On November 19th the Minnesota Theater Alliance and The Playwrights Center convened experienced local playwrights, freelance directors and artistic directors interested in starting and shaping a conversation about how our community can collaborate to produce more local new work together. Approximately 65 people attended. The conversation started with introductions, including one issue or question shared by each attendee. Issues and questions were then grouped into breakout conversations with reports back from each breakout group. Below is a summary of these conversations.

**Topic: Partnerships and collaboration among companies**

**Questions/issues:**
- How can Children’s Theatre Co. partner with other organizations and theaters beyond commissions
- Is there a model that would encourage deeper engagement with new work? Can Minnesota get on board with a statewide initiative for new work?
- Collaborations – how to playwrights fit in with organizations?
- How can New Century Theater serve new plays and collaborate?
- New definition of plays = new collaborations and new rules.
- How to advance playwright work after initial connection.
- How can Dramatists Guild connect here in Twin Cities?
- How to promote theater after Twin Cities previews/productions?
- Continued life for plays (2nd, 3rd, 4th productions)?
- Making connections when the new play isn’t right for us but good for others.

**Summary of breakout discussion**
- We need to formalize what is now an informal process for one group recommending a script to another. Could the Alliance or PWC facilitate or be a hub somehow?
- We’d like a model like dance: longer workshop periods, and repeat performances as part of repertoire. [Caveat: dance is an event, not a commodity.]
  - what if audience/revenue didn’t matter?
- Maybe a local version of NNPN (National New Play Network) to facilitate rolling premiers/tours/co-productions
- People should also know that Network of Ensemble Theatres is a great resource.
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**Topic: Finding writers**

**Questions:**
- How to balance all parts of new theater creation and extend net to manage new scripts
- Radio theater – how to connect with playwrights
- How can devised theater connect with playwrights
- How to entice musicians and writers to collaborate in new ways
- Science fiction theater
- High school competition scripts
- How to attract playwrights to work visually
- How to know how to collaborate with the right people for specific projects
- How to have ensembles and playwrights work together. Control?
- Can playwrights collaborate with non-traditional theater-making models?
- How to see out playwrights who work non-traditionally
- Database of plays arranged by topic
- How to manage unsolicited submissions
- How to attract theater-makers to cabaret format
- How to attract writers to 20-minute play festival

**Summary of breakout discussion**
- Barriers are fear of different styles, unknowns about who is interested/available, politeness, silos, discomfort with collaboration.
- Time is a challenge, need tools to find the right work for the right company. We need a resource center for reading/finding new scripts. Playwrights Center? Pillsbury House Theatre is creating a script library in their lobby.
- Supply & demand – are there more actors and playwrights than can be produced? Is locally focused a recommended practice or is it better to extend geographic reach?
- Can audience get involved in selection process?
- There are pros and cons to self-producing for playwrights.
- But when a playwright is hired/commissioned/solicited, what does the playwright get out of it? (i.e. pay, recognition, building experience, creative autonomy, etc.) Playwrights need to be paid and protected.
- Are we too polite? We assume there is "territory," and that to approach a script that fits another company's niche, or a writer who works elsewhere is "predatory" or "poaching." Does this serve the writer? The community?
- There needs to be an evolution between producers/collaborators and playwrights: candor, respect, understanding, compensation.
- There was a backlash against dramaturgs and workshopping, so now producers are afraid to push or give feedback or ask for changes. But making theater should be a push and pull. Can plays ever be perfect? When there are so many separate groups, do artists get pushed enough?
Topic: Getting started as a "new" artist
Questions/issues

- How to forge connections as a freelance director
- How can directors pitch new plays and be taken seriously?
- How can theater makers connect?
- How does a young theater artist, who is new to Twin Cities, prove themselves? Is there a space for he playwright’s vision among theaters/groups?
- Transcending age stigma in theater community
- How can newcomers break in to Twin Cities theater?

Summary of breakout discussion

- How to make a club sandwich
- Perceived closed system. Is internship, sweep the floors, assistant direct, stage manage the only way in? Or do you have to start your own company?
- Playwrights got more love (this breakout was the smallest attended)
- Artists of color need opportunities at more than institutions with missions specific to people of color.
- Do you need a company to make work?
- Mentorship/apprenticeship is critical.
- We need to support new makers as well as new texts.

Topic: Audience Development
Questions/Issues:

- How to build audiences for new work
- How to make existing audiences excited about new work?
- How to convince audiences devised works are legitimate.
- How do the suburbs and outstate MN play into market for new work?
- How to engage audiences with new work?

Summary of breakout discussion

- Audience sharing! List share or word of mouth or cross promotion between organizations that do new work.
  - "We all do better when we all do better."
  - A pass (like museum pass or Ethno Metro Pass)?
  - Note: The Alliance is building a cooperative patron database, called Minnesota Audience Development Exchange (MADE) that could facilitate permission-based list trades by segment.
- Fringe growth as a model for building an adventurous audience.
  - Reframing the conversation (with audience and press)
  - A festival? Of new works? Of one playwright?
  - A month devoted to new works and promoted together?
  - CSA (Community-supported art)
- Inviting the audience into the process: audience reviews, open rehearsals, community-based work
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Topic: How to transcend standard theater conversations
Questions and Summary:

• Just fucking do it.
• "New" means what?
• Maybe we need an infrastructure (like Playwrights Center) for devisers
• New work from a group of people using more than text
• We can't all be the best at doing classic/existing work. Why don't we all agree to only do new work or new vision? For like five years? That's what Minnesota could be known for.
  o Chicago artists are cocky. Can Minnesota artists be cocky too? If we aim for excellence of a certain kind?
• Is there interest in existing methodologies (like Red Eye's) for critical feedback and development of collaborative work?