

The Northfield Experience—May 4-6, 2018

Project Description:

The City of Northfield, St. Olaf College and Carleton College will host renowned site-specific choreographer Stephan Koplowitz, who will present *The Northfield Experience—A Site Specific Performance Journey*, at 8-10 accessible locations in Northfield, May 4-6, 2018. Comprised of interlaced performances of theater, dance, visual art, and digital media that will repeat 2 times daily, *The Northfield Experience* will highlight Northfield's history and architecture. Koplowitz will audition students from St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges and the Northfield community, selecting over 150 participants including dancers, musicians, media artists, choirs and actors. *The Northfield Experience* includes live performances at Northfield locations, such as the Depot, the library, and the Post Office. Audience members check in at the Grand Theater, the event hub, and join touring groups circulating to performance sites. Most groups will tour on foot, though buses (one ADA-equipped) will also circulate. At the Grand, visitors will view a media installation related to the event.

Koplowitz will also be connected to local community artists that will be participating in this project. During the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years, he will create the work during brief residencies in Northfield. Arts Tour funding will underwrite performance expenses only for the May 4-6 presentations.

Performances will take place at Northfield landmarks such as Northfield Arts Guild and Theater, The Grand and Northfield Cemetery. Audiences from Northfield, surrounding communities, and the Twin Cities will include youth, senior citizens and those with limited exposure to original, site-based artistry. The Grand Theater in downtown Northfield will be the event hub. Here visitors will check in and tour a media installation about Northfield. They will watch live feeds from performance sites, collect maps/schedules, and join groups walking/riding buses to performances. At the Grand, Koplowitz will also speak directly to audience members at talk-back sessions on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

St. Olaf is partnering with Carleton College and the City of Northfield Arts & Culture Commission (ACC) to present *The Northfield Experience*. The two colleges frequently collaborate to advance common interests, and have strong complimentary arts programs. The mission of the ACC is to pursue arts offerings for the city that provide arts enrichment for Northfield residents.

Quality of the Arts Experience:

1) Stephan Koplowitz, an award-winning Los Angeles artist, has created 66 works including *Natural Acts in Artificial Water* at the Hines Waterwall Park (Houston); *Idyllwild*, which took place at historically/culturally/ecologically significant sites in Idyllwild (CA);

and *The Grand Step Project* (NYC), 24 free public performances on six staircases throughout Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Like these performances, *The Northfield Experience* will reflect the character of its locale and prompt residents and visitors to see their surroundings in fresh perspective.

2) St. Olaf, Carleton, and the Northfield Arts & Culture Commission (ACC) collaborate on *The Northfield Experience* to strengthen ties between the colleges and the city, and to celebrate their shared “hometown.” The collaboration enables students and community members (practicing artists of the future) to learn from a world-class artist. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation underwrote the planning/creation of *The Northfield Experience* as part of a project to promote collaboration between the two colleges.

The Northfield City Council created the ACC in 2007 to assure that the arts thrive in Northfield, reaching all population groups. The ACC also exists to strengthen Northfield’s identity/reputation as an “arts town.” City leaders recognize that the arts attract visitors and prospective residents to Northfield, keeping the city vibrant and appealing.

3) The intended outcomes of the Northfield Experience are as follows:

- To engage a diverse range of people, including youth, seniors, and low-income Northfield residents, with the arts. The performances take place in accessible and familiar places where people regularly go.
- To create art through which spectators learn about Northfield’s history. Performances at each site focus on themes/undertones of Northfield’s history and culture.
- To help participating student artists grow in performance skills and awareness of what it takes to produce site-specific art. By working with Koplowitz, students learn how large-scale site-specific art comes together.
- To attract visitors to Northfield and reinforce its appeal as an arts destination. Site-specific productions of this scale and quality are rare in SE MN. The event, broadly advertised, promises to draw large, diverse audiences from the region.

4) Koplowitz will present artist talks about creating site-specific work at the Grand Theater once per day on Friday/Saturday/Sunday. Also, a multimedia installation at the Grand will chronicle the evolution of the project and give the audience a look at Northfield not covered in the live performances. Koplowitz has incorporated similar activities into his previous site-specific works.

5) Investments by St. Olaf, Carleton, and the City of Northfield will make this an inclusive event that brings the arts off the campuses and into the center of town where diverse populations can experience it. It will be advertised to attract audiences who may not often

travel to the Twin Cities to see comparable events. We also expect to attract arts enthusiasts from the Twin Cities.