Performing Arts Commons Platform Proposal

By: Collin Huse

Overview

In the course of production within the performing arts we create tools and design objects for productions. These may be budgeting sheets, wind machines, stencils, winches, patterns, paperwork templates or any number of objects or tools that are frequently created within the production process. While we as an industry work collaboratively to produce art, it is incredibly uncommon that these objects and tools developed within organizations are shared with external artists. The lack of knowledge sharing between fellow artists means that substantial cost and resources go into researching, designing, and creating these tools and objects that have been made by other artists many times before. The result is a considerable cost (both in labor and resources) in reinventing the wheel.

This project seeks to address this problem by creating an open source platform where designs, tools, and knowledge within our industry can be shared for free. Through this exchange of information, the project has two main aims: 1) to decrease the costs associated with production, and 2) elevate the quality of creation in the performing arts by creating a platform for collaboration and innovation through the open exchange of ideas.

On this open source platform, users will be able to write descriptions, upload files, and connect videos for their innovations, which can then be accessed by other users. The target users for this project would include all artists involved in the production of live performance. This project will involve target users throughout the process of creating the platform in order to make sure the platform is efficacious. A select group of early adopters will have the opportunity to provide critical feedback and input in the future of the platform, and to become moderators on the platform to ensure the content is both safe and appropriate.

Industry Impact

This open source platform will help transform innovation within the industry as well as reducing costs and labor invested in old ideas.

This resource would reduce costs and increase quality for many organizations. By having access to the shared knowledge of our industry, an organization would not have to have to invest as heavily in researching and developing the same things we have been making for years. Spending less time and money to produce the same products would leave more resources for innovation. Organizations could build on these tools and products to improve the quality of our shared commons or have the opportunity to spend less time on the standard "needs" of a production and more time on the lists of "wants" that frequently are paired down due to resources thereby increasing innovation within the industry. Though various means, the increase in shared knowledge brings about collective benefit.

This platform would also serve as a forum for new ideas and conversations. In addition to seeing what people have created, there will be the opportunity to ask why things were done in a particular way, or to compare multiple ways of doing things. By bringing together people involved in the act of creation, there are opportunities to work together in ideation and for the education of those new to these concepts.

Milestones

Within the scope of this proposal

I.   Research and User Input - In this phase a spectrum of target users will be surveyed to gather information about what would make this online platform useful for them.
II.   UI Design and Prototype - The web based user interface will be designed and prototyped with minimal data.
III. Prototype Testing and Revision - A select group of target users will be chosen to test the interface prototype. Feedback will be gathered and appropriate adjustments made.
IV.   Server Integration - The server will be purchased and connected to the platform. Purchasing a server will maximize control and minimize unknown costs.
V.   Beta Implementation - A select group of users will be chosen to begin using the platform, uploading designs and tools, and finding bugs. Many of these early users will be moderators at the full scale implementation.
VI.   Full scale implementation - The server will be moved to a colocation facility and tested. The platform will be advertised and opened to everyone.

Following project implementation

VII. Additional funding will be sought out to fund the continuation and possible expansion of the project. This funding will be explored in the following order:
   - Donations made through the platform
   - Sponsorship from performing arts related businesses
   - Grants
   - Ad revenue (great efforts will be made to avoid this option)
VIII. Input will be gathered from leaders within the platform community to implement future improvements.

Budget

Purchase Server:	$3,000
1yr Server Co-location:	$1,200
Labor:	$ 800
Total Budget:	**$5,000**