

All of GT is a Stage: Using Mr. Burns as a Theatre Event

Collaboration fosters innovation! We encourage additional collaborators on your project. Please list the names, professional titles and roles of any project collaborators.: (1000)

Alyssa Brosy, Theater Coordinator/Technical Director for DramaTech, Project Manager for Project

Bentley Heyman, Lecturer, LMC – Filming

***Arts at Tech has five strategic goals: serve students, integrate arts for learning, create new arts knowledge and push artistic boundaries, engage with creative industries, and connect our communities through the arts. How will this initiative impact the five key strategic goals for Arts at Tech? (It does not need to address all five goals but needs to address at least one in a transformative fashion.): (500)**

I am excited to present *Mr. Burns* as a transformative project that aligns seamlessly with Arts at Tech's strategic goals. This initiative addresses four key objectives: serving students, integrating arts for learning, creating new arts knowledge, and connecting our communities through the arts.

For 76 years, DramaTech has proudly served students as an artistic home where they can explore theatre in a supportive environment. *Mr. Burns* offers an unprecedented opportunity for students to engage in a large-scale project that exceeds anything we have undertaken before. While we've executed significant productions in the past, this project will elevate their experience by introducing an episodic performance across multiple campus locations—something never done here. The learning experience for both participants and audiences will be extraordinary. For those involved in the production, the logistical aspects required will require strong planning and communication skills as well as creative planning and ideation. For the audience, the experience of waiting to see the next act and having to find it in a new location will challenge their expectations of what theatre is.

I chose *Mr. Burns* for its rich connection to the history of theatre. Over three acts, participants and audience members will journey through the evolution of theatrical storytelling—from fireside tales to ancient outdoor performances, to the traveling Mystery plays of the Medieval era, and finally into the sophisticated indoor productions of the Renaissance. This progression mirrors the rapid development of theatre technology depicted in *Mr. Burns*. Although the concepts may not be new, the way they are realized will be groundbreaking for many involved. Students will rethink theatre because this experience will push artistic boundaries through the different mechanisms used to integrate audience participation into each segment.

Moreover, this show aims to forge stronger connections within our communities. By designing the performance as an immersive encounter rather than a traditional sit-down event, we can engage a wider audience and draw more Georgia Tech community members into the world of DramaTech. Additionally, we plan to hire four talented Atlanta-based artists—acting as scenic designer, costume designer, musical director, and choreographer—who will collaborate with our students. This collaboration not only enriches the production but also fosters valuable hands-on training opportunities for our students while connecting them with the broader Atlanta arts community.

This project holds the potential to redefine the artistic landscape of DramaTech and the larger Georgia Tech Arts community. It is just the beginning of a new era of creative work that I envision for our organization. Imagine the entire campus as a stage, where diverse scripts—regardless of their STEM focus—can come to life. With the right support, *Mr. Burns* can serve as a crucial first step towards innovative, forward-thinking artistic endeavors that can thrive across campus.

Please describe the previous experience and/or training that has equipped your team to execute this project.: (300)

For over 20 years, I have passionately explored event-based performance, shifting away from traditional realism to emphasize the audience's role in theatre. My journey began in graduate school and was further ignited by my mentor, Del Hamilton, at 7 Stages in Atlanta, who encouraged me to experiment with this innovative style.

My first professional production, *Iphigenia Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell That Was Once Her Heart* by Caridad Svich, took place in 7 Stages' black box theatre. Set against the backdrop of a rave, the immersive environment allowed actors to move among the audience, engaging them as "rave-goers." Live camera feeds projected their performances on surrounding walls, while a DJ maintained the energy throughout. The result? A resounding success.

At DramaTech, we similarly produced *Rent*, transforming our space into the vibrant Alphabet City. With scaffolding and multiple platforms, we invited the audience—representing the neighborhood's residents—to become characters in the performance. They participated as support group members and café-goers, blurring the lines between performers and spectators.

Now, I am eager to bring *Mr. Burns* to life in this dynamic format. I've envisioned this production for a decade, waiting for the right moment, and now, with a group of enthusiastic young students ready to embrace courageous theatre, that moment has arrived.

***Please describe your arts initiative, and how it will provide an innovative contribution to the Georgia Tech campus community.: (500)**

I am seeking support to create a three-part production of Anne Washburn's *Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play*, which examines how society rebuilds itself after a cataclysm that wipes out a large portion of society and resets everything back to a place of simplicity and savagery. In this world, *The Simpsons* and other pop culture references become the mythology and commodity of the society as it rebuilds.

The first act unfolds around a fire, echoing the essence of primitive storytelling. In the second act, the storytelling medium evolves, incorporating a stage, props, and costumes. By the final act, set 75 years later, society has rebuilt, with indoor performances becoming the norm. Theatre has evolved into a sophisticated art form, but it reflects a new style derived from a mythology of old pop culture and the chaos of a post-apocalyptic world.

My vision is to utilize three distinct campus locations for each act, performed at different times throughout the semester to symbolize the passage of time. Each act will progress in technological sophistication, mirroring the evolution of theatre's technology.

The first act will take place in Mayer Memorial Garden (Skiles Triangle Garden), a small, sunken green space ideal for a band of survivors. Actors will emerge from various campus locations, seeking refuge while engaging with the audience, who will either sit on surrounding benches or stand above to observe.

For the second act, set seven days later, a wagon will be pulled through Tech Square and down Ferst Drive to the Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons. Here, actors will create an eye-catching setup reminiscent of a circus or Medieval mystery play, inviting the audience to gather around. The performance will begin with the actors acting as barkers, drawing people in and preparing them for the show.

The final act, occurring approximately 75 days later, will take place indoors, presenting a fever dream operatic fusion of *The Simpsons* "Cape Feare" episode alongside other pop culture references. This act will blend elements of terror and dread, culminating in a sunrise that floods the theatre with electric light for the first time.

So why this project? Theatre is often viewed as a confined space where audiences sit quietly for a set duration. However, it has a rich history of being rough (according to Peter Brook) particularly when performed outdoors. This production encourages the campus community to break free from conventional expectations and discover art in unexpected places. It invites them to embark on a transformative artistic journey that redefines their understanding of theatrical performance. Should this project succeed, the intent is to continue making more like it using different locations across campus.

***How do you anticipate this project helping you to grow in your work and/or in your arts practice?: (250)**

This project is a dream come true for me. Its scale exceeds anything I've tackled before, providing an opportunity to expand my artistic vision beyond the confines of traditional theatre. I finally have the space to think bigger and bolder, something I've longed for during my time on Tech's campus.

What makes this project even more significant is that it's entirely my own vision. At DramaTech, most productions are selected by the student membership, often resulting in shows that are not necessarily at the top of my artistic bucket list. Any show that I choose is placed in a studio slot, which means it is done at a smaller scale with a lower budget. Rarely do I have the chance to create a grand spectacle that allows me to explore collaboration and showcase my full range of capabilities. This project will enable me to direct without those limitations. My hope is it will inspire the DramaTech community to embrace a more ambitious artistic direction.

By supporting this initiative, you're not just backing a single production; you're championing a transformative experience that will elevate the standard of our work and invigorate our community.

***Where might you plan to share this initiative with the Georgia Tech community? How concrete are these plans as of now?: (250)**

Our ambitious project aims to engage the audience in three unique campus locations, enhancing the experience of each act of the play. The first act will unfold in Mayer Memorial Garden (Skiles Triangle Garden), creating an intimate, natural setting. The second act will follow a week later, featuring a horse-drawn wagon that will traverse Tech Square and Ferst Drive, culminating at the Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons. The final act will take place approximately 75 days later in either DramaTech or the Ferst Center, bringing the journey full circle.

While I have not yet secured these locations, I plan to begin this process next semester. This is a pioneering approach for me, and I'm eager to explore how to bring this vision to life.

***How would you define "success" for this project and how do you plan to measure and document its impact and your learnings from the experience? What supports do you need to make this happen?: (250)**

Success for this project hinges on several key factors:

1. We deliver a production that resonates with the audience.
2. We expand our audience base from the greater Atlanta area.
3. Attendees return for subsequent acts.

4. Student participants express positive feedback.
5. I experience personal growth as an artist.

To measure these outcomes, we'll track audience numbers through ticket sales, scans, and headcounts. Each location will feature a QR code for audience members to complete a survey, providing valuable qualitative insights.

For student participants, I'll ask them to outline their expectations at the start. After each act, we'll conduct check-ins to assess their experiences, learning, and any gaps they feel. This reflection will also apply to my own growth.

Having an outside facilitator lead these discussions would be beneficial, as students may feel more comfortable sharing candidly. This person can relay insights to the program's leadership, ensuring that we continuously improve. Additionally, assistance with data collection and analysis would be invaluable, allowing me to focus on the next phase of the production.

By investing in these measures, we can create an engaging and impactful experience that elevates our work and fosters growth within the entire community.

***Optional portfolio web link:**

www.melissa.foulger@gmail.com

***If you were granted partial funding, would you still be able to do the project? What is the minimum amount of funding you would be willing to receive and still accomplish this project?: (100)**

We can proceed with the project under partial funding. While we may need to scale back certain technical elements, it remains feasible with a budget of \$7,000. Our primary funding priorities will focus on compensating the Atlanta-based artists and securing materials for costumes and set design for Act Three of the show.

***What in-kind supports might be helpful in making this project a success?: (250)**

We greatly appreciate any form of in-kind support, with marketing assistance being our top priority. Additionally, help in sourcing materials, particularly furniture and lumber, would be highly beneficial to avoid purchasing costs. If there are campus partners available to take on production roles such as Musical Director, Choreographer, Set Designer, or Costume Designer, that support would be invaluable as well.

*** indicates required**

***Project timeline**

Please upload a full project timeline, including the dates and times at which you plan to share this project/program with the Georgia Tech community. Please indicate whether these are projected or scheduled times (both are okay at this stage, though we will give extra priority to projects that have confirmed dates.) Please note that all funds must be used by May 1, 2025; we also cannot provide funding for expenses that have already been incurred prior to the start of this grant.

***Itemized budget**

Please provide an itemized budget for this initiative, including all other sources of project support. Please note that this grant comes from state funds and cannot cover payments for GT faculty or staff, nor can it cover food expenses.

Optional portfolio

Please feel free to upload an optional portfolio of work you've done related to the work you're doing on this project, or share a web portfolio link. This is not required.