

# ELEVATOR REPAIR SERVICE

## FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR JOHN COLLINS:

The other day, while rummaging through a box of old props, postcards and other ERS ephemera, I came across a letter I wrote in 1991 to my future self.\* I was 21 years old and about to mount ERS's first production. I had some questions for myself.

Dear 2016 John,  
A few of us just had a meeting at Sidewalk Café on Avenue A - about as far east as it's safe to go around here. We were trying to write our first press release. Bradley scribbled in the margin: "We are genius-head theater jerks!" Obviously we're not taking ourselves too seriously at the moment. But I'm wondering how everything's going to turn out.

Here are some questions for you:

1. James loves the fact that a career aptitude test I took said I was best suited for work in elevator repair. He likes the idea of calling the company "Elevator Repair Service." Is that ridiculous name going to stick?

2. What I actually do for a money-job is office temp-work. That pays enough for me to make my \$400/month rent. In 25 years will I still be temping at Chase Bank?

3. This first show is called "Mr Antipyrene, Fire Extinguisher." It's not really a play, it's a six-page Dada manifesto. If we're going to be an avant-garde company, we'll probably never do plays by playwrights, right?

4. The show is going to be at NADA on Ludlow St, a storefront theater with 40 seats and an 8-foot ceiling. I wonder where else we might perform? It's hard to imagine this kind of work having much appeal outside of way-off Broadway spaces like this one.

5. Our set for this show is just a bench, a little table and a fire extinguisher we found at the theater. There's no money for sets and the budget for the whole show is around \$300. Will we ever be able to afford to spend much more than that?

6. Will ERS ever have a staff? I mean the kind that doesn't just get paid in beer from East Village bars?

7. This show runs about 50 minutes. That seems about right for this kind of experimental piece. Will we ever make a show longer than that?

8. In 2016, if I live that long, will I still be making experimental theater?

I've got more questions but I need to get going. Got to leave early for rehearsal so I can buy a bag of subway tokens before the fare goes up to \$1.25.

Sincerely,  
1991 John

### 1. It stuck.

We get calls all the time from people with broken elevators. I still blame James.

### 2. No.

ERS is now my only job and my salary comes with health insurance — which my 46-year-old body definitely needs.

### 3. Wrong.

Actually we just did a new play, by a playwright, probably our most avant-garde yet. Next project is Shakespeare. Go figure.

### 4. ERS has played 21 NYC theaters, 23 theaters around the U.S. and 30 theaters abroad

— some with 1000 seats and really high ceilings.

### 5. Our annual budget is about \$1,000,000.

That covers actor and staff salaries, office and rehearsal space and lots of production costs, including genuine sets.

### 6. Yes.

Every day I work with a staff of 7 genius-head theater jerks. They get real paychecks instead of beer, but we do keep a bottle of good bourbon stashed in a file cabinet.

### 8. Yes.

7. Yes.  
Our most popular show was about 7 hours longer than that.

**We've accomplished a lot since 1991 and none of it would be possible without your help.** Contributions from people like you are absolutely critical to our survival. I hope you'll give generously and help us celebrate the last 25 years and the 25 years to come.

All my best,

  
2016 John  
Artistic Director  
2016 Elevator Repair Service

\*Well okay not really. But I did *think* these things in 1991.