



Double Edge Theater in *Leonora, la maga y la maestra*, captured at the Alexander Kasser Theater, October 2020

As stages across the country remain empty, last month, **PEAK Performances** brought **Double Edge Theatre** into the **Alexander Kasser Theater** at **Montclair State University** to mount *Leonora, la maga y la maestra*, with **WNET's ALL ARTS** capturing it for broadcast for the series **PEAK HD**. With the production's surreal, bewitching costumes and set, the Kasser's state-of-the-art technical support, and a full cast and crew, they honed and performed the stirring piece—to no theater audience. In the coming months, perhaps the coming year, what remains undeniably unknown is when, how, and in what number audiences can return to theaters. What also remains undeniable is **PEAK Performances'** commitment to artists, and its refusal to stop giving them tools to make the unimaginable real.

With the realization that there's no need for a stage that brims with potential to sit unused or the creative energy of artists to remain static just because audiences cannot gather around them, we have taken subsequent action: continuing to invite our ever-expanding community of genre-bending visionaries to make complete productions in Montclair State University's dynamic theater space. Quite simply: we are giving artists work, we are giving artists space, and we are devoting hundreds of thousands of dollars to giving artists full performance fees, in a moment that has desolated our community, boxing our imaginations into Zoom screens and stripping so many of their livelihoods.

By Spring 2021, PEAK Performances will have featured 7 full productions this season, from artists including Elevator Repair Service, David Gordon, Zvi Gotheiner, Bill T. Jones, and Heidi Latsky.

Keeping the safety of artists, administrators, and technicians firmly in mind, the Kasser has been zoned so that each group is granted access to the given area they need (while ultimately collaborating under one roof—and, importantly, in one non-virtual space). These works from the Alexander Kasser Theater's stage can be viewed in high definition via **PEAK HD**, the organization's partnership with **WNET's ALL ARTS** which makes exhilarating, artful captures of **PEAK** works available, free of charge, for viewing on phones, tablets, and TVs. **PEAK HD**, meanwhile, continues to make new discoveries and hone its approach, with the recent implementation of **Steadicams**—in addition to the previously-installed multiple **4K robotic video cameras**—used to capture the immediacy of our performances.

Being part of the hybrid arts presenting/higher education world has uniquely positioned us to be able to continue in this full, fruitful manner: we are infinitely grateful to have the support of the university, which realizes the importance of keeping artists active, of granting them the time and resources to populate our stages with their challenging, provocative, unforgettable visions. In a testament to the indispensable work artists do here, the university wholly recognizes we're not going to sell tickets any time soon—and offers its support, regardless. As we uphold the process of unfettered creation—in a moment when most performers and technicians haven't set foot onstage for over eight months—we are also making an inventory of experiences that students can have for years, and that professors across a variety of fields can utilize in their teachings.

Facility managers keep closed theaters up to code by flicking lights on and off, running water through pipes, and checking HVAC systems. But is that what sustains a theater? Its mechanicals? In its sixteen-year history, the Kasser has welcomed a diverse range of artists who have given it a bold *raison d'être*. An indelible aura of creative meaning unsurpassed elsewhere. **You can turn the lights on and off without artists, you can check the electricity, but the hot current on any stage is transmitted by artists performing under those lights. So instead we're opening our stage doors and making something happen, bringing artists into the environment where they thrive—and paying them, for their sake and yours!**

Jedediah Wheeler
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