



## **Performance crosses the bridge**

By Camille LeFevre  
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Lisa D'Amour is "ridiculously obsessed" with the Stone Arch Bridge. While living in Minneapolis during the 1990s, the playwright and performer would often visit the curved limestone and granite railroad bridge spanning the Mississippi River below St. Anthony Falls, built in 1883 under orders of James J. Hill.

"I would go to the river because it's a direct connection to my home in New Orleans," D'Amour said. "I started to get interested in how this site [around the Stone Arch Bridge] put Minneapolis on the map. I became curious about the history layered there."

D'Amour's research traced everything from Indian religious sites to mill ruins. She noted how the area flourished as downtown Minneapolis grew up nearby, then fell into dereliction, and recently began a major comeback as an upscale cultural and residential hot spot.

Her findings are part of a new work, "LandMark: 24 Hours at the Stone Arch Bridge." The free event, which runs continuously from sunrise Saturday until sunrise Sunday, was created by D'Amour, theater artist Katie Pearl and four additional collaborators who call themselves Local Strategy. For the past year, the group has been headquartered in a room at the Soap Factory, a block from the Stone Arch Bridge, and has boned up on local history, toured the site with water, geology and history experts and studied exhibits at the Mill City Museum.

"But the most important research has been experiential," D'Amour said, "spending hours as a group at the site, each one of us falling in love with a different aspect, and discovering when the site feels intimate and when it feels expansive, the different views, and the various emotions we have there."

She describes the result as an interlocking system of dance, music, theater and visual-art events, as well as processions and tours, that will occur on the riverfront walking trails, near Mill Ruins Park, in Father Hennepin Park, in the river and on the bridge.

### Heightened experience

While some events will be obvious, others are solos or meditative works that visitors need to discover.

Each event, however, "illuminates an aspect of the place, or frames a space, or allows people to see, enter into or experience the area in a different, heightened way," D'Amour said.

Unlike the annual "Solstice River" dance celebration at the Stone Arch Bridge, by Minneapolis choreographer Marylee Hardenbergh, "LandMark" doesn't have a "spectacle aspect," D'Amour said.

"We're working from a very different perspective," she said. "We're hoping people will see our events as emerging from the site. You see it or hear it, but then it disappears or leads you to another performance."

Visitors are encouraged to stop first by the information tent, where they'll receive a printed guide to the day's events and can consult a giant colored "chromameter," or event clock. At approximately 8 a.m., 1 p.m. and 8 p.m., a band on a boat in the lock will perform music by composer and collaborator Joel Pickard, a former Minneapolitan who lives in Oakland, Calif.

Throughout the 24 hours, a "drone quartet" performs under the instructions, "If you can't hear the falls, you're playing too loud," Pickard said. "The tone should just be constant presence, a part of what's going on, rather than something calling attention to itself."

Throughout the day, slow and meticulous "endurance dances" down the bridge, by Minneapolis choreographer Emily Johnson, reflect the hard, repetitious work of the mill workers. At various times during the day and overnight, volunteers commandeered by Eleanor Savage, events production manager at Walker Art Center, will print millstone patterns along the bridge using stencils and flour. St. Paul artist Krista Kelley Walsh has created art installations that visitors can discover while on a self-guided tour, or a more formal "performance tour" led by urban geographer Judith Martin, lock worker Chris Lynch or architect Tom Meyer.

Pearl, who organized the tours, also has created "viewing stations" away from the bridge that allow visitors to hone in on one particular aspect of the area or a performance. Throughout the 24 hours, volunteer "knowledge transfer agents" at either end of the bridge will be on hand to answer questions and point out events.

"It's a very user-friendly piece," Pickard said.

Added D'Amour, "Eleanor's suggestion that we go for 24 hours has really influenced the content of the piece. We've thought about 24-hour systems, like sunup and sundown, as well as the area's ecological and industrial systems. So with 'LandMark,' we're simply trying to merge in for one day with our own system of events that will exist, trigger itself and persist, and then go away."