



Bassist Evan Borden (left) and Zane Gundersen of the Burlington-based garage-pop band Villanelles practice Monday night in the basement of a Burlington apartment in preparation for a week-end show.

BROTHER, COULD YOU SPARE SOME REHEARSAL SPACE?

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"There is good rehearsal space available if you're able to pay," Zook said. "And if you're not, then it is tricky to find a place to rehearse in this community. ...

"What people end up doing is getting rehearsal space through friends and family members — office space or warehouse space. During the evening, they can let it be used for rehearsal space."

Lyric's two shows are performed at the Flynn Center, where the group rehearses for 10 days in advance of the performances. Using the Flynn for this amount of time eats up 25 percent of the Lyric's annual budget, Zook said.

"One of the things that our organization has been trying to do for years is buy a rehearsal space and leave it set up for three months," she said.

Zook recognizes that finding affordable rehearsal space is most acute for smaller performance troupes: they have fewer available funds.

"You have to pay for it in this community," she said.

Mark Nash, artistic director of Vermont Stage Company, said that for the first seven years of his 11-year tenure, finding rehearsal space was a constant struggle.

Spaces ranged from empty rooms in churches that had to be cleared out at the end of each rehearsal to a room at UVM if the company happened to be rehearsing during January break, Nash said.

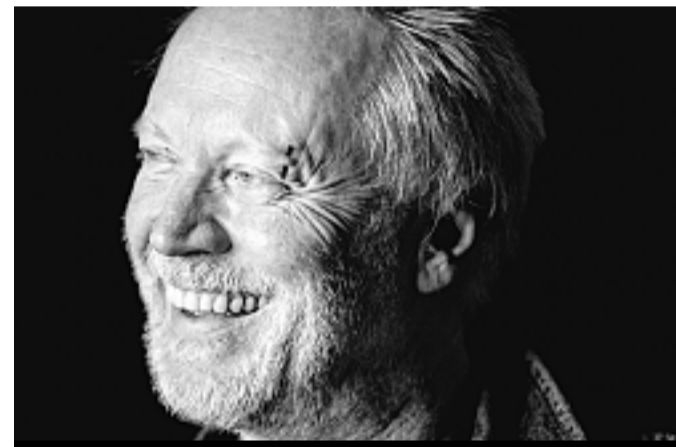
Because of the professional nature of the company, and therefore the condensed rehearsal schedule, it is possible for VSC to rent a room at Main Street Landing for \$100 a day.

Though it's not ideal, the company can afford to rehearse there for 12 days before moving to the FlynnSpace — where it performs — at a cost of \$300 a day.

"When we're doing a show that has a \$40,000 budget, and you spend close to 10 percent of that to rehearse, it's money you'd rather spend elsewhere," Nash said.

The past three years or so, Nash has been in the highly fortunate position of saving money on rehearsal expenses — thanks to donated space from Martin Gold, a partner in Blue Water Realty, a Shelburne business.

Gold gives the conference room of his 60-tenant building on the Shelburne-South Burlington



"WE JUST WANTED TO GROW THE THEATER CULTURE IN BURLINGTON. TO CREATE A SPACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN TAKE MORE CHANCES AND NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT LOSING THEIR SHIRTS, AND CAN DO SOME STUFF THAT'S A LITTLE BIT MORE ADVENTUROUS AND RISKY."

PAUL SCHNABEL, actor and co-founder of the Off Center for the Dramatic Arts

to Vermont Stage Company for rehearsal space. It is available when it is not being used by a tenant, or rented by an outside business. Both Nash and Gold say the arrangement works well, with a certain amount of flexibility built in.

"I love theater," Gold said. "I attend a lot of the lively arts and theater offerings in Burlington, and I love it. I have space I can make available, so I do. It's available for pay for people who need a meeting space — and I offer it free for theater, a way of being supportive."

For Nash, the arrangement is "ideal," even as he worries about the deal coming to an end.

"It's insanely useful," he said. "And we live in fear of it going away at some point."

Even if Nash's own days of searching for rehearsal space are over, he recently experienced the difficulty vicariously — though his wife, the actor/director Kathryn Blume.

She directed a recent performance of "Steel Magnolias." The company, created to give roles to women, had to practice in the basement of one of the actor's homes, Nash said.

"It was about half the size of the actual performance space," Nash said. "Getting spacing and timing correct was pretty tough."

BEWARE OF NOISE

If it's possible to have

in Burlington, said Boyea, who is in charge of music lessons at Advance Music. The lack of space and the noise problem are particular issues in the city, he said.

It's hard for bands with drummers to find pack up and move from place to place, or to find a rehearsal place where they can keep their kits set up, he said.

"A rehearsal space gives bands a place where they can actually play," Boyea said. "Sometimes when you need to develop sounds with a drummer, you need to play at full volume. ...

"It's not cheap to rent a space. How many 20-year-old kids have their own house?"

The value and importance of rehearsal space is evident in the experience of Unrestrained, a hard-core punk rock band based in Burlington.

When Unrestrained was given free use of a warehouse space in Williston, the players received more than a room: they acquired, at last, a place to be artists, Krushenick said. He won't disclose the location for fear of losing it.

"It allowed us to write a new album," Krushenick said. "It's secluded so we can practice late, we can relax, we can go over old songs, we can mess around."

"It allows us to explore our creativity, which is not really possible when you have five different people who have jobs, and you got to find a place to practice and you can't practice past nine cause you're worried about noise ordinances. Your practices are really rushed, and it becomes really, really difficult to work on your art form."

The players in Unrestrained are aware of their good fortune — a deal that came about through a friend of a friend, Krushenick said.

They use the warehouse

two nights a week, and can keep their equipment stacked in a corner, easily accessible the nights they practice.

"I honestly don't know where we'd be practicing if we didn't have this place," Krushenick said.

A few bands are talking about renting a space near the airport, where musicians would have 24-hour access to their instruments and practice rooms, he said. There'd be room for artists' studios, too.

"There's kind of an outcry right now for practice spaces," he said. "We want to try to diversify the kind of art you can have going on there, make it a cool epicenter for underground Burlington art."

The place by the airport requires a \$1,000 security deposit — an obstacle that could be overcome by a benefit concert, according to Krushenick.

"When you're dealing with a bunch of poor musicians," he said, "\$1,000 might be rough."

'A SKETCHY ISSUE'

On the waterfront, a hulking brick structure — the Moran plant — is a city development project in need of tenants. Matthew Minor, a Burlington bass player, said he has long thought the Moran Plant would be a perfect place for band practice, and he envisions a performance space there, as well.

"Bust it out and have little sound-proof rooms," he said. "Make little cubes where artists, and especially musicians, can work." He wants lockers for storing instruments and equipment.

The Moran Plant

Burlington, VT Sat, Nov 27 • Sun, Nov 28
 Andover, MA Sat, Dec 4
 Pittsfield, MA Sat, Dec 11 • Sun, Dec 12
 Springfield, MA Sat, Dec 18
 Albany, NY Sun, Dec 19 • Mon, Dec 20

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