



Beertown Performance Impact Responses 2012

There were several open-ended questions posed to *Beertown* audiences as part of a postshow electronic survey. These are a sampling of answers to those questions.

SPECIFIC TO BEERTOWN

Did you become invested in the decision around what was voted in and out of the time capsule?

Yes. I felt like I was a bona fide member of the Beertown community.

Only to a degree, I found the time capsule to be a pretty interesting reflection of issues in our own society and people's justifications for why they did/did not represent Beertown curious.

Yes, definitely! After looking at the items in the time capsule at the break, I became a lot more interested in them -- I loved the old bible, in particular. Then once people started discussing voting out the bible, I felt very invested in defending it. And even though I 'lost' on that, I still came out of it very invested in the decision overall.

I came away feeling a real sense of community in Washington D.C. After the show, the street was permeated with yellow high-pressure Sodium street lamps. Seventh Street felt more intimate, like a small town. I had time-traveled into a past, former life when I was a municipal and school board meeting reporter. I recognized those characters. I myself jumped into the discussion on what objects should be added to the Time Capsule.

Yes, I did. At first I was just playing along, selecting favorite artifacts (and least artifacts) somewhat arbitrarily. But then other people in the audience made genuinely compelling points, and I found myself actually persuaded by some of them. This was more effective than I would have guessed because others in the audience appeared to be doing the same thing, genuinely trying to put forth good reasons for their position despite the obviously fictional stakes at play. I also appreciated the "antecedents" and the level of care the production had obviously taken with the details of the show, because this provided a very realistic sense of immersion in the life of "Beertown" from when I first walked in the door.

Yes, I purposely made a proposal that I knew would not be popular (remove the bible). However, I was surprised at how many people did vote for its removal, and wondered after the show how often that kind of thing happens. That is, in every community and group there are always "sacred cows" that people don't usually bother to bring up for discussion. But if someone doesn't raise the question and force the issue, many people may not even question their own feelings about the necessity and/or benefit of continuing things as they have always been done before.

Yes! The antecedents helped invest me in the town's story and people. Getting to interview townspeople and look over the artifacts helped make the experience feel more real. Hearing other "residents" speak out during the town hall provided a sense of community. I wanted to see how



you combine theater with public engagement. Do you ever hold follow-up conversations with the audience--take everybody out of character to get at some of the underlying issues raised by the play?

If you had to choose one, which ephemeral artifact do you most closely identify with?

Last Bottle of Beer: I went to high school in Bethlehem, Pa. Where the steel mill is now a casino, and where they stopped making steel around 1992.

Last Bottle of Beer: The discussion over including the last bottle of beer and the pink slips was great. It is important to remember our past, but also to be realistic about it rather than idealizing.

Ada Dot's Family Bible: Family history is the basis of many strong small communities

Last Bottle of Beer: Signaled the Death of the town

Which proposed artifact(s) did you want to see voted into the time capsule?

Meteorite: It was rare and beautiful, it was a shared experience for the townspeople, and it is of scientific importance.

Chunk of Lager's Bar and Plum Pudding Recipe: They both exemplified positive elements of the town's fabric.

Plum Pudding Recipe: Because of the extent to which others in the community were involved in preparing it and shaping it.

Plum Pudding Recipe: Because it had a long train of tradition, values, family. It embodied the unique, quirky attributes that define each community differently.

Prop 6 Sign: Represents the democratic process.

Movie Projector: Because I wanted to see the audience's reaction to the antecedent.