

ecoTheater

Creating Art. Not waste.

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By Mike Lawler

“Solving For Pattern”

Wendell Berry wrote an essay nearly thirty years ago called *Solving For Pattern* that is ostensibly his views on a more sustainable agriculture in America. But, as with most skilled essayists, Berry shines a light on matters that reach far beyond the practices of the American farmer.

The premise of *Solving For Pattern* concerns the idea of taking a more holistic approach to solving problems. Using agriculture as his platform, Berry argues that solutions that concentrate merely on isolated symptoms rather than addressing problems as what Paul Hawken has called “failures of a systemic nature,” is nothing short of misguided, and probably bound to make matters far worse.

I was reminded of this notion while speaking with Seema Sueko, artistic director of Mo’olelo Performing Arts Company the other day. Mo’olelo was formed to address a slew of problems in society, ranging from the lack of living wages for theater artists, to building bridges between the diverse communities living in the San Diego area. Sueko sought to reach out directly to these communities with Mo’olelo, and has built a unique core of supporters and audience members as a result. These are not your typical theatergoers, and the reason is simple enough: Mo’olelo has made it a goal to tell their stories, rather than sticking to the fare found in most theaters. And now, by introducing a commitment to greening their operations, Mo’olelo has embraced the idea of “solving for pattern,” I believe. You see, making theatrical production more sustainable addresses concerns of community too, by recognizing that wasteful, inefficient, and toxic practices can gravely affect the people of San Diego as much as the global community.

Community, it seems, is a concern of all arts organizations. A smart arts administrator recognizes right off how reliant they are on their direct communities. They must embrace the people that will become their patrons, funders, volunteers, and staff. Mo’olelo, for its part, has taken this idea to its logical end, taking pains to consider their impact on each and every level of interaction with their community. They have created a performing arts company that not only admits that valuing these people is vital, but has taken action to protect and nurture them.

In November they will premiere their first production operating under their new GREEN Theater Categories & Sustainable Guidelines. The play, written by Michael Golamco, is called *Cowboy Versus Samurai* (a retelling of the Cyrano de Bergerac tale), and will run from November 28 to December 16. If you live in Southern California, I encourage you to go and see it and support Mo’olelo. As further proof of their commitment to the environment they are offering \$5 off the ticket price of any patron that brings with them proof of carpooling, driving a hybrid, bicycling, or taking public transportation to see the show. A discount you can feel good about.