who went to which one, as opposed to Steven's Hershey recipe, is a testament to the breadth of the program that Mr. Sapsis has put together for us over the last two days. I echo Steven's amazing commendation of Bill's work. It has, it should be noted, remained remarkably on track time wise. Thinking about this, it's a little amazing to have the most talkative bunch of chocoholics, meaning engaged theater folk, in rooms with shut doors, with coffee, with air conditioning, with cookies, and then more cookies coming through. How did they ever stay on track? I think one reason is that Bill moved everything along, and we thought he was the guy who held things up. *[LAUGHTER]* You know, Steven groaned almost as much as...

I've been absolutely amazed by the breadth of the sessions here and the panelists' participation, and also the delegates' participation, which I think has been extremely engaging and engaged. I think the tone was set for me by the opening keynotes. We watched history on the screen as Richard Brett's National Theater images, designed more than two generations ago that's still being explored and exploited and rethought. That drum revolve still makes me gasp when I see it up there, and that production was amazing.

Then we had Hugh's amazing fast forward through history from sailing to the incredible spectacle last week or the week before at the Park Avenue Armory. It resonated to me, and I think a few other people, that Hugh found the production of "Die Soldaten" so remarkable and saw it as an example of where we are going in the new and next generation of productions. Steven and I have talked about how our national theater, the Lincoln Center Festival here, is an incredible institution that can fund the amazing productions they both produce and present. Stan Pressner told me...I've had a day of doing things that Stan Pressner told me and doing Stan Pressner impressions. He's been turning up either behind me or across the table from me. Stan Pressner told me that if they really knew how much it would cost to move 1,000 well-padded Lincoln Center family bums 280 feet from Park to Lexington, they would have been unlikely to do it. But thank Lincoln Center that they did. Boy, are we glad they did that. It's come up on a number of panels and certainly in the breakout discussions as well. We'll hopefully talk about that a little bit more as well.

But such organizational philanthropy here in the U.S., and state subsidy in Europe, helps transition culture from generation to generation. But it surprises me that that has to be in a found space. The big empty warehouse and originally the production in Belgium was in a big empty warehouse that's their theater. That this occurred in a found space rather than in a custom-built theater. And if productions need, for instance, to be able to move an audience through an orchestra or change the audience-orchestra relationship, why are we not building or adapting theaters to address this?

So in the Acoustics in the Digital Age session, we heard that... Before I do that, I'm going to try and do a ground rules thing to see if we can set this up. Steve and I both have gone to sessions and taken notes, and our hope is that over the next few minutes we're going to try and go through a series of sessions.

What we're trying to do is not talk about the specific session perhaps as much as bring different sessions together and people who are in different sessions together. We're going to interact with each other because we quite like doing it. But also, the whole point of this, the story as it were, will be to try and engage you. Is there any way to get any more light out of these house lights? Do you think it's worth waiting to install some more? Stan, is there a 12K HMI left?

We hope that it'll be a little more interactive rather than us sitting up here and either talking to ourselves or talking to each other here. But in the Acoustics in the Digital Age session, we heard that surveys have recorded that young audiences want more interactivity and more engagement. We hear that over and over again, and I'm putting that in context in the audiences. I'm not sure actually in that session whether we heard any acoustic suggestions to address that thing in particular. We heard some cool stuff, but not addressing that. In some ways what these kids are saying, and it's also come up in interviews that we've been doing on a project, is that the edges of discrete media have blurred. The next generation of theatergoers...and when we talk about theatergoers, we hope that they'll be theatergoers and they'll become theater subscribers, and then they'll become donors, and then they'll become lead donors, in this country. In the U.K., we hope that they become Lord Mayor of London. But these kids don't care much about music formats, for instance. They actually don't care, as we talked about in a couple of sessions here, about digital resolution. They care about accessibility and they see media as just media. So video and lighting and audio and ambiance, and vibration, as just being part of an overall experience. I say vibration because this will tie in with something that we'll talk about a little later, which is the gaming experience. Rumble Packs and how Rumble Packs really engaged what kids think of as interactivity, is something that's a big challenge for us in theater.

So if we have the chocoholics here in the audience at the conference, and a lot of Cadbury folk from England, too, I can see out there, this generation of new arts consumers are into the whole candy

shop, sour patches and all. So what we can take away from this conference and what I hope we'll touch on now and will be the subject of ribald discussion at the dinner tonight, some main useful themes. If we don't hit them in the next sixteen to eighteen minutes, you have to stand up, say your name and shout them out. I won't see you because it's completely dark out there.

We have people in this conference and delegates, people on the panels, who really care about theaters and concert halls and venues being future proof. "Future proof" is a word that came up for new and growing audiences. In this new audience theme, Steven, do you think that the purpose-built theaters and the new technologies are a kingpin of this?

STEVEN: I think they're an essential thing in a couple of ways. I don't know if any of you were here for the last bit, and looking at the types of technology and the amount of design surrounding of a production you can do and a venue that you're building solely for that purpose, it gives you some of that added attraction to go with having the audience experience enhanced. That's kind of what our audiences are looking for in the day and the age that we're in. There are things put out in the U.S. polls that show us that the attention span of the average teenager is the length of a sitcom, and that's it.

DAVID: I disagree with that. I'll tell you why I disagree with that. Hold your thought for a moment there, because I heard that the guy who runs Juilliard, he's not here, is he? The guy who runs Juilliard said exactly the same thing a few months ago. I'm a firm believer, having observed, but not in a creepy way, observed how much attention span young people have. I'm sure Andy Hayles does this with his sons. Kids have a short attention span for boring things. *[APPLAUSE]* I think that it's really just when you use a sitcom as an example of actually what has probably about 18 months left in its life span as a medium, but a sitcom which is inherently something that controls and band-aids boredom in this way. I think you're right. If sitcoms are the metric benchmark then the length of a sitcom is probably exactly tailored to one element of sitcom-related boredom. But I think it's completely feasible for kids to sit through...I think if my kids had gone to "Die Soldaten"... The delegation that we took to the Armory, Stan Pressner is twenty years younger than the constituent audience of that.

STEVEN: That's part of where I was going. So let's go back, and their attention span is roughly because of a certain cultural level about that of a sitcom, and then they start looking. However, we have a bunch of kids in our lives, a variety of ages, none of them ours, my wife and I, but we take them to theater a lot. It's amazing to me that when you put them in the right environment, in a room with a live performance, whether it's Wintuk or Diego or the Dora shows, they're rapt. They don't lose that. When their attention is focused by something, and I personally feel that it's got to do somewhat with live performance, then that's what we do. Once they're in there, you've got them. But the question, and I think you just raised it with the "Die Soldaten" audience and the audience at Lincoln Center, and the Broadway subscription series audiences. I experienced that working around the country for Clear Channel. There's nobody showing them now, and there's nobody bringing that audience up. I think one of our challenges here is to figure out how in the buildings we're continuing to build after we leave here, we try to enhance that audience experience as much as possible.

The Philadelphia Theater project that was looked at here in that session, the way that lobby went together and the relationship from the street into the theater, and the fact that you can walk by there... This has happened in some other places here as well. I'm picking on that one. They've glazed the entire front, so that if you're walking past and looking at all the people about to go into the theater, you can see that. You get a sense of looking into that, and maybe that's beginning to say, oh, maybe that's an experience I could have and want to go to. In our world today, we've got to do that because the immediacy of the Internet is just amazing at how quickly... I know David is going to talk about

interactive gaming as well. But we've got to work on how to keep audiences interactively engaged during a theater experience, and we've got to figure out in some way how the building helps do that.

To go back to the single-purpose theater point, Marie-Flore from Cirque made it really well on our panel, we engaged them. We design a lobby that works for that show, that enhances that experience and moves them through, into a room that's designed to be with that show. It doesn't necessarily need to be a single-purpose theater. You can do it a number of different ways. But we've got to concentrate on how to help live performance and support that through all of our buildings. The global shrinkage that's gone on is amazing. I get to travel all over and I sort of blame McDonald's for the start of this cultural homogenization. We could drop you in an enclosed building, a shopping mall maybe, anywhere and you couldn't tell me where you were if all you can see is which stores you can see, what cultural icons are there around you. And I think one of the great things about what we do is that every single performance in the buildings that are being put together here are unique. We have to continue to figure out how to build buildings to support this in the future. Whether that's something Marie-Flore mentioned in this panel and something I experienced fighting with an architect on a project I'm working on now, where the architect and the construction manager had said, oh, we're going to build straight rows in this theater. We want them to be straight across. Now, the theater has a purpose. I'm not sure it's that important to this, because I feel like you want to sit in a curved row in a theater, so that not only are you aware of the stage in front of you but out of your peripheral vision, you're aware of the rest of the audience. But if you're laughing at something, so is that person over there. Even though you're looking at this, you see them. If you're in a straight row and you're looking at the backs of the heads of the people in front of you, you could be sitting in a TV studio or a movie theater. That kind of detail is what's going to keep us moving and interactive within the audience on those things. And that relationship back and forth is, I think something that's important to how do we support, how do we go forward supporting these things?

DAVID TAYLOR: Richard *[INAUDIBLE]* talks about radiation paths returning back from people. So there is a radiation path that comes from the artist to the audience member, but exactly what you're saying, which is this idea of it then bouncing off and going to someone else. And that's the difference, that's what will get you away from your net terminal and get you into an experience with other people. Now, some of the things you might do in an experience with other people will indeed I'm sure have some relation to the net and have some relation to people having similar experiences elsewhere.

I forget which people said which, so if I put a quote from you to somebody else, unless it's libelous, jump up and shout. I think it was Josh Dachs who talked about technicians, obviously none of the people in this room, but technicians thinking of the form in the Form and Function discussion, being about decor. He stated that the form is indeed the thing that drives the success of it being a theater. I think that ties in exactly with what you're saying, Steven, about straight rows, for instance, to use just one idea, but straight rows do not address the fact that there is a form of a space for a particular art that needs to be a driver from the very beginning. When we talk about programming and we talk about planning, that inherently has to, amongst the team that's here, both in terms of client, user and consultant and architect, has to try to be the mold or the form that holds that energy contained, that energy reflected.

I was going to go off on a further digression and try and tie in with acoustics, but I won't. One of the things that's very interesting is that we don't generally like change very much culturally. So we quite often mistake lingering heritage with basic issues of how culture and technology and function

and things we want to do move on. I'd asked a question of Larry, which is in a black and white penguin suit on a stage, under white light, how many more years does symphony have?

LARRY: You're asking me that question?

DAVID TAYLOR: I'm asking you that question. You have to answer it.

LARRY: I think it depends on people's overall experience. It's still a valid experience, whether it's in *[INAUDIBLE]*. I think it still adds validity to it. We went to the children's concert about four or five weeks ago, Saturday morning, parents, friends, fellow children, and to watch the rapt attention of those kids and the opportunity to go up on the stage afterwards and play, move the slider of a trombone or hit the timpani...it depends on people's exposure. It's like your comment, Steve, about taking a child to the theater. If they experience it, there is something about it. We lost a whole generation of kids for live performance when arts programs in our schools just closed down. So I don't know what the future is. I know that the validity of it is still there. I'm not quite sure of the penguin outfits or whether it is that Saturday morning in informal dress and people have an opportunity to come. There are times that that's a transformative experience. It's not the only experience. It's a really rich, rich experience for all of us.

DAVID TAYLOR: Ron Masurick and I went to a concert in a horrible but well-known concert hall with a pretty darn good orchestra, a pretty mediocre audience, and a really great program. And how many youths or under were in that audience, right?

LARRY: I'd say maybe one percent.

DAVID TAYLOR: That many? We didn't see the remaining three.

LARRY: I know at "Die Soldaten", there were maybe ten people, fifteen people under thirty-five.

DAVID TAYLOR: Come on, you were the youngest person there?

LARRY: Oh, yeah. *[LAUGHTER]*.

DAVID TAYLOR: I'm anxious about this because other people have heard me say and have seen me write and I think it's exponential. I know that in every point in time and in society we always know that now the catastrophe is happening. That's how you can get away with global warming, right? The issue I think is exponential. It's exponential because as Larry said, certainly in this country and I'll ask a Brit who's been there recently whether it's the same in the U.K. and Europe, that music and arts education has become sidelined and specialized, not core curriculum. Yes? No? It has to really back up pretty quickly because this ability to influence and engage a generation at the right time is extremely slim.

FEMALE SPEAKER: It's peculiar to the West anyway, but Russian conductors who come here look out at the audience in the Barbican and they always say, people are so old here. It's particular to certain countries. You go to China and everybody's one child, one family, more money, more ability to teach their children to learn instruments and so on. And there's a huge growth there. We say these things, but it's particular to our community.

STEVEN EHRENBERG: It's particular certainly to our culture here. Recently, two and a half or three years ago now when Steve Reich turned seventy, we did concerts of his music all over the world, in a variety of different halls, some set up for amplified music and some not. But the point is about the audience. I thought the Barbican audience was young. Maybe they were actually for that particular festival. There was quite a turnout. It was really interesting. But to go back to the orchestra, too, we can't afford it anymore. It's really interesting that fewer and fewer composers are writing for that orchestra as we know it. And with the advent of microphones and amplified sound, you don't need

a string section. You can do it with a violin, one on each of those parts. That's fine to counter one bass clarinet or whatever percussion you've got out there. The smaller model of the orchestra is part of live performance now. What John Adams is writing for, what Steve Reich is writing for. What other modern composers are writing for is a smaller amplified ensemble. Because one, they can't afford to write for those. People won't play it unless there's a big symphony orchestra, and those aren't the people who they want to be playing it. They want musicians who are more into the contemporary music to be playing that stuff.

DAVID TAYLOR: But the other component of that theme, though, that's come up over the last couple of days ties in with the idea of the cross-media. It was fashionable a few years ago to call it convergence, but in fact it's...we don't even say it right. But the guy in the middle picture here and the guy in the previous slide with the orchestra is a guy who goes under the moniker of DBR, with DJ Scientific. He is a composer and performer, and is probably the person most engaging with symphony orchestras who are struggling with their young audiences and in engaging the new audiences. He's somebody who writes music, who plays hip-hop violin, and who has an extremely broad and wonderful classical knowledge that he then transfers through his performance and his interactive performances, which require lighting and which require video, and which bring these things together in this way. He struggles to find venues which can support this and which can achieve this. Certain brand new concert halls that have been designed in this country and have opened recently have, in order to deal with donor desires from a philanthropic base that is generally upwards of 70 years old, there has been a don't want change, this is what it has to be, this is what I grew up with. I came from a high-quality music listening environment that was vinyl, we listened to it in a linear way and we finished and enjoyed it. We went to concerts and they had two pieces that were 40 minutes in the first half and then a 40-minute piece after an intermission. I don't want it to change; therefore it has to be this; therefore you can't put screens in this concert hall; therefore you can't have adjustable acoustics because DBR and DJ Scientific have some turntables and they have monitor speakers on the stage.

The acoustician who's not in this room for one particular hall, when asked how can we address this in your design? His answer was, well, don't do it. Don't do it.

STEVEN EHRENBERG: Don't address it or don't do that kind of concert?

DAVID TAYLOR: Don't do that kind of concert. The way to address it is to not do it. And that's great until we see the orchestra fade away to being a particular way, just like playing only on original instrumentations or only doing Baroque opera, or only doing ballet rather than dance.

I want to talk about the third of these three sites. The first one was the beginning of a number of very interesting sea change things that happened when Madonna signed with Live Nation. She left her record company and she took a giant enormous great fat telephone check and signed across all her merchandising, all her live dates. All her live dates became recordable medium owned by Live Nation. The branding that's essentially Madonna is now owned by Live Nation. In fact, that happened in the autumn of last year. Nickelback signed last week I think to the same thing.

STEVEN EHRENBERG: That started as I was leaving Clear Channel Live Nation. I think it might have actually started at Clear Channel, where they had developed technology and had the systems in place so that you could walk into a concert and on the way out, buy the live CD of what you'd just heard. Which was pretty amazing. I didn't mean to interrupt.

DAVID TAYLOR: No, it's interesting, because actually the technical requirements for doing that are not rocket science, certainly not rocket science for people in this room. The brand ownership and the understanding what an artist owns, what a venue owner owns, and what that venue owner's

relationship is with things that might be both created from other material and created live on the fly is the big sea change for us, the big leap for us to understand.

I want to tell you quickly about this, and anybody who's heard me say this before, you can go and get a drink from the lobby. I went to the Joni Mitchell launch last year. Joni Mitchell had a new CD. Joni Mitchell has stopped being a singer-songwriter and she's invested well, and she lives in her nice beachside retreat. She considers herself to be a visual artist. Sony gave her an HD plasma TV as Sony is known to do. If you're a singer, they'll give you a TV. The guys delivered this TV to her beachfront residence and she turned it on, and it didn't work properly. It only played back green images. She sat there flipping through the channels, wondering about calling the Sony-guy back out to the beach to fix this. Then she was watching the feed from Iraq and she saw these green ghostly images coming through, and she got her assistant to go to the CVS store and buy a bag of disposable cameras. And then she shot a series of images off the TV, and sent them back to the drugstore, had them developed, sent the assistant off to buy those albums that have three slots in them and made these triptychs. So she went through a personal art experience that was unrelated to music, unrelated to anything. It was related to a TV not working from Sony.

At the same time, Alberta Ballet were developing or were performing a piece of work based on a compilation of music by her, and she went up there. She took these little triptychs. One thing leads to another. If you talk with an artistic director of a ballet company, and whatever you happen to have in your handbag he'll make something new out of. So he said to her, wow, I'd really like to make a ballet based on your triptychs. And she said that's great, and what will you use as the music? He said, well, why don't you write some music to support this? So she went away and with the triptychs the ballet started to be developed. She wrote the music. There's a point to this story. It's a complicated point, but there is a point. She went back, she collaborated. The ballet was produced staged point. So something live that came from a television photographic art experience with music written to create it.

Canadian Television decided that they were going to make a high definition movie of this, and they made a high definition movie of this. How I came to be involved with it is because it's produced by the wife of my friend. We got invited to the world premier opening and CD launch here in New York. We went to dinner with its producer and we were going to go and see this launch. We had difficulty getting to the restaurant because there was a film shoot going on. It was in Tribeca and they were shooting a film, like they do almost every day here, and we had to get around this and have our dinner and then head four blocks to the Sunshine Cinema where we sat down and waited half an hour for Joni Mitchell to arrive to have this premier. She was delayed because she had to get around the movie crew who were filming outside. She arrived and she introduced and told the story of how this movie got made and the process in it. She put a lot of effort and a lot of heart into doing this with the artistic director. We didn't hear anything, we didn't really see her because it was a small intimate cinema, and there was no lighting for people to talk in this way. They showed the movie. The high definition Christie projector struggled a little bit with dealing with what was on the screen. The music was kind of okay in the mix that was in there. We then left the cinema, we went up and went eight blocks down the road to an art gallery where we looked at the art that was put on the walls by being lent against the walls. Then we listened to the CD that was played back through speakers that sat on the floor in the art gallery. The art gallery was lit by a series of floods that were sitting on the floor, facing the people who were standing there at the party. This was an amazing piece of work when you think about it, and could have been a wonderful thing. From Joni Mitchell's point of view,

she just completely understood this is what she did. There happened to be a CD out of it at the end, which was produced by Starbucks, which is another way of developing.

STEVEN EHRENBERG: Which you can buy everywhere in the world.

DAVID TAYLOR: Right. But here was a catalogue of inadequacies in somebody addressing essentially convergence. And once we talk about it and we say, well, ACN is going to help us with convergence, ultimately we are not addressing what Josh Dachs says is the core reason for making theaters, which is about the storytelling and the form follows that storytelling. Do you think that the repurposing or the bringing forward of the past into the new buildings is a key to getting a literate and engaged new generation of theatergoers who want to go to the theater and want to go to concerts, Steven?

STEVEN EHRENBERG: I do in a way. Gary Martinez in the Bringing the Past Forward panel said this is our House and what it looks like after it was restored and now has a new stage that'll deal with modern theater. But it is, it's true with that. There's also something that we're going to be facing soon when...the question is going to start coming up about the large multi-purpose... Sorry, you're going to hear some things I hate here, so you'll know how I feel about these in a minute. But the large multi-purpose performing arts centers that were built all over the place in the Sixties, Seventies and into the Eighties. Please, if you were part of the teams that built them, that's what we did at the time and you did a damn good job because they're all still there. But that's what we did. Tampa Bay, Jones Hall in Houston -- that's one of the good ones. I got that from somebody. The Broward Center. So many of them, anything with an orchestra shell on it, for God's sake, there's a compromise right there. Those are buildings we're going to have to make choices about soon. They're going to start to get old. The question is going to be do we refurbish those buildings, do we do something different with them? I think when that question comes to us, I think we have to take a little hint from sports. Because just ahead of where we were building those multi-purpose venues, all across our country in the Sixties and going on from there, sprung up these wild, multi-purpose sports arenas. Shea Stadium, Three Rivers. Candlestick became one. Where you were intended to sit and watch. Busch Stadium in St. Louis. You were going to watch baseball, football, soccer I guess -- not in those days -- but anything that they wanted to put in there, you were going to watch in there. And you know, it just didn't work right. After the baseball strike when baseball was trying to reclaim its audience, what started cropping up starting with Camden Yards in Baltimore, is a really wonderful designed venue to enhance the crowd's enjoyment, the audience's enjoyment of baseball. And it wasn't intended to be used for anything else. It was intended to sit and be used as a baseball park. It didn't work for football, it didn't work for anything else. But I think that as we're looking to our future and we're looking to reclaim our audience, I think we have to do everything we can to enhance their experience of these buildings. I think that's a page we have to look at, of those stadiums. I think there was a really wonderful move made to do that. Now, I'm a baseball fan and I love going to ball parks where you can really feel that and you can see that someone put some care and thought into your experience as you entered and went down and sat down, and then watched the game. I think we have to look at the same thing as we're looking towards really enhancing live performance. If we can't multi-purpose spaces anymore, maybe we have to look at that. That's going to come up, whether we want to build new or refurbish. There are some things that it's wonderful and worth saving, because that is our heritage and that is

the legacy that's been given to us. Restoring older buildings and older theaters is a great idea. I think following down that multi-purpose venue road is probably not as interesting.

DAVID TAYLOR: One of the reasons you might not knock them down though...you weren't in the sustainability one. I have to translate this. I got an opportunity to translate this. The pile of stuff you can see on the right-hand side there is the mound of diapers being produced by his son. What's the stat, Andy?

ANDY HAYLES: That's the amount of diapers my boy produces in two years. And he's not special.

DAVID TAYLOR: Andy, he is to you. But we're in a situation whereby just as we were saying that there is potentially an exponential slide downwards in maintaining the audiences, we're obviously in a pretty critical condition in understanding the state of our planet. The sustainability discussion did have a really kind of clear call to arms from the panelists and from the delegates on reusing and reducing the impact that updating and making work, and even new building, for the arts will have. There was a really good reason why theater is special. The reason for that is that if you're trying to illustrate and illuminate and educate, then theaters are a really good place to do that. They're a really good place to look at these things happening and to be assembly spaces for people to come together in understanding how this works.

Thus said, there are enormous challenges that were looked at in reducing the overall impact of not only designing and building theaters and concert halls, but also the operation of them as well. I was going to save this until the end, but my favorite moment of the entire conference so far was... I'm not exactly sure where the guy was from who said the solution to everything was sheep. There you go. It was wool, which unless I'm wrong still comes from sheep.

MALE SPEAKER: The sheep in the wall gets kind of noisy.

DAVID TAYLOR: Right. But the key issue, the problem he told us all, was the fact that generally the sheep weren't where the theaters were. But we'd just been having a discussion about green roofs, so there was this opportunity, and Scott Georgeson showed a green roof, this opportunity maybe to meld the wonderfulness of sheep wool acoustic and the fact that they could be sustained by eating the roof for the fly tower. I was going to have a graphic for that but I thought it was lower the tone.

I want to talk just a little bit on what I think is the focus of so many things. I think the idea of recycling buildings and the idea of using wonderful and amazing techniques that go back all the way to when we didn't have the equipment to do it, now that we do have the equipment to do it, and the complete and utter disregard for physics and budget and practicality that we can do in theater is the antidote to what some people heard me say earlier today, which is that as theater folk, we're incredibly good at triumphing over adversity. We also rather like to rebuild that adversity so that we can triumph over it.

What went on in the Armory has come up so many times in the discussions here, not only in the formal presentations, but a number of us have come back to it as an indication of what can be achieved, and what the point is of what we do. I like it because it ties in many things. It ties in recycling buildings, it ties in repurposing buildings, it ties in the fact that you couldn't do this -- and this will lead on to my next theme -- if you didn't have extraordinary experience and knowledge. And knowledge not only to be able to solve issues. Hey, Chris and Stan, we want to move this thousand people. We want them to move from one end of the Armory to the other. We don't want them to know we're moving, and we don't want to hear their poles rattle as they go. That's the starting point, that if that

understanding of not necessarily that I, Stan Pressner, I'm being Stan Pressner now, could do this, but I would know who to ask and in that organization know who to ask. A lot of what I have seen over the last couple of days, tying back to both Hugh and Richard Brett's call to arms is about experience and finding that experience in other people.

We learnt about teams working together. There was a long discussion about which came first, chicken or the egg, right? Which came first, the upticks or the... And if you were to ask me now what the answer to that is, we heard about sixteen variations of that during each of the different panels. The key that ran through all of them, the theme that ran through all of them was that generally if you've got a client who wants to build a theater, and you've got an architect and a consultant who like each other and want to build a theater, and together want to serve the client and thereafter the story, then you will end up with a better building. You will end up with a building that works, and not only that, you'll end up with a relationship that goes on with the building, and a relationship that goes on with your collaborators that will work for other buildings together. Do you want to talk a bit about the experience bit?

STEVEN EHREBERG: Sure.

DAVID TAYLOR: Actually, I've got something else to say. David Rockwell left. We had a meeting at the urinal here. It's his birthday. He was going to feign surprise at his birthday party in the office. He talked about designer's cockpit, which is actually the size of two stages. If you took the stage of the Orange Tree Theater in London and put it twice, it's the camera pit of the Kodak. So it's big. But he talked about how he worked with people who knew how to do this and how to understand it, how to translate the needs that were really crazy needs from the Academy, the Oscars people, to something that was buildable and usable, and then for the other eleven months of the year was useful. Enough about that. He actually talked about "Team America", and he said he had a conversation with Julie Taymor and, look, I'm going to do this set design for a marionette movie. She said, you don't know anything about set designs for marionette movies. And he said, yeah, who does? I see that as a call to arms. I see that as we don't know how to future proof these theaters. We don't know how to future proof them. We don't even know, it came out in the sustainability discussion, we don't really know how to make the sustainable elements not knocked off during the process to actually make them resilient enough and embedded enough, and important enough in the process, that given the choice between a big staircase in the lobby and the things that you need in order to save the planet with human life on it, that the decision is made to cut those sustainability ones.

So that idea of embracing the thing you don't know and stepping out into the unknown. Richard Brett is like Gandolf. He's got all the answers but you're scared to ask him the question. But I got that sense of...and Richard Pillbrow tells it as well. He does the Lawrence Olivier calling out [*in a funny voice*], "Dickie, Dickie, this is Larry, design my theater." And Richard puts it down and he goes, "Oh, crap, I don't know how to do that, but I know somebody who might be able to." You may not have known at the time...actually, this is a question to you. How many drum revolves of that size were there at the BBC? None, right? But you embraced that, you understood the point at the end there. You understood the story to be told. And when we saw "His Dark Materials" on the stage, it's stunning. It's amazing. You think, wow, this is like a toy theater but it's got really expensive back design. It's fantastic.

That confidence that we have is supported by the discussions that we have here. Not only the discussions that come from the table, but the really interesting... I was trying to throw pictures in, but I've got a lot of pictures of the audience oriented the wrong way in rooms. So the speakers are at this end, but everyone's looking that way because they're listening to Anne ask a question rather than listening to Larry King ask a question. These wonderful interactivities that happened. Because

everybody knows between a little bit and a lot, and they can. There's a passion. Passion is a word that was used a lot. I have a passion for this, I have a passion for that.

STEVEN EHRENBERG: That's one of the things that goes very well with the experience part, is the passion. I think that the people who are here have that passion. As we said before, we're all chocoholics. Richard Brett brought up that experience and said there has to be a real understanding among everybody working on the building and what the project is for, and a real understanding about what goes into it. I sort of had to just put my head in my hands and kind of weep in the corner. Because most of the projects we get on and the ones that I'm building, and I've been working on a bunch of them, we have, if we're lucky, one or two of us who actually have built a theater before. I'm lucky to have a Fisher Dachs consultant working on something, or some people from APF or Theater Projects, or Paul Myers from the Venetian who understands what we're doing in a theater, or Mike Cusak. I'm just looking at people around the room that I know. Or Mike Cusak from SAVI Audio, who knows how to install an audio system and knows how to design that for what we want. Because most of the time we have so few people on the team. We have to sit down and say, okay, here we go again, Theater 101. No, you can't put the AC, the air returns blowing upstage because you're going to blow all the drapes around the entire time, it's gonna be useless. No, you really can't put any sprinklers under the grid there. Why? Well, because here I know it looks wide open to you as a sprinkler consultant, but it's not going to be. It's just all of those little things that you have to take the time and the patience to deal with.

We had a moment recently where thank God the architect knew what he was talking about, because one of the MEP consultants had decided that they weren't able to work the MEP ducts through the trussing in the balcony. It was going to be much easier for them to just run it all underneath the base of the balcony, 500mm ducts or something. Before I could get to the mute button on my conference call phone, the architect jumped in and went, well... But it's great.

We were working actually on technology that I hope all of you are getting the chance to play with. What we use is called Screen Share and it allows us to get the desktop up from the host. We all get in on the same conference, and we can all grab a little crayon on our screen and draw on that drawing. Everybody else can see it and everyone else can draw on it. You can actually take a snapshot of that and save it as the host, and you can allow your desktop to be shared, the host can allow you to share your desktop so you can bring drawings out to it. A conference call becomes a hugely more important thing. And you can yell at people while you're scribbling on their drawings. It's great.

DAVID TAYLOR: Stewart Jones actually touched on that really clearly. He said the big difference that's happened in recent times, and it's particularly useful for theater and cultural design, is that FTP and data in the design process has made it so that people live more in your office to work, and that can be more interactive. We're all seeking interactivity, more iterative and interactive.

I want to hit another thing. Safety was another theme, and we had two or three sessions where safety wound in, whether they were specifically on maintenance issues or standards and regulations, or commissioning I liked this quote that was from Jim Niesel's presentation. I particularly like Bill Sapsis's presentation you can see up there. You can gain the data from what's on the screen. It's a blank box for some reason.

The Standards and Regulations thing was for a start a hundred percent less boring than I thought it was going to be. *[LAUGHTER]* But it also was very interesting in a criticism of it, which I saw as a strength of course, was that the panel discussed essentially the globalization that Steven was talking about earlier, which is the fact that we've lived for a long while in the great Wild West here. And that

increasingly places where regulation, particularly governments and not even market-led regulation, had occurred, that being good practical triumph over diverse people, theatrically we were finding ways to deal with it. There were some really worrying things. The CDA Stassi or something it was called, the guy who checks whether you're qualified enough to be doing your work. Andy, help me out.

ANDY HAYLES: CNAU. Stassi was better.

DAVID TAYLOR: Stassi is more what they're like. Basically you give them a perch in your office and they sit on it. You give them a cracker every now and then or something, and they observe your ability to risk assess the issues associated with theater. Which as we discovered in three separate panels was inherently risky. Which I liked. And this also I stole from Jim. One of the brilliant things about sharing a network is you can steal other people's PowerPoints if they work with you. Jim Niesel had this. It wasn't stated in the actual regulation discussion, but this is a chart that tells you in the U.K. what sort of loads you're able to lift without undertaking a risk assessment. With all the fun that that entails. Again, Andy, I'm really sorry because I'm going to ask you one more thing after this. You used to do a really good shtick on you couldn't lift a case of beer under these criteria, is that right?

ANDY HAYLES: I think it was my son's diapers. He weighs more than three kilos.

DAVID TAYLOR: And if you want to lift him up so you can kiss him on the forehead, you would--

ANDY HAYLES: I'd have to get a risk assessment from my wife.

DAVID TAYLOR: I'm going to ask you one other thing, because after the sheep on the fly tower that you have to keep away from the giant wind farm that Glyneborne are putting up, so they don't get caught up in it, you had a quote. Honestly, even now I can't believe it, and I don't know whether to laugh or cry. It's the ABTT criteria of theater has to...I'm going to say it wrong. You can say it correct, I'm gonna say it how I heard it, unless I was asleep when I heard it. This is how I heard it. "The ABTT wishes, the British Theater Technicians Association, wants us to have audience happiness or audience feeling of success in the equation, perhaps even equally with life safety." I'll redo it then. If you don't laugh, you can't lose a limb, right? No? Do it.

ANDY HAYLES: It's from the ABTT Theater Safety Commission in May. They committed to try and communicate to employees the right codes and standards for theatrical functionality and enjoyment are at least as important as safety.

DAVID TAYLOR: There you go. I'd get sued, you wouldn't get sued. So the safety thing was nice because the safety discussions that went on, given that we had really large things moving around in Steven's theater and elsewhere, I felt was a nice way of drawing on the experience and the generalist nature of the people that were here. Generalists. That was the other theme, that people that we didn't expect to have knowledge in a particular place offered it up. The common theme was what?

STEVEN EHRENBERG: Storytelling, I think.

DAVID TAYLOR: I think it was, too.

STEVEN EHRENBERG: We heard it many different times throughout the weekend, over the days when we were here, starting right off the bat with Hugh Hardy saying that's how all of this started. I don't think he said sitting around the campfire telling stories, but I think that's where it all started. Even if we're turning churches into theaters, I think that's fine. It's one for our side. I also think that they... [APPLAUSE] Sorry. But I also believe that they have the same roots. It's telling stories around that really early cultural campfire. Religion is trying to explain what we don't know, and theater's roots are trying to relate what we do know and what we experience. And I think that's a real truth. As we

move forward with storytelling, it becomes what story is that building telling? What's the storytelling going on in what we're building and what is going to happen as you go in there, as it draws you into it on its own? So that's what I was getting at.

DAVID TAYLOR: I think even in the most technical of the sessions, the thing that was driving people was this passion to share the point, to share the story, whether it was passionate acousticians, whether it was the extraordinary relationship on TPC that John Tissot has with the company and with the success of that project. John, you actually lived in that building. You didn't tell the client, right? Didn't you just sleep there? Oh, oh, I've given it away. But you have a whole life relationship -- not your whole life, but the whole life of the building relationship -- with what that building became. With all its push and pull of commercial pressure, you kept your eyes focused on the story and the desire that the team that you were part of, and it was a wonderful team of client and architect and the best consultant, to arrive at a point where you probably won't have to pay for a ticket when you go there again, right? Do they make you pay? All right.

JOHN TISSOT: I've already paid for *[INAUDIBLE]*.

DAVID TAYLOR: But we talk as consultants, and we talk as architects about making homes for the orchestras and the dancers and the artistic directors and the technicians. If you feel it's a little bit your home at the end of the day, then that's the right thing. I've been absolutely amazed here at how broad the experiences are of the people that have been here, the thirst for knowledge that's been evident over these days, and the willingness to continue to interact. It's been remarkably friendly. There really wasn't a fight outside, was there?

STEVEN EHRENBERG: No, there wasn't.

DAVID TAYLOR: As we draw this thing to a close, I think the reason this has been so amicable and friendly is that no matter what we're talking about in theater, my experiences have been with Bill Sapsis, that he has that passion, he looks at everything we do as a challenge. And drawing us all together in this way and in retooling this conference from the amazing conferences that Richard Brett achieved in the U.K. for this market. It's been the start of an ongoing series of whole life relationships between people here. You should close the conference, Bill. *[APPLAUSE]*

BILL SAPSIS: Does this mean I can go home and take a nap now? After dinner, okay. Thank you. Obviously, this endeavor is not the product of one person. There are a number of people who I would like to thank for this, for their help and their energy and their time and their encouragement. I want to just bring up a couple of names here, and I'd like if they're in the room...I think some of them are. First, before I even go that far, I'd like to point out that thank God for my sponsors. *[APPLAUSE]*

This was not a tried-and-true event. They went out on a limb with me and they took a chance on me, and it worked.

Other people who are here. I have an advisory board that was above and beyond, offering encouragement, propping me up every once in a while, editing my ubiquitous updates. Steven, David, Eddie Raymond, Laurie is here, Richard Brett. I don't know who else is here. Is there anybody else on the board here? There's Joe Aldridge. Who else is here? Come on, you can admit it. Robert. A lot of great advice. Thank you. I'm hoping that there are at least two of my staff here. Most of the staff, regretfully, the ones who really made this thing happen are making it happen right now. They're out there taking it down, quickly, so they can go to dinner too. Donna Frankel, are you in the room? There you are, hiding in the dark out there. I would definitely not be here if it weren't for Donna, there's no question about that. Sarah Gowan, who is sitting behind her. Sarah did all the graphics, the website.

She did the registration. She's the one who made sure that you had your ticket to whatever event, that you had the badge properly, and then fixed it when it wasn't right.

Let's see, what else. The theme of this conference from the very beginning was communication. Whether you want to call it storytelling or whatever, that's what I saw here over the last few days. I saw panels that ran overtime and people just didn't want to leave the room and they kept talking. Then even when we got them kicked out of the room, they went out into the hallway or they went over to one of the other rooms, or even stood out in that steamy hot courtyard and kept talking about whatever the topic they had just discussed was.

This conference would not have happened without my panelists, there are many in this room now. I want to thank them for the hard work that they put into it. Also, the people who attended here. I can write updates and I can do schedules and I can call vendors and book boat rides till the cows come home. But if you hadn't shown up, this wouldn't have been happening. I want to thank you all. I am honored that you chose to join us and we'll do it again. Thank you.

► The Speakers



Steven Ehrenberg

Vice President of Technical Production, BASE Entertainment. Steven began his career while attending Columbia University in New York. A career which has included work as a stage manager, stagehand, technical director, technical supervisor and production manager for Broadway and Off Broadway theatre, opera, events, music and dance across the world. At BASE Steven has the opportunity to work on both venue construction and show production. BASE is currently working on multiple theatre production and construction projects internationally. Recently Steven served as the technical producer for the Las Vegas Production of Phantom, acting as the producer's representative on the construction of the Venue and the installation of the production. Previously, as VP of Technical Supervision at Clear Channel then Live Nation theatrical, Steven's responsibilities included technical oversight for the touring network of Broadway Across America and consulting on construction of new buildings and renovations. Prior to work with SFX/Clear Channel/Live Nation, Steven was the Production Manager for Blue Man Productions during the mounting of their first Las Vegas production at Luxor. Since 1990 Steven has been the Production Manager / Technical Director for the Reich Music Foundation, working on Opera production and concerts throughout the world. He also serves on the ETCP Certification Council.



David Taylor 1963 - 2011

Sadly, David passed away January 17, 2011. He was an integral part of the 2008 NATEAC and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

David was an internationally known theatre consultant and theatre designer who led some of the most renowned arts buildings projects of the last twenty years, including the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood, New Amsterdam Theatre in New York, Hyperion Theatre at Disneyland, Goodman Theatres in Chicago, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, San Jose and Seattle Repertory Theatres as well as new homes for the Seattle Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and New World Symphony. His international experience includes projects in Southeast Asia, Japan, Europe and the UK, including the Dewan Filharmonik Petronas Hall in Kuala Lumpur for the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orange Tree and Tricycle Theatres in London.

In 2006, he joined the design/engineering/consulting firm Arup to lead the company's theatre consulting work in the Americas. Among his projects there was the Jerome Robbins Theatre at 37 Arts in Manhattan.

Taylor also worked as a lighting designer. For London's Tricycle Theatre, he lit *The Gamblers*, *Dreyfus*, *The Mai*, *Macbeth*, *Wine in the Wilderness*, and *Water*. In New York, he designed the musical *Shabbatai* and the New York premiere of *The Workroom* for American Jewish Theatre. Other credits included *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Lyric Opera of Kansas City, *The Lady's Not For Burning* at San Jose Repertory Theatre, and the Bollywood musical *I Believe* at the National

Theatre in Mumbai. Most recently, he lit the American tour of *The Great Game: Afghanistan*, produced by the Tricycle Theatre, and seen at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C.; the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis; Berkeley Rep in California; and at New York University's Skirball Center, where it was presented by the Public Theatre. A return engagement in Washington saw the production staged for personnel at the Pentagon.

He led the Performing Arts Business Sector for the design engineering firm, Arup in New York. He was also very involved in both ESTA and PLASA. He served as vice-president on the ESTA board for five years and was the vice chair of the new PLASA North America regional board as well as a member of the new PLASA governing body.