

FOOD TRUCKS: A MYRIAD OF COLORS PAINT EAST AUSTIN STREETS WITH DIVERSE FLAVORS P.34

# EAST

THE BRIGHT *side* OF AUSTIN

**education**  
**Redefined**  
*Sharpening educators through mentorship*



# Arts+ *entertainment*

**August  
+Sept  
2018**

“We want to move  
people, and we  
want to change  
people’s minds.”  
-Lisa Scheps  
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OUR FAVORITE  
EASTSIDE EVENTS  
HAPPENING IN  
AUGUST AND  
SEPTEMBER





“Theater is special... in that it takes you to so many different places in so many different ways.”

### Catch a Show

**Aug 9-25:** *There & Back* by Raul Garza - a play about immigration in the United States

**Sept 20-Oct 6:** *Some Humans Were Harmed in the Making of This Show*, a drag, puppetry, and self-help testimony play by CB Goodman, put on by En Route Productions.

# Ground Zero

In theater, one space becomes a million different places.

WORDS BY JESSI DEVENYNS PHOTOS BY ASHLEY HAGUEWOOD

Theater is a performance art dedicated to illuminating facets of life and human nature that are not always in the spotlight, so why put it in a black box?

**T**echnically, no object is black; it's only a perspective. Black is an unnamed wavelength that the eyes are unable to recognize. So instead of being a space devoid of hues, Lisa Scheps, founder and artistic director of Ground Floor Theater, explains that a "black box theater is like an artist's pallet. You have all the colors available, you just have to move them around to set the [desired] scene."

At Ground Floor Theater, the scenes sets are often unconventional. "We want to move people, and we want to change people's minds," Lisa explains. "Our mission is to produce by and for underrepresented communities. It's really important to me as a social justice advocate that we shine a light on communi-

ties that don't often bask in that light."

With so many communities that she wants to feature, having a black box for a background allows her to literally set the stage to cater to individuals. From social commentaries on immigration to dance pieces done by foreign theater troupes during the Fusebox Festival, Ground Floor Theater throws open its doors to the community. "We're doing shows you've never heard of, and we're doing shows that you might not like. But we're out here taking chances," beams Lisa. According to her, without chances the magic that is art disappears.

Sadly, according to Lisa, the countless artistic gambles

that make Austin such a vibrant setting for theater troupes has not resonated with audiences as profoundly as she had hoped. She laments, "We make our art, and a lot of times we make it mostly for ourselves." Nevertheless, she continues to persevere in her art.

Ground Floor Theater is not the first theater that Lisa has owned on the Eastside. In 2003, she purchased an old building on 12th Street and Cedar and converted it into the play! Theater Group. After having finally opened the regional theater she had dreamed about, she regretfully remembers "it didn't pan out." Not to be daunted, she opened Ground Floor Theater in 2015, but another speedbump slowed things down and the City closed the space in 2016.

Now, after reopening last September, Lisa works to transport theater guests into another place where they can consider ideas and identities from another perspective. "These are things that our productions always highlight," she says. "Every person is just that: a person. And we want to [convey] that with art." **E**

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